INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION: ANALYSING THE BOSNIAN AND NIGERIAN CASES

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **"Interreligious Dialogue and Reconciliation: Analysing the Bosnian and Nigerian Cases"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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CHAPTER I
Introduction

In a globalising world, conflicting identities, economic interests and political concerns are being interpreted as the 'clash of civilisations' with irreconcilable religious worldviews. Indeed, the grim reality of divisions that mark our societies cannot be avoided: if common human concerns bring us together, differing social interests set us apart. These differences cannot be simply done away with, nor can uniformity be imposed or consensus enforced upon people's beliefs and practices. Yet, if conflicting identities, economic interests and political concerns are taken to mean irreconcilable religious worldviews, ethnic cleansing and genocide will become the norm (Heredia 2007).

When one thinks of the role religion has played in world history, violent confrontation is usually one of the first images that come to mind. History is replete with examples of the divisive role religion has played as is contemporary international politics. In the numerous identity conflicts occurring in Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Balkans, there is a definite cultural dimension such that it now seems the clash of civilisations, popularised by Huntington (1993), has been all but prophetic. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, for example, most scholars agree that self-determination and resource allocation are the primary causes. At the same time, it cannot be denied that religious identities clearly and crucially impact the perceptions and behaviours of Israelis and Palestinians, even of those among them who do not identify themselves as religious or observant (Abu-Nimer 2004: 492).

Religion impacts conflict in two ways. First, religion is an important source of people's ideology, which evidently influences their identity (Geertz 1973, Kabalkova 2000). As a basis of identity, religion can be one of the motivations in conflict: religious identity can be the cause of discrimination that can lead to conflict (Little 1999, 1996a, 1996b); religion can influence the level of discrimination against ethnic minorities; religious ideology can be one of the stimulus for militancy (Hoffman 1995); and religion can intensify separatist conflicts. Second, religion can define what is and is not legitimate as well as provide a means for leaders to legitimise their actions. As a source of political legitimacy, religion can justify a wide range of actions including bellicose policies, ethnic cleansing and genocide (Fein 1990).

But religious legitimacy also has a positive dimension: religiously motivated peacebuilding efforts can achieve what political or secular initiatives cannot. This is because in critical conditions such as post-conflict trauma, religious ideas of human relations can be more influential than secular concepts of reasonableness, justice, and fairness (Glynn 1998). Thus, religious legitimacy can endorse hatred and violence as well as conflict resolution and reconciliation. The reason why religion has this dual potential, to cause conflict or abate it, is because most religions are pluralistic in that they contain doctrines of love and brotherhood as well as holy war. Even in those instances where particular religion may be viewed as part of the problem — either by being central to the conflict or by becoming a mobilising factor for nationalist or ethnic sentiments — that religion still contains teachings that encourage humaneness. These teachings, irrespective of current practice, present valuable belief systems for dealing with sectarianism and providing a basis for managing intractable conflicts (Johnston 2003).

Huntington's clash of civilisations theory posits that with the end of the Cold War, the old basis for international relations and conflict based on East-West rivalry has given way to conflict between the major world civilisations. When Huntington refers to civilisation, he self-admittedly invokes religion. This means that the civilisations debate is essentially over the issue of religion in international relations. Subsequently, the civilisational wars that he talks about are most likely to occur between peoples of different religions. Furthermore, according to Huntington, the most intense civilisational clash is likely to occur between the people of the Christian and the Islamic faiths because the Islamic civilisation is historically the most violent and the Western world faces a threat from it (Huntington 1996a) (for a detailed discussion of Huntington's theory and its critiques, see Section 2).

Among the critiques of Huntington, one set of scholars argue that far from clashing, the world is moving towards cooperation and integration. These scholars spot trends which reveal that the centrifugal tendency of ethno-religious identities, which threatened to break up the international system into warring parties after the end of the Cold War, has been checked by more effective domestic and international strategies for managing conflict. The relations between ethno-religious groups in heterogeneous societies have also been changing in ways that suggest the construction of a new regime governing minority-majority relation (Gurr

2000). Moreover, factors such as globalisation, economic interdependence, communication (Anwar 1998, Tipson 1997), and commitment to democracy, free market, and rule of law (Ikenberry 1997) are lessening conflict in the post Cold War era. A small but growing numbers of scholars claim that religion can also be a part of the process of bringing people together by being a basis for dialogue among different groups (Appleby 2000, Gopin 2000). Since Huntington premises religion on inherent status, religious identities become an ascribed characteristic of people that can be at most adapted but not essentially changed. But if religious ideologies and identities are viewed also as a matter of conscientious preference, then the human element of decision and choice can be brought back to people's social and political life to check violence, transform conflicting positions and heal the wounds of war.

Indeed, there is no denying the historic violence precipitated by religious differences, but there have also been exemplary creative exchanges and cooperative interactions between peoples of different religious traditions to work towards diffusing social and political tensions. In a pluralist world, mere co-existence or mutual seclusion is not an adequate response to conflict. What is needed is a constructive dialogue that engages people beyond negating misconceptions and understanding the beliefs and praxis of others. Through such dialogue communities come to construct themselves and the other differently — they develop better understanding and acceptance of the subjective reality of the other and form greater connectedness to the experiences and positions of the other (Fisher 1997). This leads to a transformation of perceptions and relations to the other (Gergen 1999). Thus, transformative dialogue leading to deeper mutual understanding is seen by many as a desirable, if not ideal, state of affairs (Maoz *et al.* 2007).

Based on the above assertions, this research undertakes a theoretical investigation into interreligious dialogue as an identity-forming process that can foster reconciliation of relations between religious communities in societies that have experienced communal violence. Interreligious dialogue entails contact and communication between people of different religious traditions, at the individual and institutional level, with the aim of personal change where personal change involves a threefold transformation: transformation in how we perceive our own identity; transformation in how we perceive our relationship with the religious other; and transformation in we perceive our relationship with our own community.

At the heart of interreligious dialogue lie ethics, genuineness and personal transformation. Ethics involve accepting people of other religions as they are — dialogue should not be a search for common grounds between different religions, effort to fuse religious doctrines, or intent to universalise doctrines from individual religions, but a quest for understanding and accepting other religions as they are meant to be. Genuineness comes about through spontaneity — dialogue should not be a premeditated activity, but a natural encounter of diverse people in a free and fair environment. Personal transformation is about changing oneself rather than changing the other — dialogue should take us into the depths of our own heart and mind and change the way we see ourselves and the our surrounding, instead of trying to influence others into changing how they see us. In this way, dialogue can foster openness, trust, and rebuild broken relations. Since interreligious dialogue can bring personal transformation that can lead to rebuilding broken relations, interreligious dialogue can contribute to a more peaceful society with tolerance as a minimum expectation and acceptance and respect as the maximum ideal. According to this understanding, interreligious dialogue can encompass different types of interactions such as theological conversations, academic discussions, involvement in sports, and engagement through visual and performing arts. Moreover, interreligious dialogue can be inclusive in spirit — its participation can extend to people who do not identify themselves as belonging to a particular religion, who follow non-traditional religions, or who do not consider themselves believers at all. This is not to say, however, that every form of interreligious interaction is interreligious dialogue. The distinguishing feature of interreligious dialogue is that diverse people come into contact and communication spontaneously for addressing the issue of social separation between religious communities.

Furthermore, interreligious dialogue approach to reconciliation challenges the forgiveness-centric model of reconciliation based on forgiveness of victims, confession and repentance of perpetrators, and wholehearted acknowledgment of suffering by others. Advocates of this forgiveness-centric model argue that forgivingness can be a universal ethic of reconciliation applicable across different cultural contexts. However, it must be noted that the ethics of forgiveness derives from Christian theology. Consequently, promoting forgiveness as peacebuilding measure in multireligious contexts reflects a bias towards Christianity. It also reiterates the historical inequality between Western and non-Western cultures. Lastly, it

perpetuates the cycle of social injustice by privileging one community's ideals over others. A religious peacebuilding approach for a multireligious context must exhibit an 'interreligious' dimension. This is where the novelty and significance of the interreligious dialogue lies. Interreligious dialogue approach to reconciliation embraces religious pluralism without getting into the 'interreligious' rhetoric, that is to say, the endless search for similarities and dissimilarities between religions. Instead, interreligious dialogue is an inclusive, non-competitive, and process-oriented rather than goal-oriented approach, which seeks to achieve, not consensus, but contact and communication between diverse people. Contact and communication are believed to be the key tools for identity reconstruction and relationship rebuilding in the aftermath of conflict contributing ultimately to the larger process of reconciliation.

To illustrate the role of interreligious dialogue in reconciliation, this research focuses on the experience of mass-violence and reconciliation in Bosnia and Nigeria. In Bosnia, despite five decades of communist rule during which all things religious were looked upon with contempt, elites used religion during the Yugoslav wars as a symbol of identity to stroke the fires of nationalism as well as indoctrinate the masses for ethnic cleansing and genocide. Throughout the crisis, the peacebuilding role of religious leaders remained limited to signing statements calling for an end to the conflict and a cessation of ethnic cleansing. Many scholars question whether religious communities contributed to the crisis or were at least part of it. Notwithstanding these arguments, it is clear that religious communities could have done more to end the hostilities and heal the wounds of war. Since the end of conflict, some efforts at interreligious interaction have taken place between the major religious communities at the grassroots as well as the elite-level highlighting the role of interreligious dialogue as a component of post-conflict reconciliation. These efforts have helped in raising awareness about the significance of interreligious interaction for moving towards peaceful co-existence of different ethno-religious communities in Bosnia (Coward and Smith 2004).

In postcolonial Nigeria, the relations between Christian and Muslim communities have been fraught with tensions, easily degenerating into communal violence (Umaru 2013). This phenomenon of violence and conflict traces its roots to the colonial and pre-colonial period

during which Nigeria witnessed the arrival of British Christian missionaries and the nineteenth-century wave of Islamic Jihad. Due to the legacy of the Christian missionaries and the Islamic fundamentalists, clashes have persisted through many generations between Christians and Muslims leading both communities to adopt a "totalising view of each other" in the present times (Iwuchukwu 2013). Interreligious dialogue efforts between the two communities have been going on for over a decade and a half in the backdrop of this volatile conflict. These efforts have emanated from both the elite and the grassroots level. They have played a small but not significant role in lessening local religious tensions in some parts of Nigeria and have helped in many instances to reconcile members of warring communities.

One of the major questions regarding reconciliation-aimed interreligious dialogue work is its effectiveness in actually changing psychological, social, and/or political situations. In this regard, dialogue efforts in both Bosnia and Nigeria face enormous challenges. In Bosnia, interreligious interaction remains to be coupled with peace building efforts within each religious tradition and community. Interreligious efforts also need to be effectively supported by diplomatic policies that do not downplay but work around the differences between the religious traditions. Furthermore, many internationally organised and aided dialogue efforts are misguided in their approach or serve the interests of other countries. In Nigeria, interreligious dialogue efforts have left out the African religious traditions to the extent that some scholars argue that in case of Nigeria, a dialogue is inherently exclusive, what is needed is a trialogue between Christians, Muslims, and Traditionalists. Interreligious dialogue has also disregarded the potential of women to contribute to peacebuilding. Finally, interreligious dialogue work is being marred by international contributions to radical Islamists and fundamental Christians who are keeping the flames of Christian-Muslim bigotry alive.

The overview of Bosnia and Nigeria gives a picture that is at once encouraging and daunting. The eventual goal of reconciliation — of how different ethno-religious communities in Bosnia can become true neighbours, of how Christians and Muslims in Nigeria can appreciate each other's cultural and religious differences — is still to be realised. But it must be noted that healing a traumatised society is a lengthy and challenging process. Recovering from war, hatred and terror in Bosnia or dismantling generations of separation, prejudice and

violence in Nigeria requires transforming relationships from the personal up to the societal level. As the history of both countries show, leaving injustice, hatred and suspicion unattended always causes a relapse into violence. But providing space for bringing people of different religious identities together in mutual respect and commitment can be an accomplishment in itself as well as a step in a long journey towards lasting peace.

Bosnia and Nigeria are two similar case studies significant to the research for three main reasons. First, both offer an unequivocal illustration of religion as a "double-edged sword" — it can foster peace but it can also legitimise violence — and this helps to explain why religion is a frequently overlooked dimension in international politics as also in peacebuilding. In the Balkans, the role of the church in abetting wartime policies is well known. What has received much less attention is the creative dialogue process that various religious actors are involved in since the end of the conflict. In Nigeria, while occurrences of religious violence form part of the daily news, only few efforts have been made to study the efforts of grassroots religious activists in leading the people towards peaceful co-existence.

Second, both Bosnia and Nigeria present a case of dialogical encounter between Christianity and Islam — the two religions supposed to be most emphatically clashing according to Huntington's thesis. An assessment of Christian-Muslim dialogue in these two countries would help in critiquing Huntington by illustrating how the world is moving towards a dialogue between civilisations and that religion can play a part in it by bringing people together for conversations. In Bosnia as well as Nigeria, interreligious dialogue is regarded as a peacebuilding exercise and not looked upon with suspicion because of the involvement of religious identities, ideologies and practices.

Third, Bosnia's experience of ethnic cleansing and genocide and the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia raises ethical questions about the relation between justice and reconciliation. The extent to which criminal trials facilitate reconciliation is not established (Clark 2011), but if justice is conceptualised as broader than merely criminal trials, then there is an underlying lack of justice in Bosnia, which is eventually detrimental to reconciliation. Bosnia's multiple transitions, from communism to

democracy, war to peace, and state-dominated to liberal market economy in turn provide a critical contextual backdrop for an analysis of the process of interreligious dialogue. Nigeria's long-standing tensions between Christians and Muslims, the lack of theological understanding between people of the two communities, the rigorous attempts at religious conversion by leaders of both religious communities and the imposition of Sharia law in the northern states creates a hostile environment for interreligious interaction. Yet, in this backdrop, activists who were formerly religious militants have taken the lead in transforming people's mindsets and propagating peaceful co-existence. Nigeria's experience of dialogical encounters in the midst of ongoing violence presents a crucial case for studying the challenges that are posed to interreligious dialogue by the socio-political context.

1. Grounding the Research in International Relations

Religion is an 'overlooked dimension' of the international relations (IR) literature. Religion rarely features in the major theories of international relations and when it is dealt, it is usually by way of seeing it as a subcategory of topics considered more important for academic investigation, such as society, institution, civilisation, or terrorism (Kabalkova 2000: 682-683). In the few cases that religion is dealt with directly, it tends to be portrayed as 'fundamentalist, extreme, radical, or militant' (Fawcett 2000: 2). Scholars attribute the disregard for religion in IR to several interrelated trends. First, the historic experience of Westphalia that has indelibly associated the establishment of the international order with the formal removal of religion, and rooted a lasting suspicion of involving religion in international affairs (Wilson 1982, Hamilton 2001, Hatzopolous and Petito 2003, Hurd 2004, Bellin 2008). Second, the major theories of IR are all based on assumptions that exclude religion as an important factor. Realism focuses on quest for power and wealth. Ideas, and religion as a subset of it, are considered to be secondary forces in this process—instrumental, but not causative. Liberalism recognizes the importance of ideas in international politics in the form of laws, institutions, and regimes that limited anarchy and fostered cooperation in the international system but it too largely ignored religion. Constructivists incorporate identity and ideas into the political construction of state objectives, but rarely make the study of religious identity or religious ideas central to their work (Checkel 1998, Philpott 2002). Third, the study of IR is greatly shaped by behaviouralism and the use of quantitative

methodology, and since religion is one of the most problematic variables to measure, it is conveniently ignored in IR (Fox and Sandler 2004). Fourth, IR scholars from positivist traditions have not been open to the incorporation of identity-related variables into their explanations even if these variables had high explanatory power because these variables have been regarded as a component of reflectivist/hermeneutic traditions (Sandal and James 2010). Because of these, religion has long been peripheral to the concerns of most IR scholars.

1.1. Religion in International Relations Theory

It is only recently, due to a series of internationally notable incidents involving religious ideology, identity and practices, that religion has steered its way into the mainstream of IR discipline. Bellin (2008) notes the recent interest of IR scholars in religious identities and values marks an advance over the realist dominance in IR. While this advance holds the promise of explaining many of the current political developments perplexing to scholars and policymakers, most of the new studies fall short of undertaking a puzzle-driven research that might shed light on questions of when and how religion matters in international affairs. This does not mean that the new literature is not increasing the understanding of the interplay between religion and politics but that these are areas that call further exploration. For example, the notion of religion as a tool for leaders and elites is rarely investigated in international relations theory. However, there is a body of theory that assess how elites can use other dimensions of culture to advance political motives. This literature, called instrumentalism, generally deals with ethnicity and nationalism. Instrumentalism posits that the reason why factors like ethnicity and nationalism assume importance in international relations is not because the actual goals of leaders are ethnic or national but because leaders have other political and material goals to achieve, in the pursuit of which they manipulate ethnic and national sentiments (Smith 1993, Moynihan 1993, Gurr 2000). One version of instrumentalism found within ethnic conflict theory, constructivism, extends this argument further. Constructivism posits that ethnicity and nationalism are not used but *created* to pursue political and material goals. Thus, constructivists disregard where culture originates from and how it impacts interests, and instead argue that ethnicity and nationalism are founded on the utility of pursuing interests and power (Comaroff and Stern 1995: 5-7). Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000) argue that instrumentalist and constructivist perspectives

can be applied to study the role of religion in politics. The instrumentalist view of religion posits that elites use religion as a tool in seeking their own power and for mobilization efforts. The constructivists' view on religion is applicable to politics and religion when leaders use new interpretations of their religions in order to justify their actions. Further, Hasenclever and Rittberger (2003) hypothesize that although religious differences are hardly ever a genuine source of political conflict; under certain conditions they shape conflict behaviour decisively in the direction of either escalation or de-escalation. Acts of violence require legitimation. Religion and religious leaders can provide such legitimation. But religious leaders may also deny legitimation and in such cases violence may not occur even if significant socioeconomic and political inequalities exist in societies. Primordialism, the theory that challenges instrumentalist and constructivist view of ethnicity's role in politics also provides insight into the influence of religious legitimacy on international relations. Primordialist theory posits that ethnicity and nationalism hold significance because they are closely associated with identity. They represent kin-like relations between individuals and this makes them politically relevant. This explanation for ethnicity and nationalism may be extended to religion as well because most religions predate ethnic and national identity and are often, but not necessarily, linked to ethnic and national identities (Kepel 1994). Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003) observe that primordialists and instrumentalists view the role of religion in world affairs from two theoretical standpoints: the politicization of religion as an inescapable threat to security, and as an enabling or mobilizing factor of interstate or intrastate warfare and as inimical to the resolution of conflict. Constructivists agree with instrumentalists that elites play a crucial role in the outbreak of armed conflict. But while instrumentalists suggest that ultimately determined leaders can manipulate religious traditions at will and that the justification of violence is at best a rhetorical but not a substantial problem, constructivists insist that religious traditions are inter-subjective structures that have a life of their own. Fox and Sandler (1994: 53) argue that the primordialist view of religion's role in politics is not incompatible with the instrumentalist and constructivist views. The instrumentalist argument that religion can be politically mobilized when politicians 'play the religion card' to push their policies does not imply that religion cannot become politically relevant through other means such as identity. Religion can contribute to identity that in turn can contribute to conflict. Thus, it is not difficult to believe that religious identities, be they

primordial or constructed, have an influence on domestic and international politics both as a primary motivating factor and as a tool for leaders and elites.

1.2. Huntington's Clash of Civilisations Theory and its Critiques

Since the formulation of Huntington's clash of civilisations thesis, there has been a vigorous debate over the validity of his argument. Huntington (1993a, 1996a, 1996b) proposes that in the post-Cold War era, conflicts will occur between the major world civilisations. The central defining characteristic of his civilisations is religion, and the reference to wars along civilisational fault lines is essentially conflicts between people of different religious identities. Huntington's concept of civilisation clearly overlaps with religion implying that the clash of civilisations debate is actually over the role of religion in international affairs. Huntington further argues that most violent confrontation is likely to occur between the Western and the Islamic worlds. Many scholars have critiqued Huntington's theory along several different lines. The debate is presented here is in the form of type of arguments that are posed in criticism of the theory. First, many scholars believe that the cause of conflicts in the post-Cold War will continue to be the same as the factors that caused conflict in the Cold War era (Ajami 1993, Gray 1998, Pfaff 1998). Similarly, others like Beedham (1999), Kirkpatrick et al. (1993), Halliday (1997), and Rosecrance (1998) argue that future conflicts will be based on the same national, historical and economic issues as conflicts in the past. Consequently, conflict will most likely occur within civilisations rather than between them. Second, many argue that far from clashing, the world is moving towards cooperation and integration, and a general reduction in conflict. Anwar (1998) and Tipson (1997) believe that factors like economic interdependence will facilitate world integration and lead world civilisations to move beyond conflicts. Ikenberry (1997) believes that for states to rise above conflicts, all that is needed is a commitment to democracy, free markets and the rule of law. Also, Halliday (1997) observes that civilisations have been born out of a historical borrowing and mixing of cultures so that is it not possible to identify distinct civilisational entities as Huntington does. Third, many scholars argue that Huntington overemphasizes the importance of civilisations thus undermining other factors that may foment or abate conflict. Ajami (1993) for instance remarks that Huntington underestimates the influence of modernity and

secularism and that economic prospect attracts people more than maintenance of traditions. Other scholars point to the importance of factors such as information technology (Barber 1998), military prowess (Rosecrance 1998), protracted discrimination (Senghass 1998), and economic power (Hunter 1998, Nussbaum 1997) as the defining feature of the post-Cold War world order. Fourth, many of the quantitative studies reveal trends that negate Huntington's thesis. Some studies show that intra-civilisational clashes are far more likely than inter-civilisational ones. In fact, inter-civilisational clashes have waned since the end of the Cold War. Henderson's (2002) study shows that economic growth, trade interdependence, relative material capabilities, alliance membership, and territorial congruity provide stronger explanations for international disputes than the notion of civilisational clash. Several studies find political factors to be more salient than cultural ones in both international war (Henderson and Tucker 2001) and civil war (Henderson and Singer 2000). Fifth, many scholars disapprove of Huntington's methodology: it is not clear what the world civilisations entail and what not (Pfaff 1998, Beedham 1999), there is no systematic analysis of the relation between civilisational controversies and political actions (Senghass 1998, Rosecrance 1998), and the cultural factors that Huntington points out as being unique to the West, are not cultural in nature nor are they unique to the West (Ikenberry 1997). Sixth, many argue that because Huntington's theory is popular among policy makers, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy (Hassner 1997a, Pfaff 1998, Tipson 1997). Similarly, Anwar (1998) and Gungwu (1997a) charge Huntington with instilling a fear of Islam in the West. If the Western policy makers get convinced by his predictions, then conflicts between the West and Islam would provoke more aggressive responses from the West, making conflict escalation more likely and peaceful resolution less common than may otherwise have been possible. Despite these criticisms, Huntington has his band of supporters. Marshall (1998) agrees with Huntington that the majority of the conflicts worldwide are along religious fault lines. Some of Huntington's critiques argue that the predictions of clash between the West and Islam may be true to some extent (Anwar 1998, Hassner 1997a).

In 1998, the United Nations adopted the resolution proposed by President Mohammed Khatami of Iran, designating 2001 as the year of the 'dialogue among civilisations.' Khatami's 'Dialogue among Civilisations' is considered a powerful rhetoric and antithesis of

Huntington's thesis. Examining Khatami's idea, Petito (2004) explains that dialogue among civilisations entails a rejection of power politics, a commitment to conducting international relations with morality, and the consequential reestablishment of the dignity of the human being. It also entails a belief that ideas and values, embedded in cultures and civilisations, inform in a determinant way all political processes on a continuum that runs from the individual to the state apparatus. Saunders (2001) finds the phrase 'dialogue among civilisations' misleading because dialogue takes place not between civilisations but people. Globalization has undermined the proposition that nation-states should be the primary actors to initiate a dialogue among civilisations, and made it not only necessary but possible to conduct dialogue at the inter-personal level. Moreover, dialogue does not imply a sporadic, one time exchange, but rather a sustained dialogue that builds an increasing agenda, develops a common body of knowledge, and inspires participants towards transforming relationships, and it is only through a sustained dialogue that a clash of civilisations can be eventually avoided.

1.3. *Reconciliation in International Relations Theory*

Many scholars from the subfield of conflict resolution believe that if dialogue can be a process by which confrontation between people can be constrained then dialogue can also be a process by which inter-personal and inter-group relations can be repaired in the aftermath of confrontations. Gay (2011) for instance believes that dialogue is a powerful instrument for reconciliation by way of determining how language crafts the memories of conflict. He says that reconciliation is founded on collective remembrance and the primary medium for expressing remembrance is language. To the extent that politics controls language, politics also controls memory. For this reason, while language can be used to facilitate remembrance, it can also be used to obscure memories. Similarly, while remembrance can be used to acknowledge past violence and overcome the resulting pain and alienation, the politics of language and remembrance can be used to shroud or even deny a genocide or atrocity. Dembinska (2010) talks about two ways in which the common past can be managed in deeply divided post-conflict societies for working towards reconciliation. On the one hand, all conflicting memories should be 'forgotten' and new constructions should be put in place if

enemies are to be reconciled (Devine-Wright 2003). On the other hand, the need for preventing forgetfulness is quintessential to the process of reconciliation. However, an intermediary way between the two views would be to appease conflicting memories through processes that transform myths, and this is where dialogical encounters can be helpful by providing antagonized parties with a platform for transforming myths. A similar trajectory for reconciliation is shown by Schreiter (2008). He tells that aggrieved parties can be reconciled by establishing a shared identity, where the search for a shared identity should incorporate reconciliatory elements already present in the local culture and take into account the amount of time that has passed since the end of conflict. The aim of dialogical encounters then would be to arrive at a shared identity. Lederach (2001) recognizes the centrality of relationships in reconciliation processes. He argues that if reconciliation is relationship-centric then the defining quality of practice is the building of trust. According to Lederach's view of reconciliation, the aim of dialogue would be to restore relationships by entering the domain of the internal world, the inner understandings, fears, hopes, perceptions and interpretations of the relationship itself. Hicks (2001) adds that the task of reconstructing relationship requires reconstructing identities or narratives because in identity conflicts, threats to identity have been described as one of the explanations why conflicting parties seem unable to come to a negotiated end to the conflict, even when there appears to be a way of accommodating the interests of both the parties. Hicks suggest that parties must undertake the critical task of self-examination after which only they should engage in dialogues to construct a mutually tolerable interpretation of the past that would eventually bring about their reconciliation.

1.4. *Conflict, Dialogue and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Nigeria*

Mooren and Kleber (2001) assess the impact of the war in Bosnia in terms of individual well-being and devastation of trust. They observe that the conflict has clearly impacted how people assign meaning to life and their surroundings. Bosnians will be frequently engaged in coping with stressful memories. Moreover, there is a relationship between the occurrence of disturbing memories and avoidance strategies, on the one hand, and trust on the other. According to Touquet and Vermeersch (2008) the discussions on state change in Bosnia should move beyond focusing on state and institution-building efforts by domestic and

international elites to investigating identity-forming process outside governmental politics where local non state actors can mobilize people along non-ethnic lines. Vukomanovic and Vucinic (2003) find that during the last fifty years, insufficient attention has been paid to conducting dialogue between representatives of various religious communities in former Yugoslavia. The gatherings of religious communities' representatives that took place, both before and after the conflict were more 'cosmetic' and politicized in the light of current events. During the conflict, churches did not make enough efforts to prevent, or at least react to the atrocities. Many scholars raise the question whether religious communities contributed to the problem, or were at least part of it. Notwithstanding these debates, it was obvious that religious communities can do more for healing the trauma of war. Goodwin (2006) points out that most of the people of the religious communities express confidence in religion's ability to respond positively to issues such as forgiveness, restoration, and healing and to transfer them to a larger context than personal religious faith. He therefore suggests that religion should be incorporated into peacebuilding efforts but through a bottoms-up approach as opposed to the top-down approach, which the international community is currently applying in Bosnia. Merdjanova (2009) outlines the various achievements and challenges faced by people and organizations that have been involved in interreligious dialogue in the Balkans. Interreligious initiatives in the Balkans have rapidly expanded to include such activities as official and informal meetings, issuing statements of shared commitments, research and publishing on tolerance in interreligious relations, women's initiatives, youth activities, artistic endeavours. Sterchele (2007) finds that the difficulties linked to the practice of interreligious dialogue are due to the lack of ritual forms, such as rules, ceremonial idioms, liturgy, and repertoires of action that are capable of uniting and integrating the various religious communities. He compares religious rituals with football rituals to show that neither of the rituals can exclusively be a factor for dividing people or uniting them.

Omotoye (2012) outlines the current situation in Nigeria. He finds that one of the major problems facing Nigeria in the last few decades is religious and ethnic violence. There is insecurity especially in the Northern states of Nigeria leading to frequent killings in these states and retaliation in the Southern states. The incidences of religious violence are disrupting the peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Christians in the country. The latest

threat to peace in Nigeria is the menace of Boko Haram, a radical Islamic sect responsible for killing many innocent people. Based on these observations, Omotoye attempts to advance reasons for the causes of and possible solutions to religious intolerance and violence in the country. His findings show that there is an urgent need for education and religious dialogue, so as to ensure peaceful co-existence in the country. Umaru (2013) argues that religion is a powerful impulse in human existence and it plays a paradoxical role in society as it both contributes significantly in shaping the spiritual, socio-political and economic lives of people and also acts as a source of conflict. The experience of interreligious conflict in Northern Nigeria challenges the claim of Islam and Christianity to be religions of peace. However, understood as closely intertwined with culture and custom of a people, religion can be central in the establishment of peace and conflict resolution within and between communities. Based on this premise, Umaru explores and presents the socio-political and theological resources available in Northern Nigeria for developing a consistent Muslim-Christian dialogue that can contribute to the peace building process. Ezegbobelu (2009) studies the micro nation states in Nigeria to show that the issues involved in interreligious dialogue cannot be analysed in isolation from other various societal variables as some scholars have done in the past. He demonstrates that religion and theological studies must be rooted in interdisciplinary approach and must pay serious attention to the local context. These contexts – societal variables including geo-historical, cultural, religious, local, national, artistic and global factors – play an indispensable role and provide the background for understanding, interpreting and evaluating human religious expressions. Wuye and Ashafa (1999) tell their story of transformation from being former religious militant leaders before 1995 to becoming activists for peace and reconciliation. Bitter enemies at first, they first met face to face in 1995 in an atmosphere of mistrust. But at the urging of a civil society leader, they agreed to try to work out some sort of understanding which resulted into a dialogue that helped them to overcome misconceptions and gain respect for each other. Apart from being co-authors in publishing, they launched two projects: Muslims and Christians Dialogue Forum, and Interfaith Mediation Centre.

2. Aims of the Research

This study has a threefold purpose: first, it explores the ways in religion, identity and conflict are related; second, it explains the main components involved in the process of reconciliation in the aftermath of mass-scale violence; and third, it seeks to conceptualise interreligious dialogue as an approach to reconciliation. Based on the theoretical framework thus developed, the study explores the conflict and peacebuilding context in Bosnia and Nigeria, and against that backdrop analyses the ways in which interreligious dialogue initiatives in both countries have contributed to reconciliation.

Interreligious dialogue is a worldwide practice whose modern history dates back to the late 19th century. It is a process which brings people together for discussions in a free and secured environment. In this way, it serves as a bridge between people to manage past memories collectively and engender deeper understanding and appreciation for each other. By devoting academic attention to exploring interreligious dialogue, this research aims to contribute to the newly developing literature within IR that looks at religion as a creative force in building peace as opposed to the conventional view of religion as a divisive element. While acknowledging that religion is undoubtedly a motivation or mobilising factor in many conflicts, the research explores religion's capacity to ameliorate the very conflicts it has helped in fomenting by being the basis for dialogue. Having said that, the research does not turn a blind eye to the limitations of the interreligious approach. It points out the shortcomings of interreligious dialogue and identifies the plethora of challenges faced in transforming conflicting positions. By highlighting these pitfalls, the research aims to demonstrate that interreligious dialogue is a difficult, often painful, endeavour that does not guarantee success. But when attempted with careful preparation and a clearly defined purpose, it can enhance mutual awareness, promote joint activities, and even transform relationships between members of warring groups. Moreover, only when limitations and challenges are adequately emphasised can the ground be laid for addressing them in future. In effect, this is a study of what works — and does not — in the field of interreligious dialogue. In the same spirit that scholars urge practitioners of this approach to not get carried away by unrealistic expectations or be dismayed by unavoidable failures, this research also tries to

stay focused on studying the developments and obstacles related to interreligious dialogue without undermining its potential as a peacebuilding tool.

3. Hypothesis of the Research

1. Interreligious dialogue can be an important step in the process of reconciling relations between hostile communities in deeply divided societies.

2. While interreligious dialogue has created awareness in Bosnia about the pragmatic importance of interreligious interaction, in Nigeria, it has helped in moderating local religious tensions.

4. Methodology of the Research

This research investigates the role of religion in conflict as well as peacebuilding. As a result, some methodological preferences are implicit in the research design. The research makes use of the constructivist and primordialist paradigms of international relations theory. The term 'constructivism' holds different meanings for different scholars. But there is a consensus that constructivism focuses on 'capturing processes of mutual constitution' (Klotz and Lynch 2007). Therefore, it is a theory especially valuable for studying identity-related variables, which are shaped by the social context (Sandal and James 2010: 5). However, presenting constructivism as incompatible rather than complementary to other identity-related theories would mean disregarding the explanatory power of those theories. Indeed, constructivism is compatible with many theories, including primordialism (Barkin 2003: 338). Therefore, this research adopts a framework that examines the role of religion alternatively from the constructivist and primordialist perspectives depending upon which approach has greater explanatory power for the cases under study.

To explore whether interreligious dialogue can facilitate reconciliation between communities after violent clashes, the research draws on deductive reasoning. Based on the premise that interreligious dialogue generally leads to a more peaceful social environment because it promotes an ethos of tolerance and trust, the research proposes that in societies that have undergone communal violence, the practice of interreligious dialogue can foster reconciliation between the hostile communities.

The research undertakes the case study method to understand how interreligious dialogue has taken place in some of the conflict-ridden and post-conflict societies. Attention would be paid to understanding the salience of religious identity and religious legitimacy in the process, the role of religious actors, and the nature of issues and activities undertaken.

The primary materials on which this study is extensively based were collected personally through fieldwork in Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the course of the study (2012-2017), two visits were made to the field — a month long visit in April 2015 followed by a three-month visit in October-December 2017. The field trips covered the capital city of Bosnia, Sarajevo and the smaller cities of Jajce, Travnik, Tuzla and Mostar in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Zvornik and Srebrenica in Republika Srpska. The bulk of interviews were conducted in Sarajevo. The interviewees ranged from Muslim and Christian clerics, civil society workers, professional researchers to students and laypersons. Some of the notable profiles of interviewees include: persons who lived in Sarajevo during the four-year long (1992-1995) siege of the city; persons who lost family members in the war; persons who participated in combatant during the war; persons who had to flee the country due to the war and returned after several years of living abroad; persons who were raised by parents traumatised by the war; foreigners living in Bosnia from before the outbreak of the war; and fellow foreign researchers. Apart from interviews, visits were made to museums dedicated to memories of the Bosnian war, assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo, and the socialist history of Bosnia. Two visits were made to the Mostar (divided between Muslims and Catholic Croats) for taking photographs (included in the study) and visiting museums dedicated to war remembrance. A day-long visit was made to Srebrenica to visit the Potočari genocide memorial and take photographs (included in the study). Apart from these, numerous walks through the streets of Sarajevo and conversations with strangers in cafes helped in gathering a general picture of the impact of war on Bosnian society.

The case study of Nigeria is based on primary materials available online such as newspaper articles, documentaries, short films, video interviews, transcripts of interviews taken by journalists and researchers, reports produced by international organisations. Fieldwork in Nigeria was not possible due to lack of funds and the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity for

foreign nationals. However, the effort has been to compensate for the lack of fieldwork by engaging deeply with the materials available online.

5. Structure of the Research

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the principal idea, aims, methodology, structure and hypothesis of the study. Chapter 2 explores the reasons why religion has remained peripheral to the study of IR. It examines the various ways in which religion plays a role in international politics, particularly in conflict and reconciliation. Chapter 3 deals with reconciliation and interreligious dialogue. It captures the situation of the aftermath of collective violence: widespread trauma; concealment of violence; and denial of violence. It explores at length the key components of reconciliation: truth-seeking through criminal tribunals and truth commissions; justice-seeking through retributive and restorative mechanisms; patterns of collective and individual remembrance; and ethics of forgiveness, and relationship of forgiveness to truth and justice. Finally, the chapter deals with interreligious dialogue approach to reconciliation by, first, discussing the traditional normative theories of interreligious dialogue and their critique, and then introducing the ethical approach to interreligious dialogue. Chapter 4 deals with the case study of Bosnia. It overviews the causes of the Bosnian war with an emphasis on the role of religion. It studies the socio-political backdrop in which reconciliation efforts have been taking place for the last twenty years, namely institutionalisation of ethnicity, weakening of democratic values, and waning of secularism from the public sphere. Further, the chapter studies two interreligious dialogue initiatives in Bosnia — Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Pontanima Interreligious Choir — and examines the ways in which they have contributed to reconciliation. Finally, the chapter explores the contemporary social and political challenges obstructing the path of reconciliation. Chapter 5 deals with the case study of Nigeria. It analyses the historical factors that gave rise to communal tensions in Nigeria, namely the British policies of promoting North-South regionalism and Christian-Muslim rivalry. It then analyses the contemporary causes of instability in Nigeria: Christian-Muslim strife; weak federalism; implementation of Sharia in the northern states; and religious violence. Thereafter, the chapter looks at one intereligious initiative in Nigeria — Interfaith Mediation Centre — and explores how they have impacted local people's perceptions. Finally, the

chapter overviews the current security threats in Nigeria, namely the oil crisis in the Niger Delta and religious violence by Boko Haram. Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarising the previous chapters, and presenting the main findings of the study. The chapter makes a case that devoting new scholarship to exploring the ways in which interreligious dialogue promotes reconciliation can produce approaches and ideas that can actually be highly germane to the construction of a culture of peace in societies emerging from violent pasts.

CHAPTER II

Debates on Secularisation and Religion in International Politics

There has always been a discomfort among scholars of International Relations on the question of religion. Many associate religion primarily with fundamentalism and perceive religious differences as dangerously violent. The academic mood reflects in practice as well. Policy makers in many countries are panicked by the potential explosiveness of religious ideologies, movements and institutions. Overall, the interference of religion in contemporary politics, including domestic and international politics, is considered undesirable. Despite this, scholars almost unanimously agree that religion has noticeably reappeared in the recent decades at the individual, community, state and international levels. The so-called religious resurgence has perplexed them precisely because they have not been able to explain it through the traditional approaches in the field. However of late, a small but growing number of scholars are re-examining International Relations in the hope of offering some insight into the phenomenon of *religion in politics*. Their endeavours have not only brought religion out of its confinement in the peripheries of International Relations but also thrown into question one of the most celebrated achievements of modern politics, the Peace of Westphalia. This chapter is geared towards partaking in the same effort: understanding the role of religion in contemporary politics by revisiting some of the most influential strands of thought about religion.

The conventional wisdom in International Relations is that religion was inseparable from politics in Europe in the high middle ages. The importance of religion peaked especially between 1517, the eve of the Protestant Reformation, and 1648, the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia. The Westphalian settlement ended sectarian violence in Europe by exiling religion to the private sphere and removing forever the hand of religion in politics. The public sphere became autonomous or sovereign and secularism arose as the dominant discourse in international politics. In this way, Westphalia marked the birth of the sovereign state system as also the moment of secularisation of the international system. Westphalia created the 'modern' world order — one in which religion was privatised, political authority was secularised and the separation of religion and politics was formal.

Since modern international politics traces its origin to Westphalia, the separation of religion and politics is considered the foundation of academic International Relations. Consequently, the religious-secular bifurcation is taken as the natural starting point for social scientific enquiry in the field. The mainstream International Relations theories presume that religion is a private affair. Realism focuses on the quest for power and material capabilities among states. The influence of religion on state behaviour is for the most part ignored. Neorealism studies the role of international structure in determining state behaviour. Factors such as power, technology and geography are considered to be the primary factors that constrain state behaviour. Marxist traditions dismiss social norms and practices as unproductive. Religion is treated at best as a consciousness that is removed from reality and extraneous to the process of production. Liberalism recognises the importance of interests in international politics in the form of laws, institutions, and regimes. But liberal theorists believe that religious ideas in the public sphere tend towards violence. Constructivists study how international norms influence state behaviour. However most of the social constructivists treat religion as private by apriori assumption.

The failure of International Relations theory to understand the complex relationship between religion and politics and to explain the recent resurgence of religion flows from a single massive assumption: that Westphalia irrevocably privatised religion in the course of creating the modern state, thus rendering politics secular. The realist, liberal and constructivist traditions and their many variants are founded on the notion that since religion was divorced from politics at Westphalia, the possibility of the presence of religion in modern politics is ruled out at the very beginning. These traditions believe that modern international politics, built on the Westphalian idea of autonomy of the public sphere, operates on a consensual disaggregation of religion and politics.

The Westphalian assumption of a clear separation between religion and politics has for the most part remained uncontested in International Relations theory, and this is why subjects like religion that are considered antithetical to secularism remain beyond its grasp. Moreover, the unchallenged political authority of secularism in the field has made the division between religion and politics look permanent, even natural. Scholars study religion and politics as well-defined categories that hardly undergo social and historical change. The private and the

public are also seen as neat spaces that do not as such overlap. However, the two striking trends in international politics mentioned at the outset — the propensity of religion to fuel conflict and the noticeable resurfacing of all things religious — demand that the relationship between religion and politics be re-examined and to that end, the Westphalia be called into question first. This chapter primarily undertakes this task: it cross-examines the religious-secular bifurcation in international politics by reassessing what was achieved, and lost, at Westphalia.

This chapter addresses three questions: first, how did secularisation come to dominate International Relations and what different traditions of secularism organise the norms of international politics; second, why is the secular orientation of International Relations in crisis, that is to say, why does the privatisation of religion and the clear separation of religion and politics no longer hold; and third, if attempts are underway to displace the secularist monopoly in International Relations, then which alternative perspective can explain how processes, institutions and states come to be regarded as religious as opposed to secular, and what are the implications of the religious-secular demarcation in politics. Through an exploration of these questions, the chapter makes three arguments. First, Westphalia did not drain politics of its religious content, even though it created a secularist discourse in politics which held religion as a private affair. On the contrary, the principle of secularisation that dictated the post-Westphalian international order was arguably founded upon religion, in particular Western Christianity. Second, secularism helps to generate particular conceptualisations of religion and politics and seeks to enforce the division between them. Since secularism itself is politically conditioned, the boundaries it defines of the secular and the religious are also political arrangements. Thus, secularism cannot be considered a stable category, nor can religion a fixed identity and ideology. Both are sites of contestation and continual change. Neither has a constant or clear-cut relationship to politics. Given the variety of ways in which religion is making its way into politics, the secular-religious or the public-private dichotomy is untenable in contemporary times. Third, International Relations theory has a propensity to proclaim secularism as the proper organising principle of interstate relations. There is a collective belief among state actors that rules, norms and practices emanating from secularism are universally applicable and morally correct. In this way,

secularism represents a political culture; it also wields moral legitimacy through an informal consensus. Any deviation, especially in the form of non-secular politics, is an unexplained anomaly. Moreover, because of the Western Christian roots of secularism, International Relations theory disregards non-Western and non-Christian perspectives on religion and politics. Secularism's exclusivity is the reason why manifestations of religious differences are indiscriminately likened to conflict and increase in religious bearing on politics is seen as a undesirable development. Although both attitudes are not wholly unfounded, they expose the uncompromising tradition in International Relations of upholding the 'dark alliance' between religion and war and not venturing beyond the politics and religion divide. In defiance of this, many scholars within social sciences have tried to understand the dynamics between religion and politics in alternative and useful ways. This research will try to import some of those approaches to International Relations in the study of religion and peacebuilding.

1. The Secularisation Debate

Secularisation as a topic of theoretical analysis gained attention in the 19th and 20th centuries. The debate was primarily over whether 'secularisation,' a process entailing increasing separation of religion from politics and public life, and relegation to the private sphere, was indeed occurring in the modern world or was it merely a deception. Though more than a century and a half old, the debate on secularisation has been kept alive by evidences of major social and political changes in recent times. Some aspects of this debate pose interesting, rather realistic, challenges that may lead to valuable insight into the changing uses of religion in the early 21st century. Refreshing the classical debate on secularisation may be a good starting point for studying religion in international politics. Among the plethora of ideas that have influenced the notion of secularisation, four broad strands of social thought that have been pivotal in forming the contemporary theoretical and analytical category of secularisation. These include structural differentiation, empiricism and scientific ideas, liberal thought, and Marxism.

The idea of structural differentiation posits that civilisations and cultures pass through various stages in the process of evolution. Evolutionary change usually involves transformation of functions and meanings from the simple to the complex. The consequence of evolution for religion is that its regulatory role in the public sphere dies away, and instead

it assumes a more limited function of legitimating the existing model of society. Thus, from being at the centre of society and politics, religion increasingly becomes a separate institution with a demarcated set of functions outlined by secular or non-religious authorities.

Empiricist and scientific ideas contain the force to lay bare the inconsistencies and weaknesses of religion and to bring in its place new ways of thinking grounded in human reason and experimented knowledge. In *The Natural History of Religion*, for example, David Hume explained that people's belief in the supernatural is an irrational stance — their refusal to give up religious dogmas in the face of the vagaries of life. In his controversial work, *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin proposed that all creatures were created through the process of evolution and natural selection, and humans had evolved from apes. These ideas mounted a severe challenge on the theological beliefs that humans were created in the image of God and therefore they were superior than all other creatures.

The works of liberal thinkers like John Locke and Stuart Mill echoed the importance of autonomous political order and individual rights in society. Locke argued that both individuals and society would stand to benefit if, what he regarded as the "natural right of human beings," was respected i.e. their freedom of choice in matters of the form of polity they want to live in, the political leaders they want to be ruled by, the occupations they want to engage in and the religion they want to follow is maintained. By the mid-19th century, Mill argued that a liberal state was one which did not impose any particular form of religion on its people and remained neutral towards all religions.

A combination of Hegelian idealism and Marxist materialism went a long way in smothering religion in the public eye. A radical strand of Hegelianism argued that the rational side of human nature was progressively realising itself through use of reason and the spirit of Christianity. For making the rational being complete, it was necessary to do away with obstacles that religion posed. An equally radical explanation of the influence of religion was put forth by Marxists. They believed that religion was the instrument through which the ruling classes of every social formation oppressed the working classes. The rulers or the capitalists had corrupted and co-opted religion. The need for religious ideologies in a society would be dispensed with, if class-based hierarchy and exploitation were destroyed. When capitalism would be wiped out, religion would no longer enjoy the mysterious hold over

people. This would be the socialist world, priding itself in self-critical socialist theory and social practice because the liberal philosophical approach was clearly insufficient to address the root cause of human misery — social class oppression. It was only when the Marxist-inspired state socialism and communism was turned into a political movement that the power of religion in the private and the public sphere was seriously damaged.

Freudian psychology believes that religion is a 'neurotic by-product' of the struggle between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Religion provides an insight into the responses which psychological conflicts generate in people and into conditions in which neurosis could either become intolerable or be overcome. Freud believed that individuals had the capability of outgrowing and thereby overcoming their neurotic dependence on religion by applying maturity and rationality. For an evolving society and culture, maturity and rationality would mean that religion would be left only as a minor weakness of individual and collective psychology. Freud believed that scientific ideas also produced anti-religious sentiment in individuals and collectives (Hamilton 2001: 64-76).

The current debate on secularisation is primarily between two schools of thought. On one hand is the idea that the contemporary world is characterised by secularisation, which entails the progressive decline of influence of religion in the public sphere. On the other hand is the idea that religion is not abdicating from the public sphere. Instead, its significance is continuing or, in many cases, reviving.

1.1. *Religion in Decline*

The claim that religion is progressively declining from societal sphere has several finer strands. Furseth and Repstad (2006) call them collectively as moderate theories of secularisation, as opposed to extreme theories of secularisation. Extreme secularisation theories came into circulation through the works of 19th century sociologists, like August Comte (1798-1857) who believed that cultures and societies passed through distinct historical stages during which they were constantly evolving. In the earliest stage, dominated by theology, events were explained as the works of Gods. In the intermediate or the metaphysical stage, theological explanations were replaced by philosophical ones. Finally, in the modern stage, theological and philosophical explanations gave way to strictly scientific

and empirical explanations. The modern epoch is characterised by the optimistic belief in scientific progress. Such progress provides the basis for individual thought and would bring about the gradual death of religion in industrialising societies. This hard form of secularisation is no longer tenable in contemporary social sciences. Few scholars, if any, envision a world without religion. Far more popular is the moderate position, which sees importance of religion as gradually diminishing, as against altogether disappearing, due to the progressive liberation of societal sectors from the clutches of religious institutions. In other words, when various elements of society, one by one, free themselves from religion, hold of religion over society cannot but decline (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 74).

Anthropologist Jack David Eller (2007: 252) explains that the catalyst for such religious change is social diversity. During the transition from the medieval to the modern period, social diversity had an important role to play in two ways. First, in the process of historical evolution, as societies came to include different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and of course, religious groups, no religion could play the role of uniting them into a single moral community. The separation of the state and church in the 17th century was one of the consequences of social diversity and plurality (Bruce 2002: 17). Thus, pluralism severely threatened the monopoly of religion. Second, within religions itself, there came about schisms resulting in fragmentation of religions into sects and denominations. In Western Europe, the Catholic Church was uncontested throughout the ancient and medieval periods. But with the coming of the Protestant Reformation its monopoly was shaken forever. The triumph of Protestantism paved the way for the proliferation of alternative churches and ushered an era of competition and fragmentation in the sphere of religion as each individual was free to interpret religion now that the Catholic Church was no longer the sole arbiter between God and man (Bruce 2002: 10). The tendency to splinter is not unique to medieval Christianity, other traditional religions of the world faced the same and in no lesser intensity. Since individuals were effectively free to choose from an assortment of ultimate meanings as they deemed right, the attitude in society toward religion was one that has been called a consumer approach: "if you build a church, people will come." This also means religious institutions and leaders had a strategic role to play in enlarging and consolidating their congregations (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 7).

Norris and Inglehart (2004) categorise various moderate theories of secularisation according to economic theories of demand and supply. (1) *Demand-side Theories*: Demand-side theories focus on the behaviour of masses. They explain how industrialisation and modernisation have gradually eroded religious beliefs and practices despite the attempts of religious leaders to spread and popularise religion. Demand-side theories are subdivided into rationalisation and functional differentiation (functionalism). (i) Rationalisation theories argue that the age of Enlightenment gave birth to the rational human who has discovered the mysteries of nature through reason and science, thereby making religious teachings and interpretations redundant. (ii) Functional differentiation theories argue that the expansion of the welfare state in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries in Western Europe replaced the core social responsibilities of religious institutions such as monasteries, parish churches and priesthood with specialised non-religious organisations and individuals. Stripped of its social significance in industrialised societies, religion will gradually wither away. (2) *Supply-side Theories*: Supply-side theories focus on the behaviour of religious institutions. They discuss how public demand for religion is more or less constant, therefore any variation in the influence of religion across regions is due to the change in level of activism (evangelising and proselytising) of religious institutions. Supply-side theories are subdivided into rational choice theories and religious market approach. (ii) Rational choice theories argue that it is not demand for religion by the public that determines the course of religious change but active supply of religion by religious institutions. (iv) Religious market theories argue that there is a strong competition between various religions and religious denominations to rally religious consumers to them. This pluralistic competition leads to rivalry between religious institutions preserving indirectly individual freedom of choice in religious matters.

No single theory has been able to dominate the discussion on secularisation. Scholars have pointed out flaws in every one of them. Regardless of this, the conceptual maps offered by these theories lead to four ideas that can help in understanding the influence of religion in the public sphere, where public sphere includes politics, nation, state and civil society: (1) rationalisation; (2) differentiation; (3) modernisation; and (4) pluralism. Much of the academic debate on religious change in the public sphere takes place in either agreement or disagreement with these ideas or developing alternative explanations to them. These ideas form the background on which almost all theories of secularisation or religious change stand.

Therefore, if one intends to build a case for the significance of religion in present times, one cannot afford to ignore these debates.

1.1.1. Rationalisation: Loss of Faith

The process of rationalisation is defined as "the methodological pursuit of efficient relations between means and ends. In some cases this may also mean the pursuit of efficiency as an end in itself" (Beckford 2003: 47). In industrial and advanced industrial societies, rationalisation includes several aspects. (i) It intellectually challenges the foundations of divinely revealed knowledge such as the conceptions of heaven, hell and afterlife, and questions the legitimacy of interpreters and guardians of sacred truth such as theologians and religious heads. (ii) It re-examines the efficiency of institutions and organisations that are widely established as sacred, such as churches, monastic orders and religious brotherhoods, and raises doubt over the ability of religious agencies to compete with secular ones, for example, religious schools versus non-religious schools or religious charity agencies versus secular charity agencies. (iii) It projects religious ideas as 'mystifications' and 'false consciousness,' and strikes at the cultural roots of religious beliefs such as individual and community rituals and ceremonies with religious symbolism. In all these ways, rationalisation corrodes the religious beliefs and practices that are revered as values in themselves or as ways of life justified by sacred tradition. Thus, rationalisation ultimately has a secularising effect.

The principal statement on the secularising effect of rationalisation was put forth by Max Weber. Weber claimed a straightforward relation between the decline of religion and the general process of rationalisation in modern societies. He argued that the rise in capitalism and industrialisation and the emergence of a bureaucracy based on reason and regulation had led to a shift in social attitudes from one based on religious values to one informed by rationality. Weber argued that the shift in attitudes was by and large an inescapable process. Religion could exert influence occasionally — in times of instability — but there was no scope for religion to play a central role in modern societies ever again (Ekstrand 2000).

The demand-side theories of secularisation based on the works of Weber and Durkheim have

been thoroughly dissected by critics. Bruce (2002) summarises Weber's rationality thesis of secularisation:

> Industrialisation brought with it a series of social changes — the fragmentation of the life-world, the decline of community, the rise of bureaucracy, technological consciousness — that together made religion less arresting and less plausible than it had been in pre-modern societies. That is the conclusion of most social scientists, historians, and church leaders in the western world (Bruce 2002: 36).

Scholars who are sceptic of Weber's thesis point out three problems. First, Weber's thesis is based on the assumption that rational thought and religious lifestyle are incompatible. As far as theory is concerned, scholars say there is no necessary incompatibility between religion and rationality. The pursuit of scientific knowledge and rational inquiry can well be accommodated into a worldview founded on religious values. Interestingly, scientific outlook can actually perform some of the same functions as religion, for example, strengthening faith in the laws of nature and predicting the future through astrology and related sciences. One even notices the rise of a generation of technology worshippers, a phenomenon termed as 'cyber-religion' (Brasher 2001, Dawson 1999). Moreover, except for the growth of industrialisation and bureaucracy, Weber does not provide a systematic analysis as to why religion does not have a central role in modern society and why reason and instrumentality have become prevalent (Furseth and Repstad 2006: 85). Rationalisation may be prevalent in the public sphere but individuals and communities can continue to embrace religious values in their private or social lives and in the spaces in-between formal secular organisations. This phenomenon is not so much an issue of resisting secularisation but rather co-existing with it by maintaining religious hold in spaces where it may be effective or indeed, necessary.

Second, rationality — an efficient relation between means and ends — is a relative concept and therefore cannot be suitable for all situations. Where rationality promotes dangerous or destructive ends, it cannot be seen as a satisfactory basis for social and moral order. Zygmunt Bumann (1989, 1991), one of the sharpest critics of modernity writes in the context of the Jewish Holocaust by the Nazis that the systematic mass persecution of a particular ethnic community requires a rationally thought out plan and rational means of executing it. The modern state not only owns the means but its obsession to create a utopian social order, prompts it to put these means to use uninhibitedly and indiscriminately. This has made the modern state, the foundation of one of the worst evil of our era — genocide. In other words,

in determining how 'rational' is rationality, one has to look at the ends towards which it is directed. If the ends are de-humanising, there can be chances that the pursuit of rationality can create conditions in which religious values can get reasserted.

Third, Weber's core postulation concerned the growing role of Protestantism in the Western world as a result of the arrival of the Industrial Revolution. Since these developments occurred few centuries ago, empirically examining their contemporary validity is difficult (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 8). The evidence of secularisation by rationalisation is supposed to be found simply in the sustained claims about the replacement of religious thinking and behaviour with rational and goal-oriented ideas and practices.   For example, the wave of scientific thinking that has swept through the fields of medicine, education, engineering, astronomy and so on are seen as clear indications of the receding influence of religion (Beckford 2003: 48). But if rational worldview creates disenchantment toward belief in the divine, then in those societies that pursue science most intently, religious influence may be expected to be the least. Evidence across the world suggests otherwise (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 9). Secularisation is "a taken-for-granted ideology rather than a systematic set of interrelated propositions," notes Hadden (1987: 588).

1.1.2. *Differentiation: Loss of Function*

Differentiation perspective envisions societies as functionally integrated systems of social institutions and processes. When the systems face internal struggles or external pressures, the processes of differentiation of the functions of the societal institutions and processes take place. Differentiation theories inquire about the circumstance in which one or more institutions determine the way the overall system evolves: how relations between different institutions are regulated and how the system is kept intact in the course of interaction with other systems. On the subject of religion and secularisation, questions of functional differentiation have produced very interesting responses. Religion, in advanced industrial societies, is considered to have lost its traditional role of sanctioning the ideal set of values for social and personal conduct and legitimising the entire system. It is also less effective in fostering communal identity and binding social institutions into a whole.

The idea of the loss of purpose for religion as a consequence of functional differentiation among institutions in the evolution of a society finds its origin in the works of Emile Durkheim (1912). Durkheim believed that religion does not simply embody a set of beliefs, but also comprises of a set of actions such as prayers, confessions, feasts, fasts, and ceremonies associated with festivals, change of season, birth and death. These rituals and ceremonies are integral to the society because they have the effect of maintaining social cohesion and stability and are believed to benefit society as a whole. Durkheim argued that industrialised societies have undergone the process of functional differentiation because of which they have different professionalized institutions and persons for taking care of the multiple needs of society. For example, the monopoly of the church as lawgiver and priests as scholars and healers is replaced by the rule of government and courts and setting up of universities and hospitals. Having lost several of its social functions, religion remains at best a residue of spiritual and moral values.

Durkheim's ideas were developed further by Thomas Luckman, Peter L. Berger, Bryan Wilson, Peter Beyer, Steve Bruce and Karel Dobbeleare. Luckmann's (1967) idea was that as societies advance, various social sectors gradually extricate themselves from religious control. Economics requires its own laws governed by rational calculations of gain and loss. Sciences such as medicine and physics require methodological research and experimentation. Politics requires strategic decision-making. In sum, all sectors run on their own logic — in economics, money is to be earned, in science, truth is to be proved, and in politics, power is to be pursued, leaving no room for the invisible or the divine hand to do its work.

Berger's works are interesting because he changed his position on the debate in the later part of his career. In his early works, he claimed that traditional religious institutions are declining with the advancing of modernisation, and religion would soon become a strictly private affair. The relationship between religion and politics, Berger (1967) explained, as a problem of legitimation. Historically, religion has been the instrument for legitimation i.e. justifying the social system in a way that institutional set-up is made meaningful and acceptable for the individual. Globalisation de-instrumentalises religion so that in modern Western societies religion no longer plays the role of legitimising the public sphere, but retreats to the private realm. Berger saw this change as almost inevitable. In later works however, Berger retracted

on this position and claimed that modernisation can also create condition in which religion can resurge or counter secularisation. He argued that religion could be a force for social unity, collective action and political mobilisation, even in modern societies (Berger 1967 as explained in Repstad and Furseth 2006: 97).

In his early works, Wilson (1992) emphasised that secularisation is characterised by change in the behaviour of the public sphere towards religion. If religion no longer legitimises political power in the way it once did, plays a lesser role in cultural life, and is no longer used to interpret natural and worldly events, then it is reasonable to speak of a pervasive mood of secularisation. In short, secularisation means that religion has become less important for the functioning of the public sphere. Religion becomes a private matter and any attempt by individuals or social institutions to influence individual belief would be taken as an act of interference into private matters.

In analysing globalisation, Beyer (1994) argued that religious movements have two probable responses to globalisation depending upon the nature of the religion. Some sections of traditional movements, such as Catholicism or Islam react against globalisation, resisting global forces and trying to preserve old identities. Liberal theological movements such religious environmentalism that attempt to espouse world culture celebrate globalisation and diversity. In the context of globalisation, many religious traditions, both old and new ones, can find a fertile ground for renewed influence in the public life (Beyer 1990). Bruce (1996) makes a similar point by viewing globalisation as a dilemma for religious institutions in modern liberal societies. They can adopt either a strict fundamentalism or a self-effacing liberalism. Both options can or cannot work.

Dobbeleare (1981) made a creative attempt to synthesise the various demand-side theories of secularisation initiated by the work of Weber and Durkheim. He suggested a model of secularisation comprising of three analytically distinct but overlapping dimensions of the phenomenon: laicisation, religious change, and religious involvement. Laicisation refers to the declining importance of religion in society. Religious change involves alterations in theology and orientation of religious institutions as well as beliefs of individuals. Religious involvement refers to changes in the rapport between the individuals and religious institutions. Dobbeleare regards laicisation as the most important aspect of secularisation but

also points out that it is not a uni-dimensional or irreversible process (Dobbeleare as explained in Beckford 2003).

The functionalist or the functional differentiation theory dominated the academic debate on societal development in the 1950s and 1960s but went out of use gradually. Functionalists assume that like religion, secularisation, is a complex but unitary phenomenon that simply requires conceptual clarification or better specification of a measurable reality (Beckford 2002: 45). They argue that societies progress along a single path of socio-economic development ending in the creation of modern secular democracies. Critics claim that collectives such as communities, societies, nations and states do not travel along a single historical path of progress, but experience multidimensional changes (Hagopian 2000). One of the changes could be a loss of the social purpose of religious institutions due to functional differentiation in society. However, this does not necessarily mean that the moral and spiritual function of religion is also lost, it could in fact become more important. For example, the ascendance of Islamic parties in Pakistan, the popularity of Evangelicalism in Latin America or outbreak of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria, all point to an ascendance of religious influence in society and politics. At the same time, there has also been a decline in public support for religious institutions. Thus, rather than envisioning a steady and inevitable erosion of the spiritual purpose of religion, critics argue in favour of a more complex historical pattern characterised by a range of factors such as charisma of spiritual leaders, political mobilisation of religious movements and impact of historical events that produce varied pattern of changes in modernising societies.

A similar argument is put forth by Chaves (1991) that secularisation is not necessarily the outcome of functional differentiation in society because either the claims about the integrative role of religion in the past have been exaggerated or religion continues to perform functions at other levels of the society. This means instead of integrating the society into a religious community, religion can play the role of providing moral guidance, spiritual meaning and identity to individuals and collectivities. The same position was held by Mol (1967), who argued that functional differentiation does not warrant secularisation because when religious organisations give up their political and social functions in the process of evolution, they still are free to harness their spiritual power.

In line with the critics of rationalisation theory of secularisation, critics of functionalism argue that if functional differentiation is indeed an indication of the decline of religion, one could expect the affluent European countries to be least religious. However, that diverse patterns of religiosity exist in these countries suggests otherwise (Tschannen 1991, Greeley 2003). Reviewing the patterns of church-goers in Europe, Stark (1999) writes, "The evidence is clear that claims about a major decline in religious participation [in Europe] are based in part on very exaggerated perceptions of past religiousness. Participation may be very low today in many nations, but not because of modernisation; therefore the secularisation thesis is irrelevant" (Stark 1999: 260). Hadden (1987) adds that secularisation thesis came into vogue because of the social and cultural milieu of the times, the 1950s and 1960s — it fit the evolutionary functional model of modernisation. Claims of secularisation kept circulating not on the basis of empirical evidence but neglect of contradictory evidence. Those who claim the occurrence of secularisation exaggerate the level of religious practices in Europe's past as well as underestimate the power and popularity of religious movements in the present era. Hadden believes that the way religion remains part of politics is one of the many evidences that secularisation has not unfolded as predicted.

1.1.3. Modernisation: Loss of Tradition

Beckford (2003) defines modernisation as "a complex configuration of social, legal, economic, political and cultural processes of change that favour (a) the strengthening of states within an increasingly co-ordinated system of international states; (b) the systematic pursuit of economic productivity and power at national and international levels; (c) the application of theoretical knowledge and practical skills to the enhancement of productivity; (d) the establishment of democratic forms of politics and government; (e) the valorisation of education and freedom of thought and expression; (f) the dominance of urban centres of residence and work, and; (g) the cultivation of notions of individual subjectivity, dignity and rights" Beckford (2003: 49). According to Beckford's definition, modernisation entails a critique of traditional bases of authority, belief in reason, desire for freedom and a dynamism in many areas of life. Given the equation between religion authority and political authority in ancient and medieval times, he argues that modernisation has led to the destabilisation of religious authority in favour of political authority. In other words, modernisation has induced

secularisation. Wilson (1985) and Wallis and Bruce (1992) also propose a strong causal link between modernisation and religious decline. They claim that religion has lost its power to legitimise the political, social and moral order after the coming of modernisation. Modernisation has also led to the privatisation of religion. In short, irrespective of levels of individual religiosity and attempts to mobilise religious sentiments in politics, society and economy, the overall presence and influence of religion is on the decline. They proceed to argue that unless someday religion visibly regains control over some of the major social institutions, the ongoing drive toward secularisation as a result of modernisation cannot be halted. They clarify however that decline of religion is not universally true nor is it inevitable: decline of religion can be reversed where religion is an important marker of collective identity such as in communities fighting for their physical or socio-cultural survival.

1.1.4. *Pluralism: Loss of Monopoly*

"Pluralism is a situation in which there is competition in the institutional ordering of comprehensive meanings for everyday life. Historically, such competition generally succeeds a situation in which it was more or less absent. That is, pluralism is a consequence of the historical process of de-monopolisation" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The original view on the relation between religious pluralism and secularisation was that pluralism fosters competition which erodes religious faith and thereby generally leads to secularisation. The phenomenon of religious pluralism in the West was thought to have been initiated in the 16th century when Western Christendom fragmented as a result of the Protestant Reformation, and diverse sects and denominations were born that emphasised alternative beliefs and doctrines. This event ended the monopolistic hold of a single church, sowing the seeds of doubt and mistrust (Berger 1967).

Drawing on the supply-side theories of economic market, which explain the competition between firms as a struggle for attracting consumers, religious market theorists of secularisation argue that because of the presence of more churches, sects and denominations, religious organisations and leaders have to expend increasing amount of time, energy and resources on attracting individuals and communities toward their congregation. The result is a religious marketplace characterised by open competition. When there are several absolute truths completing for adherents, people start exploring and comparing, and are less willing to

give up whole-heartedly to any one religious view. Diversity and competition lead to self-criticism, doubt over the truthfulness of religious traditions and a growing interest in interpretation and theory of knowledge (Manheim 1936 as explained in Berger 1967). Since the religious market offers several alternative spiritual paths, a discomforting fact emerges that people chose their God rather than God choosing them. In this way, pluralism has a secularising effect in and of itself (Berger 1967).

The concept of pluralism originated in the United States, where religious de-monopolisation was brought about by a series of historical events that forced several religious congregations to find ways of co-existing with each other in a social system that none of them could dominate. When there are several congregations vying for religious consumers and none of them can monopolise the religious market, a common strategy that develops among them is to ensure that the competition is at least free. This is usually achieved by weakening the political support for congregations. As politics is kept separate from religion, in time religion becomes privatised and religious freedom and tolerance are de facto established. In circumstances where religious tolerance is legally imposed, religious expression of individuals and groups is constrained by law, also amounting to the privatisation of religion. Under both circumstances, the scope of propagandising religion, especially through proselytising is minimised and religious involvement in the public sphere is drastically cut down.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) believe that a religious market orientation, whether historically propelled or legally imposed, is not the only condition under which pluralism emerges, nor is it the most important in contemporary society. The global historical force giving rise to pluralism is rather secularisation — the progressive liberation of societal sectors from the dominance of religious meanings and institutions. Secularisation has its origin in 'a peculiar Western development of religious ideation, that attained maturity with the development of modern industrial society and continues to be diffused today as the latter becomes a worldwide phenomenon. Secularisation entails pluralism *ab initio*, even if there is as yet no plurality of institutionally organised meaning systems, insofar as there appears a minimal choice between saying yes or no to the previously dominant religious tradition. Bruce (2002) adds that religious diversity has a secularising effect when society is liberal and egalitarian,

because in a democratic and equality-oriented society, religion cannot be imposed but must be chosen by individuals, and often it is not chosen at all. Thus, pluralism exists today not only in the United States, where there is a system of co-existence among religious denomination, or countries of Western Europe, where a previously dominant church is in competition with alternative religious strands and secular movements, but also in so-called developing countries with an increasing number of people liberating themselves from traditional religiosity (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

The religious market approach of the supply-side school has been debated for several decades now. While the earlier view of market approach was that secularism entailed religious pluralism, the later views by contrast argued that pluralism and competition between creeds does not have secularising effects, but instead lead to vitalisation of religion and greater religious mobilisation. In sum, organised religion thrives most in an open-market system characterised by diversity and competition, and the greater the pluralism, the more the involvement of religion in the public sphere.

The most ardent advocates of the causal relation between pluralism, competition, and religious growth are Finke and Stark (1988). The link they propose though is not a straightforward one. They explain by drawing an analogy with the liberal market orientation in which tough competition raises the amount of resources and energy spent by rival industries, while monopoly tends to stifle the growth of the very industry that enjoy the monopolistic status. To illustrate the point, they study the continuing vitality of religion in the American public sphere against the stagnant state of religion in Northern Europe, particularly the Scandinavian countries (Finke and Stark 1992). In the United States, the constitutional separation of church, freedom of religion and the sheer diversity of religious congregations has caused religion to remain significant regardless of fluctuations in religious beliefs and practices of individuals and groups. The older congregations such as the Catholic, Lutheran and Episcopalian churches have been challenged by new Evangelical churches that demand more time and energy from the followers but also give a more engaged religious experience. By contrast, in the Scandinavian countries, the national or established churches are patronised by the state through monetary concessions and regulations on rival churches. As happens with state-owned industries or monopolistic corporate houses in the economic market — their

growth gets stifled by rigid bureaucracies, lack of innovation, and technical inefficiencies — in the same way, societies where a single congregation dominates through government support, the appeal of the congregation diminishes among the public because the clergy bank upon state privileges and do not invest fresh resources in continuously reviving the faith of the followers. The growth of the congregation stagnates and the participation of the public also becomes half-hearted (Finke and Stark 2000).

Other theorists who associate pluralism with religious growth put forth different explanations. One line of argument is that because the nature of demand among religious consumers is varied, having a variety of faiths on offer will lead to an increase in the gross consumption. Diversity and competition lead to specialisation of the market in such a way that there is something for everybody, so in totality more consumption of religion takes place (Furseth and Repstad 2006: 91). Another line of argument inspired from social conflict theory is that in a pluralistic environment, religious creeds become conflictual in the sense that they orient themselves in opposition to the others. This leads to increase in religious involvement because opponents struggle for their cause (Finke and Stark 1988).

Even after debating the later position on pluralism for over two decades, critics claim that some of the empirical findings are inconsistent with the supply-side hypothesis that pluralism fosters religious participation. For example, in Southern Europe, despite the monopolistic hold of the Catholic Church, many other congregations continue to be strong (Verweij 1997). Some seek to rescue the supply-side thesis by arguing that the monopolistic position of the Catholic Church in Italy is prevented by internal competition (Diotallevi 2002). However, the weight of evidence suggests that a positive relationship between pluralism and religious participation is found only in very limited cases and even then mostly in modern contexts (Chaves and Gorski 2001).

Various theories of secularisation, in sum, envisage a steady shift from religious era in public affairs to a secular era (Martin 1965). While all of these theories compete for credibility, it is hardly academic to subscribe to any one of them. However, it may be pointed out, as a way of harmonising the discussion, that by stressing different characteristic features of the process of historical development, all theories depict various aspects of reality.

1.2. Religion in Transformation

Another version of the secularisation thesis holds that evidence for declining participation in conventional forms of religious organisations, beliefs and practices does not necessarily indicate secularisation. Instead, the decline is indicative that religion is undergoing transformation in that it is acquiring new and different forms at various social levels (Beckford 2003: 52). The idea that all forms of faith, spirituality and belief are abdicating from modern society is unfounded, what is really happening is that religion is metamorphosing and thereby exerting influence in the public life in unexpected ways that bear little resemblance to the traditional forms and roles of religion (Lyon 2000: x). In other words, secularisation involves the decline of traditional religious beliefs and the displacement of the authoritarian power of religion. But religion as the kingpin of people's being — their source of understanding about life, death and afterlife — cannot decline unless these fundamental questions itself stop puzzling humans (Bellah 1970: 227). Religion is changing, but there is also a very consistent part of religion that provides a broad context of stability within which the change is taking place. Thus, the 'metamorphosis of religion' is a more accurate description of the religious change taking place since the middle of the 20th century. All the evidence advanced in favour of the decline of religion amount only to show that religion is dynamic; they do not show a conclusive shift in society either toward or away from religion (Hadden 1987: 603).

There are three major strands of argument that attempt to explain the phenomenon of change in the shape and character of religion. One of the popular ones is Davie's (1990) thesis called 'believing without belonging.' It argues that the rates of people's participation in religious congregations, especially in Western Europe have gone down. This, however, does not show that people have given up their faith but that there is less church attendance and less involvement in the activities of religious communities as compared to earlier. Gill (1993, 1999) reasons that unless people's religious views are continuously conditioned by collective worship and participation in religious congregations, they are likely to be unorthodox and individualistic. In this argument, Gill echoes the spirit of early and mid-20th century theorising about the shift from particularistic to universalist values and from collectivism to individualism. Davie (2001b, 2001c) observes that at a time when non-religious voluntary

organisations are finding it difficult to perpetuate their membership, religious organisations easily continue to gather followers and play a significant role in the public sphere. Thus, when religion is concerned 'believing' and 'belonging' need not go hand in hand, and therefore where religion is said to be declining, it is not so much actually disappearing as being 'redirected' (Davie 1990: 462).

Davie's attempt to challenge classical secularisation theories in the name of 'believing without belonging' is not without criticism. As Davie contends that statistics in support of decline of religion cannot actually be taken as evidence of religious change in favour of secularisation, in the same way, other scholars, in their turn, point out that the evidence suggested by Davie in support of the metamorphosis of religion are not conclusive indicators of a changing balance between believing and belonging. For example, it is not clear how Davie's claim that levels of subscribers to central doctrines of Christianity are decreasing and subscribers to un-canonical religious views are increasing is related to increasing rates of those who believe without belonging. Further, scholars find the comparison between religious institutions and non-religious voluntary organisations asymmetric because in many of the countries of Western Europe, the churches enjoy state patronage and constitutional privileges. Finally, there are religious congregations in Western Europe where both believing and belonging are strictly demanded. For example, the conservative evangelical and pentecostal churches insist on integration of belief and practice as well as, if necessary, take disciplinary measure to control deviant or dissident behaviour (Beckford 2003: 55).

The second major strand of argument in the transformation of religion school is Hervieu-Leger's (1986, 1993, 1999) thesis that the dismantling of the Roman Catholic Church's organisational structures, mainly the religious orders and the priesthood mark a restructuring of religion, though not necessarily a shift toward secularism. The reasoning behind this argument is that the declining authority of religious institutions, in the context of modernity, created circumstances under which, people were impelled to construct their meanings of life individually and freely. In other words, the enfeeblement of collective morality imparted "a colossal measure of freedom" to individuals. However, choices of people do not mark a drastic break from the past. Instead, it is informed by collective memory — the wealth of

religious and cultural memories bequeathed across generations. Thus, individual faith today though freely arrived at, bears the characteristics of older religiosity.

The third important strand of argument that rejects the classical secularisation thesis is the claim that even if formal religious organisations have retreated from the public sphere, unofficial forms of religion continue to play an important role thus showing that religion has not declined but restructured itself according to the changing needs of the modern society. Historically, the distinction between official and unofficial forms of religion has not been fixed — its location has been dependent on the struggle between religious leaders, secular authorities, and public interest. In modern society, unofficial religion refers to expressions of religion alongside formal religion or overlapping with it. Unofficial religion is not necessarily a secondary form of religion, rather it is a worldview in its own right, the influence of which may appear to increase as rates of participation in official religion declines. The phenomenon of unofficial being resilient and continuously evolving in the rapidly changing socio-political conditions of the 21st century is taken by some theorists as evidence that metamorphosis of religion is a more appropriate description of the contemporary religious change that is secularisation (Hornsby-Smith *et al.* 1985, Bailry 1997, Cipriani 1989).

1.3. Limitations of Secularisation

There are two threads that run common in most theories of secularisation. First, the trajectory of social change they assume for post-Enlightenment Western Europe is a unilateral one. This means all advanced and functionally differentiated modern societies move on a single path that brings about the progressive marginalisation of religion. Certain special conditions may slow down the rate of marginalisation, but cannot check the eventual death of religion. All modern societies will, therefore, ultimately become institutionally irreligious. Second, the focus of their study has been exclusively on Western Europe — some narrow it down further to North Western Europe — giving the understanding that post-Enlightenment Europe contains the 'lead societies,' and all other societies are on the path of approximating the condition of Western Europe (Martin 1991).

The outcome of the first assumption is that the historical complexity surrounding the process of societal development is treated with relative insignificance. Oftentimes, manifestations of

religion are regarded as epiphenomenal i.e. something else in reality. By ignoring historical conditionality of social change and selectively eliminating religion as epiphenomenal, secularisation theories obliterate important facts that may give valuable insight into the discussion on secularism. For example, the movements that have taken place over the last two decade in the Baltic and South Caucasus, namely Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, aim to invigorate national identity by revitalising elements of local tradition such as language. At the same time, these movements aim to salvage religious traditions lost under communist rule. Thus, these enterprises combine nationalist and religious goals. When viewed from the perspective of social movements, however, they may seem as primarily nationalistic projects with religion as only an aspect of nationalism (Martin 1991).

The focus on Western Europe leads to, on one hand, a negligence of the processes of modernisation in non-Western societies, and on the other hand, a tendency to regard Western Europe as the epitome of modernity. Naturally, other cultural areas, especially those with religious presence, are seen as being caught in time and left behind in the race for modernisation. The regions of the Middle East and North Africa, for instance, oscillate between secular tendencies reflecting European influence and religious voices demanding for Islam to pervade all walks of life. In countries like Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia, there is a perpetual tussle between those who want secular values in governance, law, education etc. and those who want Islamic morality to dictate policies of public institutions. In Sudan, the tussle exists between those who want Islam with a minimum pluralistic outlook and those who want an uncompromising Islamic orientation of state and society. In many Islamic countries of the world today, post-Enlightenment secularism is as much of an alien ideology as representative of European colonial domination. Islam, on the other hand, is native and an integral part and long-time associate of the history of the land. Therefore, in the era of modernisation, when no one can afford to be left behind, these countries may be seen as desirous of modernising in their own way: through incorporation of a triumphant religion, rather than submitting to foreign control by importing another's ideas (Martin 1991).

The study of the effects of religious nationalism in modern secular states, therefore, points to the need to disaggregate secularism and examine its diverse historical trajectories and

complex relation to religion in different historical and political circumstances. Taking his cue for continuing the inquiry into religion and secularism, the following two sub-sections are devoted to identifying some of the broad processes that affect religious change in modern societies and see how these processes might be mutated, abated or intensified by specific historical conditions of different cultural areas, and examining the trends of religious change in non-Western societies and see how far they have replicated the European secular model and to what extent they have taken their own paths (Martin 1978, 1991).

2.   Debating Religion and Secularism in Western Society

In his academically acclaimed exposition on 'cultural violence,' Galtung (1996) expresses the idea that in social sciences, many a times, the obvious phenomenon escapes notice because the phenomenon permeates our lives, we are too used to it and scare consider it a subject worthy of fresh attention. He illustrates the idea through a study of the forms of violence present in our society. One form of violence, named direct violence, is that committed by identifiable individual or collective actors. Direct violence can be made out easily because it consists of discrete events. Another form of violence, termed structural violence, is that taking place everyday in the form of institutionalised policies and practices of the social system. Structural violence does not get noticed easily because it consists of situations rather than events. For example, policies of the government that are advantageous to one group and disadvantageous to another comprise a situation of structural violence, yet this situation is so interwoven with practices of the government that they do not appear as violence at all. When structural violence is legitimised through ideologies or belief systems, such that direct and structural violence seem justified in the light of ongoing developments, the situation is one of cultural violence. Religious belief systems have the potential to impact all three forms of violence.

Galtung believes that patterns of contemporary political behaviour may be traced back to ideas and value systems rooted in the past of a civilisation. But because these ideas are rooted in the past, their influence is precluded from the development of modern ideas. However, such a past, which he calls 'deep culture,' remains alive in the 'collective

subconscious,' and it is here one must resound to discover the continuity of ideas in civilisations. The same thought is echoed by Osiander (2000):

> A civilisation exists only historically, that is in time as well as in space, because it has a collective memory specific to it. If we accept that social systems are collective mental constructs, then a given civilisation cannot escape from, but will always be conditioned by, the historical experience stored in its collective memory. The premise that the collective memory of the civilisation continues to condition it is of course especially plausible in the field of belief system (Osiander 2000: 761).

It is in this light that the search for the origins of modern secular ideas must begin in the study of beliefs systems present in the ancient Western world because it were these values that conditioned subsequent historical developments in the West. The two major systems of religious belief that most dramatically influenced Western civilisation are the Graeco-Roman religion and Christianity.

2.1. The Classical Period: The Religious and the Political in Western Antiquity

Thoughts moulded in the ancient Graeco-Roman world between the period of 10th century BCE and 5th century CE influenced Western sociological and political thought far more prominently than is commonly acknowledged. One of the ideas exhibiting Graeco-Roman influence is secularisation. Graeco-Roman religion contained several libertarian values that are today considered the embodiment of secularism. Graeco-Roman religion was also highly distinct from its successor religion, Christianity, in terms of beliefs, and, more importantly, in its orientation towards the state and the state's attitude toward it. But since secularisation is premised on the Enlightenment spirit of a clash between the Catholic church and the state, pre-Christian religions are by instinct treated as yet more orthodox than Christianity and, therefore, irrelevant to the study of secularism.

Borrowing from various definitions of religion, the role of religion in a society may be summarised as two-fold: to be a psychological trove for responding to people's spiritual questions and needs; and to be an instrument for cementing the social order and give certain people control over the system. One of the unique aspects about Graeco-Roman religion is that it lacked the function of social and political control. The Greek Gods had an unflattering character — they were powerful and eternal, but they also committed mistakes and indulged in excesses. Thus, they possessed an uncanny resemblance to humans, the reason for which has never been adequately explained. With this type of religion, there was no concept of a

divinely inspired code of behaviour, as was handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai. People were to respect gods, but not necessarily imitate them because they exhibited the same flaws as humans. Worship consisted only of public rituals such as elaborate prayer ceremonies, processions and sacrifices. There was no concept of rewards and punishments equivalent to the Christian notion of heaven and hell where men and women were destined to go based on divine judgement of their deeds. There was also no divine intervention in the creation and maintenance of the social order; focus was squarely on humans themselves. Unlike Christianity, where god was said to have created man in his own image, in Graeco-Roman tradition, it was openly acknowledged that myths about gods were the creation of poets. All this does not, however, imply that people were free to do as they pleased — in fact there was a fair amount of mutual superintendence and social disciplining — but religious restrictions did not prevent dissident behaviour because there was no religious imposition on personal morality (Osiander 2000).

A second unique aspect of Graeco-Roman society is that religion did not play the role of cementing the social order. Unlike some of its contemporary major civilisations around the world, namely the Egyptian, Babylonian, Chinese and Indus Valley civilisation, Greek and Roman civilisations were not founded on the banks of great rivers. Their agriculture was not dependent on complex irrigation systems, the establishment of which required coercive rule. As a result, their social and political orientation was one that precluded coercive rule. Thucydides writes in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* that city-dwellers owned farms in the country-side and remained self-sufficient for the most part. Society was dominated by independent farmers who did their own fighting as well as catered to their religious needs, without letting either sector be taken over by a specialised group. Later, mercenary soldiers happened to do most of the fighting, both in the Hellenistic and the Roman empires, but their social status remained conspicuously low. Priests though never formed a separate class in society, unlike the Christian clergymen. Representation in political decision-making bodies was far from equal, and structural violence existed in the form of slavery, but the citizens, the so-called free men, were precisely that — free, not subjects. Further, the Greek and the Roman empires enjoyed high degree of internal order, so that there were no police forces. Armies, including the standing armies, were usually stationed on the frontiers. Thus, in the

ancient Graeco-Roman world, though political order was based on oppression of the majority by a handful of privileged elites, there was no acceptance of coercion and the attempts that were made to rule by use of force were short-lived. Therefore, religion was never a tool for coercing the public into abiding to the social and political order. Graeco-Roman elites did not use religion for wielding political power or claiming social status (Osiander 2000).

A third aspect that distinguishes Graeco-Roman religion from it successor religions is the severely limited role of priesthood. The political elites of the Greek and Roman empires had a significant contribution in this. They not only did not harness religion to defend their status, they actively tried to curtail the power of the priesthood. Priests enjoyed some measure of political influence as they could express their approval or disapproval of proposed measures, but overall, the priesthood was kept under strict control of the secular authority. Between the 2nd and 1st century BCE, the more the Roman society became refined, mainly through Greek influence, the more its priesthood declined.

Another reason why the priesthood was prevented from wielding power is because Graeco-Roman religion did not have any holy scriptures whose interpretation could be monopolised by the priesthood. In ancient Hindu society, the class of Brahmans commanded extraordinary social status precisely because they held the key to all theological knowledge and were supposed to be the only path through which common man, including even the king, could liaise with god. The notion of the afterlife was also such in Graeco-Roman religion that priests could not threaten the commoners with eternal damnation on account of not performing religious obligations. It was believed that with death, the soul would invariably descend to the underworld. It was therefore not important how life was led because the destiny after death was already ascertained. The notion of redemption also did not exist in the religion (Osiander 2000).

Another interesting aspect about priesthood in both Greek and Roman worlds is that women held religious offices and became priestesses of certain deities. Among the prominent female priesthoods were the Athena Polias at Athens, Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, Hera at Argos, and Apollo at Delphi. In her notable work, *Portrait of a Priestess*, Connelly (2007) describes a women's path through priesthood: "covering the preparation for the office, its requirements, and the manner of its acquisition; the performance of priestly duties, including costuming, the

use of ritual implements, and the execution of ritual; the exercise of priestly privilege and authority; and the commemoration of priestesses after death" (as quoted in Spaeth 2008). Connelly's study reveals that religious office was one arena in ancient Greece where women enjoyed privileges and power comparable to that of men. Female priestesses did not lead secluded or marginalised lives, as was previously thought — they performed rituals, wielded political power, received patronage and compensation, and were bestowed with honours, including in death. For a predominantly masculinist society, all this may be added to show a fairly liberal outlook towards religion. Also, the fact that women were barred from holding political offices, but could hold religious offices indicates that religion was subordinate to politics in the public sphere. The complexity of the priestesses' lives in antiquity threatens the simple lines drawn today between public and private, sacred and secular. It also bares the stark contrast of ancient religion with early Christianity, where women were largely excluded from priesthood (Osiander 2000).

A fourth trait of Graeco-Roman religion that pronounces its secular character is the ready acceptance of philosophers. Graeco-Roman social order was not based on religion and, therefore, not threatened by deviant thinking. In fact, religion was consciously kept weak because of which philosophers played an incomparably greater role in society than priests and theologians. The public was free to solicit the knowledge and advice of philosophers, a trend that was decisive in shaping Western civilisation. Philosophers were not compulsively atheists or irreligious, nonetheless, philosophical knowledge was generally secular and libertarian. Philosophers were divided into schools, which competed with each other in a peaceful, plural and purely academic fashion. Philosophy, like religion, was also never instrumentalised for the purpose of social control and remained only a popular provider of ethical and spiritual guidance (Osiander 2000).

The Hellenistic period, from the time of Alexander to the rise of Rome (323 BCE - 31 BCE), was also a time a drastic political and social change. The old system of *polis* (city-states) was giving way to the *cosmopolis* (world society) as Greek civilisation came into contact with new and far away empires in Persia and India. With the crumbling of the traditional closed community of city-states, individuals were impelled to create new thought processes to explain their experiences and address existentialist questions. To respond to this difficult

situation, some took refuge in founding or adopting new multicultural movements and potentially universalist cults, while others took the recourse of nonreligious or secular philosophic schools, which avowed to freedom from suffering, anxiety and fear or pain and death. "The philosophic schools appealed to thinking individuals who were not satisfied by the shortcuts that myths and magic had to offer" (Otey 1997: 16-17).

Four philosophic schools or secularist theories namely, cynicism, stoicism, epicureanism, and skepticism, became pre-eminent. All of them were dedicated to the quest for understanding the individual's relationship to the universe. They represented "a clear-eyed resignation to chaos and uncertainty, and a conviction that reality, even painful reality, is preferable to living under false ideas," including religious ones (Hecht 2003: 27). (1) *Cynics*, under the influence of Diogenes, believed that the conventional social order based on the *polis* had failed, and the only way left for humans to attain happiness was to pursue complete individual freedom by adopting a natural way of life, same as animals. This involved not owning property, living in the open, moving around naked and so on. This way of life was of course asocial and scandalous, yet it was natural and free. Religious beliefs, as part of the conventional social order, were also rejected (Otey 1997). (2) *Stoicism* drew its inspiration from Socrates and cynicism. It professed strict rationality and realism in the sense that individuals were to be concerned only with that which was in their control. Individual happiness was deemed irrelevant, perhaps even unattainable. Emotions were imprecation of rational self-control. In the words of Bertrand Russell (1945: 269), the stoic's worldview was: "We cannot be happy, but we can be good; let us therefore pretend that, so long as we are good, it doesn't matter being unhappy. This doctrine is heroic, and, in a bad world, useful". (3) *Epicureanism* unlike stoicism held that in a cosmopolitan world, humans could not only be good but also happy. The main hindrance for attainment of happiness was fear: fear of pain and death, and fear of the gods. Since death was an inevitable end of sensations for all mortals, including the sensation of fear, there was nothing to be afraid of in death. And religion only enhanced the fear of death. As to the Gods, it was not certain whether they existed, and even if they did, they were least concerned with humans so that it was unwise to put faith in them and await their mercy. Epicurus is famous for his analysis of the two irreconcilable aspects of the gods, goodness and power:

God either wishes to take away evil, and is unable, or He is able, and unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils?

(4) *Skepticism*, founded by Pyrhho and Carneades, claimed that certainty was impossible to attain — really nothing could be known. But since uncertainty was always possible, individuals should give up the quest for true knowledge. It was possible for individuals to live in this condition — by avoiding firm beliefs and final judgements. In fact, individuals ought to live with uncertainty to attain happiness and peace of mind. Carneades went on to challenge all established notions of human experience and classical traditions relating to the Gods (Eller 2007: 258).

By contrast, Christianity rose with the support of the state. Constantine I (ruled 306 - 37 century CE) wanted to end internal dissent in the Roman world and become sole emperor of it. He embraced Christianity as the belief system that would unite western and eastern provinces of the Roman empire. At the time, Christianity was a three century old religion, popular among the plebeians and fighting tooth and nail with Judaism and Roman paganism. Constantine legislated Christianity as the state religion and endowed the church with extensive grants and privileges. The church became rich as well as came to enjoy the protection of the imperial court. In return, the church stood at the emperor's service — wielding the threat of eternal damnation, the church exercised a monstrous measure of control at the grassroots and state level. The church and state thrived on mutual reinforcement of policies, which often produced similar political behaviour in them. This amorous alliance of the church and the state continued till the medieval times.

A final point of distinction between religion in the ancient Mediterranean world and the Semitic faiths that followed it is that the former was non-missionising while the latter heavily relied on proselytism for their preservation and growth. In Roman society, Greek Gods were progressively incorporated and no effort was made to retain a distinctive Roman religion. The family of Gods was expanded with alacrity, and the Greek example was regarded as the natural authority. Foreign Gods were mostly co-opted. Lest some god might have escaped their notice, in the 1st century CE, Athens even had an altar dedicated "to the unknown god" (Osiander 2000, Price 1999).

Christianity, on the other hand, evolved from the start in competition with existing religions. Aggressive proselytisation was therefore endemic to it. The state was instrumental in instituting Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire, but mob violence played a no lesser part in bringing about the triumph of Christianity over rival religions. The historical picture of the early days of Christianity is very often misleading.

> We imagine the early church as peaceful and long-suffering. But this is to some extent a propaganda image created by writers affiliated with the church. In fact, christians tended to cause civic unrest wherever they appeared. From a very early point, their record in this respect is startling and unrivalled by any other sect or movement (Osiander 2000: 775).

After Christianity won the favour of the Roman imperial court in the 3rd century CE, the church resorted to draconian measures to eliminate non-Christian cults and unleashed ecclesiastical militants to coerce non-Christian populations to adhere to Christianity. The first to fall prey to this was paganism. In "a wave of terrorism" (Brown 1971: 104), Christian militias systematically destroyed the symbols, sanctuaries, temples and holy sites of traditional Graeco-Roman religion. But the traditional culture did not die as quietly as many historians would make believe; there was enormous friction between the new Christians and the old worlders. A chilling story is of the famous 3rd century mathematician and philosopher, Hypatia of Alexandria. A prominent scholar and teacher of her times, an ascetic who maintained distance from the church, and a commanding figure, who roamed the highest circles of society, she inspired awe and respect among men in a society that was overtly masculist. Owing to her position and reluctance to embrace Christian faith, a Christian paramilitary called the *parabalanai* brutalised and murdered her in full-public view. The death of Hypatia marked the end of the tradition of respect for philosophical knowledge. Remarkably, it also marked the end of Alexandria as a classic Roman metropolis and seat of cosmopolitan culture and learning in the ancient Mediterranean (Dzielska 1995). Another striking example is the destruction of Serapis at Alexandria (391 or 392 CE), a great shrine counted among the most magnificent structures of the ancient world. Militant missionising in the early Christian era did not spare the Jews either. Every one of Jewish place of worship was demolished. Jewish settlements were sacked and the foulest outrages were committed. There are multiple archaic sources that describe these scenes and confirm the extreme Jewish hatred among early Christians. Yet, the violence directed outwards was less than what went on within. The Christians had an impulse to see each other as heretics to be weeded out. "Any

attempt to draw a scale of religious violence in this period [337-425] must place the violence of Christians towards each other at the top," writes Brown (1998: 647).

From the sociological and political perspective, an important point emerging from this discussion is that Graeco-Roman society exhibited secularism not simply because social order was immune to religious domination or philosophical spirituality rivalled religious morality, but because religion and politics or religion and philosophy had their own spaces in the public sphere. Not the place occupied by religion per se, but the space left unoccupied by it is what lent a secular essence to ancient Greek and Roman societies. Also emerging from the discussion is that the dominant libertarian, so-called Western, values of today such as individualism, pluralism and freedom of choice are not legacies solely of the post-Enlightenment era; their origin is far more old and complex. If it may be recalled that post-Enlightenment Europe was still predominantly Christian then it is not far-fetched to reason that pluralism and secularism could not be the outgrowth of that period because throughout the medieval and pre-modern era Christianity was not only antithetical to libertarian values but also fiercely active in impairing their growth. A final noteworthy point is that Graeco-Roman society went through massive surgeries in becoming Christian, the least of which was brutal uprooting of traditional thinkers from both religious and philosophical branches and merciless desecration of historic idols, temples and sanctuaries. These torrential changes came about in ideology, culture and forms of political behaviour, including forms of violence. Some of these changes lived on in the subsequent social orders of Western Europe. What this hints at is that Christianity's 'monotheistic exclusivism,' absolute rejection of everything pre-Christian and anything non-Christian, heavily influenced the later European social orders and development of Western political ideas (King 1999: 37).

2.2. *The Late Middle Ages: Protestant Political Theology and Sovereignty*

The second important era that has decisively moulded modern Western political ideas is the period between 1517, the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, and 1648, the creation of Westphalia. On the eve of the Protestant Reformation, Europe was dominated by the Holy Roman Empire professing Catholicism. Its emperor exercised substantive powers over other European kingdoms. The Catholic Church held formidable powers and ensured the greatest possible religious uniformity in Western Europe. This situation amounted to a crisis for the

secular rulers of Western Europe as their sovereign powers was severely truncated. Protestant ideas shook away the medieval shackles of Europe by challenging all temporal powers of the church and the Holy Roman empire.

2.2.1. European Politics between Reformation and Westphalia

In the high Middle Ages, between the 11th and the 13th centuries, there was no territorial entity in Europe where the monarch enjoyed absolute powers. Over the next three and a half centuries, however, this scene changed substantially. Several monarchs, including those in Britain, France and Sweden managed to establish supremacy over the church. In Italy, a small group of sovereign states had survived for a century. Charles V conquered Italy in 1519, becoming the emperor of both Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. He had substantive powers over the vast realm from Netherlands to Austria. However, he did not rule as the sovereign within his territory as the church still held formidable powers. The church owned one-third of the entire land of the empire and one-fourth of the property of cities, from which it raised vast revenues. The archbishops and bishops held political offices. The church partially controlled education, meddled in public affairs, and monitored the religious behaviour of the state subjects. Charles V, having pledged allegiance to the pope, served to uphold the faith by discharging the dictates of the church (Kann 1974). After 1555, German princes enforced their faith within their own territories according to the principle of *cuius regio, egis religion* (whose the region, his the faith) stipulated in the Peace of Augsburg (Holborn 1959: 243-246). The treaty ended shortly afterwards owing to mutual dissatisfaction over the terms of the agreement. This engulfed Europe in war once again, expanding into the historic Thirty Years' War (1618 - 1648). The Thirty Years' War ended with the signing of the Münster and Osnabrück treaties, which together constituted the Peace of Westphalia.

The Westphalia served as the legal instrument for limiting the powers of the church and the Holy Roman Empire. In effect it bequeathed to rulers absolute powers within their territory. Following Westphalia, sovereignty became the norm in Western Europe and sovereign states emerged as the chief form of polity. States exercised monopoly over legislative, executive and judicial powers within their territory. Some scholars like Philpott (2000: 213) argue that Westphalia was revolutionary because it domesticated religion in European politics —

religion used to be the primary source of conflict in European politics prior to Westphalia, while after Westphalia, it ceased to play this central role. Post-Westphalian wars were fought for independence and break-up of medieval empires into nation-states. States also came to develop a standard of statehood by which only those polities that exhibited certain attributes such as a legislative (assembly, congress, senate, house, chamber, council, cabinet and so on) and were accepted as a part of the system of states. States opened diplomatic offices and developed practices appropriate to a system of states. At the heart of international diplomacy, lay the principle of non-intervention. Officially, the Westphalia peace lasted till 1806 — the year when the Habsburg Empire which encompassed the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved — but its normative stipulations endured and became solidified with the passage of time.

2.2.2. *The Social Power of Protestant Political Theology*

Between 1517 and 1545, European society experienced a deep-seated crisis in the form of religious tensions between advocates of a Protestant political order and advocates of a Catholic political order within a polity. Tensions often flared up into widespread violence. Historians have pointed out several social precipitants of this crisis, the most glaring of which was the corruption of the medieval church. Church's authority was strongest in Germany, which is also where the Reformation eventually broke out. Intellectual, and theological movements also influenced the Reformation. Christian humanism and nominalism, which were precursors to Reformation, were highly popular in Germany, Switzerland and the Low Countries of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg, where the Reformation came the earliest and most intensely (McGrath 1987). Some of the urban factors emphasised by Reformation scholars include economic interests of the rising bourgeoisie, increase in literacy, widespread use of printing press, and growing intensity of papal and imperial control (Wuthnow 1989).

The most decisive and immediate precipitant of the Reformation crisis was Martin Luther's political theology. Luther asserted that the Christian church was not a unified institution under the authority of a single person, the pope in Vatican — it was an aggregate of various doctrinally reliable local churches. Luther believed that God had made two separate realms for the people, one where the spiritual would dominate and another where the temporal. The

spiritual world was the site of meeting between Christ and the believer, while the temporal world was the place for political and social affairs. This was called the 'Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and the Two Governments.' Luther's cohorts demanded that the two realms be clearly separated such that religious elites would not be able to undertake political duties nor political elites be able to carry out ecclesiastical duties. In his political theology, Luther was influenced by late medieval theology, especially nominalism. He underwent a personal spiritual crisis, which also influenced his ideas.

Luther's ideas circulated first through monasteries, then through clergy and missionaries, and then to congregations. Ideas got disseminated surprisingly fast because of the use of two fairly news modes of mass communication — the sermon and the pamphlet. Sermonising acquired a new significance between 1517 and 1520 as pastors preached Protestant theology in churches, which came to be heard by people of all classes. At the same time, print media came into vogue as a tool of social movement. Over 300,000 copies of Luther's writing were printed on pamphlets and distributed in universities and by clerics, who then passed on the ideas by word of mouth. Both sermon and pamphlet became hugely popular among disobeying quarters of the society, including merchants, artisans, peasants, labourers, and nobles. But amongst merchant and artisan, who comprised the larger part of Protestants, they were most enthusiastically received.

The new converts attended churches where Protestant theology was preached. They conducted mass, confession and other sacraments according to the new theology, and ignored the commands and excommunications of the Roman Catholic Church. The more rebellious among them smashed idols, staged protests and rioted against the clergy. Through these defiant practices, they expressed their opposition to the central Catholic Church in Rome. Since the church's authority rested directly on the obedience of believers, the authority taken by surprise when believers turned defiant. Thus, defiant practice was a direct form of social power which the Protestants wielded (Philtpott 2000). The political translation of Luther's theological ideas also spelt dire consequences for the church — its excessive estates were to be confiscated, the archbishops and bishops had to relinquish their political offices, the emperor had to give up the authority to enforce religious uniformity within the polity, and ecclesiastical powers of the church and the emperor were ended. As the church was stripped

of its powers, secular authorities rushed to assume them. These prepositions implied that powers were to be divided between the secular and religious authorities. This was essentially leading to sovereignty (Cameron 1991). The church condemned Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521. In 1543, Charles V moved his army down the Rhine and began making plans for a holy war against the heretics and restore papal domination (Skinner 1978: 189).

2.2.3. *Protestantism and the Birth of Sovereignty*

Once the imperial army stepped in to defend the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church, Protestants had to necessarily take up arms against Charles V on behalf of the princes who allied with them, while rebelling against the princes who resisted. Reformers from all sections of the society offered their military services. Yet, this was not enough to fight the persecution of the church as well as the emperor. As a result, reformers turned to political elites like kings, princes, nobles, knights or magistrates to join hands with them to seize lands and wrest temporal powers from the church, and perhaps also fight the emperor. But the princes needed the means for doing so, and more importantly, a motive. The bargain which the reformers had to offer the princes was that if they converted, they could use the social power of Protestant ideas to appropriate church property, break up Catholic congregations and monasteries, repudiate Rome's doctrinal authority, appoint new church leaders and raise armies to fight the emperor. If they did not convert, they might still support the Reformation out of fear of an all-out rebellion by reformers, or because they saw a scope for gaining land and power by aligning with the reformers.

The princes effectively did not have much choice. Since the widespread conversion to Protestantism had turned the Reformation into a popular and intense movement, they could either join forces with the Protestants and benefit from it, or remain unsupportive and pay for it. Amidst the large-scale conversion to Protestantism, therefore, princes came to have an interest in sovereign statehood (Holborn 1959). From the perspective of the reformers, there was every reason to give full sovereignty to the princes because in them they could seek protection from the church as well as the emperor. Owing to prospect of the mutual gain, within a decade of the start of Protestantism, many princes began demanding freedom of action within their polities, enforcing doctrinal uniformity, improving the conduct of clergy, and monitoring the religious affairs of the public (Todd 1971).

The 1648 Peace of Westphalia is marked as the turning point of the history of Western European politics because it is regarded as the year when religion was privatised as a response to sectarian violence in Europe. Rabb (1975: 81) describes this tradition with the comment that after 1650 "one's church was to all intents and purposes irrelevant to one's foreign policy." Many International Relations theorists and political scientists, especially of the realist and liberal schools, close off inquiry into the role of religion in domestic politics and foreign policy at this point, assuming it to be the beginning of the inevitable process of secularisation (Luard 1992: 7). To believe that religion never again played a role in international relations the way it did prior to the Reformation is, however, a myopic view of historical events.

In *War and Religion after Westphalia,* Onnekink (2009) claims that even as the polities imbibed the normative principles of Westphalia, wars driven by religious considerations were endemic in Western Europe. Some conflicts were peripheral but had to the propensity to intensify into large-scale wars, such as the Russian-Orthodox Khmelnytsky Uprising in Poland-Lithuania (1648-1654), the religious violence during the Villmergen wars in Switzerland, and the widespread Protestant riots in Cévennes, south-central France (1702-1710) and Hungary (1703-1711). These conflicts acquire significance when considered against the backdrop of domestic religious unrest. In France, the Edict of Nantes (1598), which had granted substantive powers granted to the Calvinist Protestants (Huguenots) was revoked in 1685. By 1713, the Protestant church of France was all but destroyed. In Italy, the Protestant of Savoy (Waldensians) came under persecution from the 1690s onwards. In Poland-Lithuania, the Calvinist Protestant church had been flourishing until 1715, after which, with the formation of the Tarnogród Confederation, its influence was substantially reduced. In England, the Glorious Revolution (1688 - 1689) ended absolutist monarchy of the Catholic Tudors and replaced it with the constitutional monarchy of Protestant emperors and the rule of the parliament. Seeing the growing persecution of Protestants in central and eastern Europe, English Protestants also created the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (1698), an international organisations for supporting co-religionists (Nishikawa

2005). In Ireland, Catholic chieftains attempted to resist Protestant English rule by fighting the Nine Years War (1688 - 1697) during the Elizabethan period.

Onnekink (2009) argues that though these wars did not enlarge into international religious wars, they still suggest that the Westphalian states system was not entirely secularised as has been supposed in International Relations. Thomson (2009) comments:

> It is crucial to differentiate between a notion of 'wars of religion' and a more broadly conceived religious foreign policy. The ways in which religious language and ideas shaped political thinking were undoubtedly altered and transformed in the second half of the seventeenth century. Yet this was not a straight transformation from a religious pre-modernity to a secular modernity with 1648 marking the point of transition. Instead, the process was subtler. Protestants could easily convince themselves that they had adopted new ways of thinking about religious conflict but they were less sure that their Catholic opponents had abandoned confessional zeal. Thus, the process of change exhibited asymmetry with one side moving despite, or perhaps because of, the intransigence of the other. Indeed, the continued emphasis on Catholic zealotry was to become an important component of Protestant self-understanding. Consideration of Protestant identity, in turn, suggests ways in which current understandings of the nature of the Enlightenment need to be modified. Enlightened Protestant thinkers made arguments about the need for the state to stand above the church not from a position of strength but rather as an aspiration because they feared that in much of Catholic Europe the precise opposite was true (Thomson 2009: 47-48).

This exposition outlines five significant points. First, by demanding the abrogation of the church's temporal powers and bestowing of these powers to political elites within a polity, Protestant political theology encapsulated the concept of sovereignty because this clearly meant a separation of powers between the church and the state (Gedicks 1991). Second, the Protestant-Catholic struggle led to the growth of Western European polities on the lines of sovereignty. To respond to the Reformation crisis, polities embraced a non-religious state structure, expanded and took command of their militaries, developed state institutions to raise money, and invested in technological advancements. In this way, it was a religious war between different denominations of Christianity that promoted states to undertake measures of internal reform that indirectly portended to sovereignty. Third, Protestantism was preceded by other heretical social movement of the late Middle Ages such as the Lollard movement in England, the Waldenses in southern Europe and the Hussites in Bohemia, yet it was distinct from them because the earlier movements challenged the Catholic domination of Christian doctrines but did not provide an alternative proposition that would undercut the church's institutional powers. Protestantism, however, advanced the political idea of seizing power and wealth to weaken its religious domination and entrust them to temporal powers so that they would counterbalance the church. Fourth, Westphalia's ideational elements — end of the Holy Roman Empire's monopoly, creation of sovereign statehood, birth of Enlightenment,

and separation of church and state — had been gaining momentum for three centuries prior to 1648. Westphalia has an established historical continuity from the late Middle Ages through the Protestant Reformation to the Thirty Years' War. Thus, Westphalia was no exception to the rule of historical continuity, though it definitely marked a culmination of Protestant ideas. Fifth, the history of European politics after Westphalia shows that sectarian violence continued to characterise Europe even after 1648. Immediately after 1648, there are pause in sectarian violence for the next few decades, but religious consideration in foreign policy once again became pre-eminent from the 16th to the 19th centuries as demonstrated by the European campaigns of exploration, conquest, colonisation, and conversion in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. In the case of Spanish conquest of Americas, for instance, although the clear purpose was to find and acquire gold and silver, conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity was not incidental to the goal. But modern historical writing on these wars and their interpretation by International Relations scholars have drained out the religious content of these wars. Shakman Hurd (2008) argues that attempts to privatise religion in international relations were itself part of a process of philosophical and political manoeuvrings of the Enlightenment to manage religious wars in European politics.

2.3. *The Enlightenment Era: A Scientific Mentality and Christian Ethics*

The third era that shaped the Western world decisively was the period roughly from the mid-late 17th century up to the second half of the 20th century known as the Enlightenment. As mentioned earlier, there is no consensus among scholars about the precise time period of the Enlightenment. Gay (1966, 1969) suggests the years of the Glorious Revolution in England (1688) and the French Revolution (1789) as the beginning and end dates of the Enlightenment. He clarifies however that Enlightenment ideas did not originate only after 1688, they were circulating much before that. But they gained momentum after 1688 and their influence peaked during the 18th century. After 1789, Enlightenment ideas still prevailed their revolutionary force diminished owing to a change in the intellectual and cultural climate, which had originally given birth to these ideas.

Enlightenment impacted all aspects of human endeavour and brought far-reaching changes. Two of the developments resulting from the Enlightenment had an especially important role in the formation of Western cultural and political identity. The first is the development of a

scientific mentality, which several scholars cite as the progress in human thought that led to secularisation. The second is the emergence of Western liberal ethics infused with Christian theology, which some scholars believe as having created a set of principles and practices common to and on going in contemporary Western secular societies and having their roots in Enlightenment's version of Christianity. The simultaneous development of a non-religious scientific temper and a Christian liberalism point to a complex relationship between Enlightenment and Christianity. An 'anti-Christian sentiment' (Smith 2008: 136) — a critique of religion, marked by 'attempts to force religion out of politics' (Hurd 2008: 24) — coexisted with a Christian ethics upheld by a resilient popular faith.

2.3.1. *The Age of Enlightenment*

In an essay titled *What is Enlightenment?* Immanuel Kant (1784) wrote:

> Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* [Dare to know!] 'Have courage to use your own reason!' – that is the motto of enlightenment (quoted in Hyland *et al.* 2003: 54).

Kant's words clearly tell what the Enlightenment was. It was, first of all, a new age, marked by a liberation from traditional ways of thought and action and ushering in a never seen before standard in human sophistication. Often called the 'Age of Reason,' Enlightenment was the time people began to inquire and criticise the established ideas of humanities and sciences. This critical spirit and the freedom to question made people feel empowered. They could rely on their reason and the resources at their disposal to investigate their surrounding. They could judge for themselves and not have to rely on institutionally handed-down knowledge. This was revolutionary in every sense.

Gay (1966, 1969) writes that reason and criticism, both served as tools of Enlightenment. Reason did not necessarily lead to action but criticism did. Criticism required a sense of freedom to be able to criticise and objects to criticise such as people or institutions including the church and the papacy. The 18th century offered both: people were relatively free from the domination of institutions and ideas because of which they could dare to criticise, and there was the practices of the church and the policies of political establishments to criticise.

In fact, what characterised the Enlightenment, as opposed to the Reformation, was the eagerness to criticise both religion and politics. People felt they did not need the doctrines of the church to explain the meaning of life nor did they need the stewardship of autocratic political regimes. Science would lead the way for people to progress. Apart from science, classical Greek and Roman learning also became a source of inspiration for criticising the myths and superstitions of Christianity. Thus, science, impiety, and classicism, all combined to contribute to the worldview which the Enlightenment critics set out to construct. Enlightenment critics faced their share of hardships. They were persecuted by the church and/ or the state. Sometimes they sought refuge by fleeing to more liberal countries. But in most cases they renewed their efforts often with greater vigour.

The age of Enlightenment did not come about uniformly in Western Europe. There were variations across countries. In France, criticism against both the church and the state was severe, so much so that it ultimately brought the French Revolution. In Germany, politics was still considered unimportant. In England, people were fairly satisfied with functioning of the church and the state. In Italy, efforts were underway to bring about a change in the state apparatus. Yet, overall the mood that was reflected was common. As Kant said, "not everyone was enlightened, but it was the Age of Enlightenment" (Kant as quoted in Gay 1966, 1969). Not everyone, however, agrees on the shared spirit of the age.

Some scholars point out that the contributions of the women, of the poor and the downtrodden, and of non-Westerners have been left out in the Enlightenment narrative. This allegation cannot be denied. The history of Enlightenment does not document what went on with people outside of the European intellectual circle, especially considering that some of the achievements of the Enlightenment were to the detriment of the other groups in European societies and societies in Western colonies. One example of this is that when the church was facing criticism at home and religious influence was severely questioned at every step, Christian missionaries went far and wide into Asia and Africa to spread the word of God. It may be interesting to note that Christian indoctrination came to non-Western societies at a time when in Western Europe attempts were underway to break away from the dogmatism of Christianity.

2.3.2. *A Scientific Mentality*

One of the defining features of Enlightenment was the drive to escape from old superstitions, myths and religious dogmatism through the employment of observation, empirical investigation and critical analysis. This attitude, of consciously hailing science as the key to knowledge, made the 18th century a time of unsurpassed innovation and advancement. The area which saw the most revolutionary changes was medicine. Medicine was dispensing with the old cures of saints, alchemy and astrology and establishing itself as an independent science. The improvements in medicine also benefitted people the most. Yet, such was the pervasiveness of the Enlightenment mood of empirical study that no quarter of human life — arts, philosophy, politics, theology, language, or science — could remain untouched by it. As Gay (1969) describes:

> The age of Enlightenment was an age of academies — academies of medicine, of agriculture, of literature, each with its prizes, its journals, and its well-attended meetings. In the academies and outside them, in factories and workshops and coffeehouses, intelligence, liberated from the bonds of traditions, often heedless of atheistic scruples or religious restraints, devoted itself to practical results; it kept in touch with the scientific and contributed to technological refinements (Gay 1969: 9-10).

While notables appeared in every field of study, one person's contribution towered over all others in laying the foundations of modern science. This was Isaac Newton. Newton used mathematics, observation and experiment as his scientific methodology. After his discovery of the law of gravitation and achievements in physics and astronomy, philosophers in all the developing fields of sciences, including social and medical sciences came to be influenced by the Newtonian way. Regardless of the actual significance of his work, Newton's influence universal because he embodied "the essence of the intellectual revolution that occurred at the Enlightenment" and that made his. Smith (2008: 146) sums up Netwon's importance to the Enlightenment:

> This is the triumph of the scientific mentality. It is not the unquestioning adoption of Newtonian physics in all its details; even Newton has not fully stood the test of time. But it is the triumph at a popular level of empiricism over metaphysics. The public sphere requires facts and explanations which depend on observation and inductive reasoning. This is true in the social sciences as much as the natural sciences. It is the mentality which dominates secular Western society and with which religion has struggled to coexist.

It is interesting to know that in spite of his scientific discoveries, Newton never undermined the Christian faith. He was himself a dedicated theologian, and believed that the laws of nature themselves were the creation of God. His followers saw this argument as reason to

believe in God's rational design of nature. Newton exemplified the combination of a scientific outlook and a resilient faith in God. But even with his regard for his Christian faith, Newton was essentially a modern individual — someone who had given up deductive reasoning in favour of inductive reasoning, validated through observation and experiment (Smith 2008).

2.3.3. *Anti-clerical Sentiment*

As the new scientific mentality triumphed, the Enlightenment also became a time when Christianity and the church came under virulent attack. Philosophers condemned the church for its dogmatism and irrationality. In France, Spain and Italy, this meant the Roman Catholic church. In England, Netherlands and Germany, the situation was complicated because of the presence of both Catholic and Protestant churches. Philosophers were against the church primarily because the church was against them. The church was accused of deliberately attempting to thwart the Enlightenment by preaching about miracles and tormenting people with notions of hell and purgatory. Since the church controlled many schools, it had access to children, most of whom were gullible enough to believe the church. Many young men and women were initiated into monasteries and convents to swell the ranks of the church congregations. All who disagreed with its teachings were declared heretical and pagan. Galileo's persecution is one the most shocking illustrations of the extent to which the church was determined to curb freedom of thought and expression.

What is interesting is that despite the anger of the philosophers against the church and the church's systematic efforts to reinforce its power, the Enlightenment was not a period characterised by atheism and irreligion. There were individual examples of atheism, but as a whole the philosophers were never principally opposed to religion. They envisioned for Christianity the role of a civil religion, albeit in the context of a free and pluralist society. Yet, by all measures, the scientific mentality outdid Christian theology as the 'functional technology' of the modernising West (Smith 2008).

2.3.4. *Christian Liberal Ethics*

Alongside the development of a scientific mentality, the other major intellectual and cultural event that occurred at the Enlightenment was a shift in the position of religion. The shift

however was not in the direction of atheism or irreligion, as may have been expected, but instead within Christianity itself. The Enlightenment initiated a process of change whereby Christian ideas were separated from their theological origins to the point that they no longer remained recognisably Christian. In other words, Christendom was separated into liberal ethics and doctrines: doctrines were removed from the public sphere, while liberal ethics came to dominate the major public debates. For instance, the Christian premise of equality of souls in the eyes of God translated into the liberal assumption that society consists of individuals, each with his or her own ontological ground. This means, in Siedentop's (2000: 210) words, that 'Christian ontology provided the foundation for what are usually described as liberal values in the West.' Arguing the other way round, Juergensmeyer says that 'the particular form of secular society that has evolved in the modern West is a direct extension of its past, including its religious past, and is not some supra cultural entity that came into being only after a radical juncture in history.' This means, in Smith's (2008: 158) words that 'a society which emerges out of a Christian past should be expected to display signs of that past in its ongoing life.' Since liberalism has emerged from post-Enlightenment ethics, which themselves were derived by dislodging doctrines from Christianity, it is logical to associate contemporary liberal ethics of the West with Christian theology. If proven, this association would become highly important because liberalism is the defining trait of politics in Western societies. And if liberalism is indeed associated with Christian ethics, it would mean the West's secular identity, is all but founded on Christianity.

The claim that Western liberal ethics is rooted in Christian theology may sound odd because it is widely supposed that Enlightenment was characterised by anti-Church sentiment. Moreover, Western society itself insists that it rejected Christianity ever since Enlightenment and the advent of secularism, especially in its liberal form, is its proof. However, there are scholars who maintain that the "Enlightenment removed Christian doctrine from public discourses, but not from an identifiable Christian ethics"; contemporary liberal ideas are an expression of Christianity (Smith 2008: 17). By investigating the relationship between particular liberal ideas and Christianity, these scholars have found that post-Enlightenment the ideas of philosophers like Hobbes, Hume, Locke, John Stuart Mill or Kant were

undoubtedly anti-clerical and anti-religious, but the philosophical framework within which they thought was still Christian.

Siedentop (2000), for example, explores the notion of the individual, which is at the heart of the moral identity of contemporary Western societies. The idea stems from the belief that the individual has a status which means he or she can exercise an independent moral will. Siedentop finds that the existence of the individual moral will is a notion derived from Hellenistic concern with universals, Jewish priority of conforming to God's will and Christian notion of equality of the children of God. In classical society, the relationship between mankind and God was at the communal level. With the amalgamation of Hellenistic, Judaic and Christian ideas, this was transformed into a personal relationship with God. Siedentop writes that "the Christian conception of God provided the foundation for what became an unprecedented type of human society" — democracy (as quoted in Smith 2008: 154). This democracy was different from the type of social order that existed in classical and medieval ages because this was underpinned by the ideology of equality of all humans. In the words of Smith (2008):

> Western individualism is at the very least 'residual Christianity'. It may be more than this because it may be reformed Christianity. The Christian God survives in the assumption that we can function as individuals. That is, we assume that humans have, as a right, the capacity to access the truth. We can understand and investigate the nature of reality as individuals, not as a tribe or society. Our conscience and our personal judgments have a status because of our individualism. We have equal liberty and equal rights because we have individual and universal moral status. These individual rights make it possible for society to function as a democracy. And in the West, the ethical status of democracy is unchallenged, whatever the failings and imperfections of its practice (Smith (2008: 154).

Gray (2002) explores the ideology of humanism by positing it against Darwinism. Gray argues that the humanist idea of progress — humanity can advance in scientific knowledge and thereby increase its control over nature — is inspired from the Christianity belief that humans are different from animals and they have a special status in the world. But in the post-Enlightenment era, Darwin's thesis of evolutionary origin of species was accepted in science as credible account for tracing the origin of humans to establish that human race had evolved from animals, and all had in turn evolved from a single source of life. This made mankind no different from animal kingdom. Human progress was an illusion because science had shown that humans survived through mechanically evolving, rather than progressing

(Gray 2002: 4, 31, 109). Therefore, the post-Enlightenment humanist belief in progress was an antiquated Christian doctrine.

Similarly, modern humanism's belief that knowledge will set humanity free is, according to Gray, a myth. He argues that modern faith in truth, including scientific truth, is a tradition originating in classical works of Socrates, passed on to Plato, from Plato to Christianity, and from Christianity to humanists. Gray states that if Darwin's theory of natural selection is credible, it means humans have been made to transmit genes and keep their species alive, not explore the truth. This would render meaningless the paradigm that humans are agents in search of truth. In fact, to certain extent evolution even necessitates self-deception. Gray concludes that humanism is flawed because its essential belief in human exceptionalism is mistaken, and in this it follows Christianity. Christianity believes that God made humans in his own image, and therefore, they are unique and privileged. Humanists believe that they are special because they are self-determining and can exercise free will. Further, humanism believes that morality as a way of life is superior to immorality or evil that comes from Christianity. But in the Darwinian worldview, species must contest with each other to survive. This makes conflict and evil endemic to the process of evolution. And human beings are also not spared from this. They kill to survive. They are not the cruellest in the animal kingdom, but they are killers. Therefore, what may be a good life in the animal world may be held as immoral by Christians and humanists.

The purpose of these examples is to make a case that when the secular West seeks to be ethical or secular, it still turns to Christianity as an anchor. This has led to a pervasive presence of Christian identity in the liberal ethics of secular Western society. Moreover, liberal ethics has a Christian identity because of their emphasis on individualism. If the Western societies desire to disentangle liberal ethics from Christianity, they have to first forego the concept of the individual. What is interesting is that most people would find such an effort futile because they are habituated or happy thinking within the bounds of liberal ethics that is steeped in Christianity. They persist in doing so because they believe that the contemporary form of liberal ethics in the West has no possible alternative. In the words of Smith, the moral dominance of Christian liberal ethics in so powerful in the Western society,

"as though the absence of Christian liberal ethics is actually the absence of ethics in its entirety" (Smith 2008: 158).

3. Debating Religion and Secularism in the Islamic World

Here, it is important to understand two strands within secularisation that dominate the Westphalian political and moral order and have a powerful influence on the way in which the West perceives the Islamic world. These are laïcité, in which religion is seen as an impediment to politics, and secularism, in which religion is seen as a source of identity that generates conflict in global politics

3.1. *Laïcité: Political Separation of Religion and Politics*

The term laïcité was coined in France at the end of the 19th century to denote the removal of ecclesiastical tutelage from elementary schooling. The principle of laïcité originated during the French Revolution in association with the conflict for power between the church and the state. Laïcité was specific to France and the Catholic nations. In its most extreme phases, laicite took the form of radical anti-clericalism or laicism. In the early 20th century, it came to denote the separation between institutions of the church and state, formalised by law in France in 1905. Today, laïcité is primarily used to mean the expulsion of religion from the spheres of power and politics in modern societies, the privatisation of religion, and a decline or potential disappearance of individual religiosity. Secularism, on the other hand, arose in Protestant countries as a by-product of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648-1649), where the conflict between the church and state was settled by nationalising Christianity to delegitimise the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. In Protestant countries, religion was reduced to the status of a ministry of the state and it was believed that modernity had induced such a process, which would lead to a progressive secularisation, although not bringing about a sharp discord between growth of society and reduction in the role of religion in the social and political areas. Today, secularisation is used to indicate a de-sacralisation of the world, but never a total separation of the government and religious institutions in society (De Poli 2010).

Laïcité is a political choice that defines the place of religion using authoritarian and legal means. Laïcité is decreed by the state, which then organises the public space in a manner that

keeps the visibility of religion to a minimum. Chatterjee defines laïcité as "a coercive process in which the legal powers of the state, the disciplinary powers of family and school, and the persuasive powers of government and media have been used to produce the secular citizen who agrees to keep religion in the private domain" (Chatterjee 2006: 60). Asad states that laïcité is meant to restrict religious traditions "to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of 'free-thinking' citizens" (Asad 2003: 191). In International Relations, laïcité produces two consequences. First, laïcité seeks to arbitrate the terms through which the political and the religious are defined and attempts to exclude religion from politics. In so doing, laïcité designs the political domain in a way that it comes to be associated with public authority, public interest, tolerance and justice. It also becomes the point of reference for constructing the religious domain. Laïcité therefore works to produce the very domains it also presupposes. The power to arbitrate categories makes laïcité a powerful notion in International Relations, especially when the process of arbitration remains unnoticed or invisible. Because laïcité attempts to legislate the terms through which the religious and the political spheres are produced, it can successfully emerge as public and value-neutral, while project religion as its private and value-laden counterpart and guard the political sphere from whatever it calls as religion. Cavanaugh (1995: 409) and Appleby (2000: 5) claim that laïcité is a part of the "conventional wisdom" of realist and liberal traditions of International Relations theory because they assume that religion was privatised in the course of creating the modern state. As a result, International Relations regards religious presence in politics or unrestrained religious commitment as unnatural and undemocratic and even having the potential for violence.

Second, by prescribing the spaces for the secular and the sacred, laïcité rules out all alternatives models that challenge the customary secular order, concept and practices of international politics. "Modern scholarship sees zealotry as a retrogression into primitivism and as a pathology of traditions. At closer sight it proves to be a by-product and pathology of modernity," states Nandy (1998: 335). Hurd (2008: 35) observes that non-secular forms of politics are stigmatised in International Relations as irrational, undemocratic and violent. Laïcité works to force these forms out of the political domain, which not infrequently produces strong counter reactions in politics. The agents whom laïcité disqualifies, as they

come to sense that politics is apparently constructed by laïcité, may resort to unconventional and extreme political moves to express themselves, not least of which is religious fundamentalism. Hurd believes that by not tolerating nonconformists, laïcité displays the same theocratic tendency which it seeks to oppose. In this way, laïcité "is not the opposite of theological discourse," instead it is "a particular kind of theological discourse in its own right."

3.2. Secularism: Decline of Religious Beliefs and Practices in Society

Secularism is a social process through which religion progressively loses its significance in people's lives. People no longer construct the meanings of their life and everyday experiences under the aegis of religious beliefs even though people may continue to be believers. In very advanced stages of secularisation, religious beliefs may altogether disappear from society. However, secularism is not anti-religious or anti-clerical (Roy 2007: 8). Hurd (2008) calls this form of secularism as Judeo-Christian secularism, owing its origins in Western, Christian, and later Judeo-Christian identity, values, religious beliefs, historical traditions and political practices. Judeo-Christian secularism is founded on the notion that the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment did not permanently sever the relationship between Western politics and Christianity. Rather, Christianity remains the defining element of Western civilisation (Neuhaus 1984) and provides the moral identity for political life by forming the basis of an ethical consensus without which popular government cannot operate (Jelen 2000).

Hurd (2008) claims that the Judeo-Christian version of secularism originated, more specifically, in early America where the religious beliefs of the Protestant majority formed the basis of a particular understanding of modern democratic politics. Gedicks (1991: 120) observes that in 19th century America, there was no ethic that explicitly required the division of society into religious and secular spheres, "rather religion and government emerged as competing centres of institutional authority, each of which tacitly recognised the pre-eminence of the other in certain matters." Government policies articulated in religious terms were acceptable both legally and socially. Following the wave of immigrations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, it became common for the government to sell public

policies in a secular cask in order to perform better at the polls. Protestant discourse gave way to a more civic form of religion, but Protestantism continued to serve as the inspiration for policymakers. "Protestantism still affected public business, but implicitly, more as the source and background of political movements than as the movements themselves," notes Gedicks (1991: 122). Van der Veer (1999: 28) notes that England had a similar political orientation around this time. Despite their religious differences, evangelicals and utilitarians in Britain believed that, "civil society and the forms of knowledge on which it was based were ultimately part and parcel of Christian civilisation." Hurd (2008) finds that, therefore, it was through the 19th and 20th century Euro-American politics that Protestantism was established as the common ground for the Western civilisation. With time, as the American population diversified, this common ground came to include Catholic and, after the World War II, Jewish influences. By the end of the 20th century, Judeo-Christian secularism emerged as the source and background of domestic and international politics. Liberal stalwarts such as John Stuart Mill relied on Judeo-Christian secularism to seek a unified cultural and political identity of the Western civilisation (Connolly 1999: 78). Taylor (2007) names this settlement as "common ground" secularism, where the objective was to dissociate politics from religion, but prevent the state from privileging one sect over another by summoning that which was common to all sects. This even-handedness in dealing with different religious sects of Christianity was the original American conception of separation of the church and state. This meant that the political community maintained a uniform identity derived from doctrines common to all Christian sects. In this way, though the political order was ministered by an ethic of peaceful coexistence, it also indirectly designated who did and who did not belong to the polity (Pizzorno 1987: 39).

Secularism differs from laïcité in that it does not aspire to expel religion from discourses on power and authority in politics in the name of distilling an independent ethic. Instead, it attempts to accommodate religion, Judeo-Christian traditions in particular, as it holds that "religion is ultimately good for democratic politics, because a shared adherence to a common religious tradition provides a set of publicly accessible assumptions within which democratic politics can be conducted" (Jelen 2000: 90). While laïcité assumes that the separation of the church and the state led to the privatisation of religion, secularism assumes that the separation

of church and state was a unique achievement of the Western civilisation that has given rise to liberal ethics and democratic politics (Huntington 2001: 60). These descriptions of secularism suggest that there is a civilisational solidarity among those located in the geographic West, which also lends a partisan attitude to the West against the non-West.

Having looked at the presence of religion (Christianity in the West) it is equally imp to look at the idea of secular in the Islamic world. This is because, in both the cases of this study, Islam is the other important mediating factor, apart from Christianity. Of late, there has been much academic discussion in International Relations about the limitations of the conventional secularisation thesis and consequently, a lot has been written about the resurgence of religious identity in politics and the revival of religious beliefs and practices. However, it cannot be refuted that in studying the relationship between religion and politics, International Relations continues to uphold the idea that secularisation is uniquely Western and Christian, and the secular West is the standard-bearer of the proper relationship between religion and politics. The discipline also continues to assume that secularisation has emerged as the dominant paradigm in political discourse owing to the globalisation of the Westphalian state system in which religion was privatised.

These ways of thinking lead to the marginalisation and delegitimisation of non-Western and non-Christian perspectives on religion and politics because it implies that when non-Western societies want to democratise they must adopt Western forms of secularism. Shakman Hurd (2008: 49) claims that "more than any other single religious or political tradition, Islam has come to represent the 'non-secular' in European and American political thought and practice." Islam is represented as anti-modern, anti-Christian, and theocratic, and these representations are not in the least coincidental. The main point is to determine whether it is Islam in particular or religion in general that is a problem for Western secularism. That Western secularism has strong Christian roots is by now obvious, what remains to be investigated in whether Islam is intrinsically resistant to secularism or have the Islamic polities followed paths of development that have allowed alternative arrangements between Islamic institutions and state politics.

3.3. Islam and Secularisation: Is Islam Inimical to Secularisation?

In his study titled, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova (1994) argues that the relocation of religion from the political domain to the civil society through the processes of political secularisation does not necessarily mean religion is privatised. On the contrary, this relocation constitutes the very condition for the formation of modern "public religions," such as contemporary Christianity and Islam. Based on theories of undifferentiated public sphere of civil society, Casanova claims that when public religion enters the public sphere of civil society to shape political practices and world views and to raise normative issues, then religion can no longer be held at privatised. What we are witnessing today in the West, in the Islamic world and elsewhere is the "deprivatisation" of religion. Hurd (2008: 117) claims that because the distinction between public and private, religious and political, and secular and sacred are defined in International Relations through the Western secularist lenses, the politicisation of Islam — according to Casanova, the emergence of Islam as a public religion or the deprivatisation of Islam — and religious resurgence in general are apprehended in two ways: laïcité or political secularisation seeks to engage and transform political Islamists both politically and economically; and secularism or social secularisation seeks to eliminate actors and movements, who draw on Islamic referents, through diplomatic and economic isolation.

In their detailed work on religion and politics in the Islamic world, Lane and Redissi (2009) argue that religion and politics have not been separated thus far in the entire Muslim world, except for Turkey, because of three structural factors. First, Islam does not recognise the formal separation of religion and politics that is typical of Christianity. This is because traditionally, both political power and religious authority reside in one person, the caliph. But the caliph is not a priest or lay man. More precisely, he is one who upholds the religious code of conduct and governs his subjects who are equals in terms of religion. It is from the caliph that all other kinds of power in the state are derived, including judicial power, but with the exception of Sharia. The relationship between the Caliphate and Sharia is twofold. On the one hand, the Caliph rules his subjects through the laws of Allah, codified in the Sharia and the subjects are obliged to obey the Caliph. On the other hand, the Sharia stands above the Caliph, who may be dethroned if he personally fails to follow the five basic commands of Islam (faith, prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca). This duality has given rise to the

dominant western view that Islam is essentially both religion and politics, sacred and secular. Second, the Islamic civilisation did not undergo the gradual process of secularisation that Europe did. European countries adopted one of the two paths to secularisation: the Protestant evolutionary path (Judeo-Christian secularism or social secularisation), as seen in England and Germany, and the Catholic revolutionary path of radical anti-clericalism (laïcité), as found in France. Whereas both these processes had to be achieved through enormous coercion and resistance, once they were instated in Europe, they drastically altered the political orientation and catapulted it into the age of modernity. The Islamic world remained crouched in its "oriental despotism." Third, Islam has traditionally exhibited "caesaro-papism," which means the relationship between the political and religious powers in the Islamic world was one of compromise, not contestation, as was the case in the Occident. Caesaro-papism in Islam is a chief cause of making the religion hostile towards secularisation (Gellner 1983: 81, 1989: 218). Caesaro-papism is the opposite of theocracy. In theocracy, the religious institution such as the church is in control of the state leading to a combining of the powers of the secular government with religious powers of the church. In a purely theocratic state, the head of the state, the Emperor, is also the highest authority of the church. In caesaro-papism, religious power is subordinate to political power and the religious hierarchy is subordinated to the secular sovereignty. The sovereign by right exercises supreme power in the religious domain and regulates religious matters as another administrative task.   The caesaro-papist model of state was best exemplified in the Byzantine empire. From the 6th to the 10th century, the Byzantine Emperor managed the Eastern Christian church by presiding over councils, appointing patriarchs and delineating territorial boundaries for their jurisdiction. Byzantine's caesaro-papism was so strong that the emperor was called 'pontifex maximus', meaning chief priest, and the Patriarch of Constantinople could hold office only if he had the emperor's favour. Turkish and Mongol sultanates also adhered to the caesaro-papist model.

Lane and Redissi (2009) make an additional point that defends the opposite of their previous idea that Islamic states cannot be secular due to the inherent ambivalence of Islam on the proper place of religion and politics and lack of historical processes of social change. Lane and Redissi (2009: 150) argue that in spite of the three above-mentioned factors, Islamic polities cannot be branded as religious because Islam does not determine the form of the

state. Even though Islam is the state religion and Sharia is the basic source of legislation, 'the state reserves to itself the right to legislate norms, which are not in conformity with Sharia.' There are several secular manifestations in politics such as in the constitution, composition of political parties, functioning of tribunals, and formal procedures in law and administration. The economy is guided by rational and utilitarian principles. The art forms such as movies, music, novels and paintings also exhibit secular aesthetics. Land and Redissi argue that since Islam does not prescribe the form of the state, there is nothing that prevents Islamic polities from separating religion and politics, except religious conservatism, misinterpretation of holy scriptures or the secularism is an import from abroad, the acceptance of which implies embracing modernity for Islamic societies. 'Thus, there is an intellectual movement within contemporary Islam that is favourable towards a lay society' (Lane and Redissi 2009: 148).

3.4. *Alternative Approaches to Understanding Islam and Politics*

Despite the movement towards withdrawing religion from state and society and simultaneously depoliticising religion, it is undeniable that religion and politics do not fashion separately in the Islamic societies. Even in those multicultural societies of Western Europe, where Muslim communities form a significant component, these communities demand the 'politics of mutual respect', which means states must be more than mere neutral. In the words of Kerrou (1998: 100), 'the political religion and the religious politics present themselves as pluralism, constituting multiple layers of interaction and complex strategies.' Some scholars have put forth approaches for understanding the complex interaction between religion and politics in modern Islamic societies or multicultural societies containing strong Muslim presence, while circumventing the secular-sacred dichotomy of laïcité or the Chistian liberal worldview of secularism. One approach is especially useful with a view to exploring the dynamic co-existence of religion and politics is Casanova's (2001) theoretical framework of the de-privatisation of modern religions. It is useful for understanding the forms of religious interference in the public sphere that have emerged in Muslim-majority as well as Muslim-minority countries. Casanova argues that the de-privatisation meaning the presence of religion in the public sphere of civil society may assume three forms. (1) The religious mobilisation to protect traditional values and practices against the onslaught of the modern state and market: The de-privatisation of religion plays an important role even in cases where

the religious mobilisation can be explained as a traditionalist response to modernity, which is promoted and protected by the state through juridical interventions or which disrupts established social orientations, such as patriarchal family, or racial and gender discrimination. By entering the public sphere and raising public debates on certain issues, they force modern societies to reconsider publicly and collectively on their normative structures. Casanova warns of underestimating the dangers that a traditionalist revivalism or restoration project can pose to the modern normative structures. But in the process of entering the public sphere, religions are also forced to confront and even reach a compromise with modern normative structures. Turkey lifting the nearly nine decades old ban on wearing headscarves is an example of how potent this form of religious de-privatisation can be.

(2) When religion enters the public sphere of modern societies to question and contest the claims and functions of the two most powerful institutions of the societal systems, state and market: Religion questions the intrinsic norms on which the state and the market operate because these norms disregard the extrinsic traditional moral norms. For instance, by questioning the absolutist policies of states, the rationale of national security doctrines, and the premises of nuclear doctrines, religion serves to remind both individuals and states of the need to subordinate the goals of state formation to the 'common good'. Similarly, by questioning the inhuman modes of production of the capitalist market, religion reminds individuals and societies of the need to regulate market practices to ensure they become conscious and accountable of the ecological, social and human damage they do and show greater understanding and sensitivity to human needs. World religions such as Christianity and Islam are in a particularly advantageous position to remind all individuals and all societies that in a globalising world, the 'common good' is increasingly defined in transnational terms, and that therefore, the public sphere of modern civil societies cannot sustain national or state boundaries.

(3) The relentless efforts of religion to maintain 'common good' against the individualist modern liberalism that would reduce the common good to the aggregated sum of individual rational choices. By recalling into the public sphere issues which liberalism has side lined as private affairs, religion reminds individuals and modern societies that individual choices can acquire a moral grounding only when they are informed by interpersonal and inter-subjective

norms. In other words, by bringing issues of private morality to the public sphere and bringing into public eye the private moral sphere, religion compels modern societies to reconstruct their moral foundations. This helps in practically unfolding the process of rationalisation of the traditional world and the norms and traditions of religion.

Casanova argues that by acknowledging the de-privatisation of religion, scholars would broaden their understanding of modernity because of the possibility of bringing into perspective multiple modernities as against the conventional way of thinking about a single Western secular modernity. Casanova says that since International Relations at least distinguishes a Catholic model of modernity from a Protestant one, it must recognise other distinct paths of modernity. Islamic tradition, with its unique practices and public discourse, influences and even determines the type of civil society and institutions that emerge in Muslim countries. This has led to multiple modernities within the Muslim world. These projects of Muslims modernity and their contexts are radically different from Western modernities, they are nevertheless experiments in striving towards political reform, stronger civil society, democratisation and liberalisation.

When the West is described as secular, it usually means one of the two things: that institutional Christianity has declined, an exposition more popularly known as secularisation thesis, or that religion is missing from the public forum such as politics, media, education, workplace and even home, which means secularism has won the battle of ideas. Both perspectives arise from the dominant literature in social sciences on religious decline. That this theme has dominated academics is in itself an evidence that designating the West as secular is a shared belief that has risen to the status of a fundamental assumption in academics. The disciple of International Relations has also not escaped the powerful influence of this assumption because of which it has been restrained from getting a deeper and clearer understanding of the religious and secular identities that shape global political relations.

The West's unquestioned association with secularism is, however, only one side of the problem. The other side is secularism's exclusive association with the West. The standard historical narrative of religious decline in Western Europe from the classical through the medieval to the modern period serves as a story of Europe's religious exceptionalism. The

separation of the church and the state is thought of as a uniquely Western achievement that grew out of adherence to a common set of European religious and political traditions. It is a common perception among Western political scientists that Islamic societies are attempting to replicate the Western secular model in their institutions of governance, though with limited success.

The purpose of this chapter has been to re-evaluate both these time-honoured understandings in International Relations: the image of the West as a secular society, and the image of the Islamic world as a religious society. To this end, the first part of the chapter critically analysed the sociological theories of secularism, most of which argue that conditions of modernity, for example, rationalisation, social fragmentation and religious pluralism brought the decline of religion in Western society in varying degrees and in context-specific ways. The second part of the chapter undertook a survey of certain eras in Western history, namely the classical Graeco-Roman period, the late Middle Ages and the Enlightenment era, to develop an alternative historical narrative of the West which recognises the interrelated trajectories of secular ideology and Christian theology in the emergence of the contemporary moral identity of the secular West. The last section of the chapter explored some of the Islamic perspectives — non-Western and non-Christian — on religion and politics because they have been conspicuously sidelined due to the secularist monopoly of the West in International Relations.

According to standard historical accounts on which the theories of secularisation are based, the classical period was characterised by religious paganism amidst which existed few, exceptional figures who had a secular disposition. Other than that, Graeco-Roman era is thought to be far too pagan and remote in history to have any legacies of relevance in modern times. The late Middle Ages was the time when religious activism was at its historical peak, and all people were believers and practitioners of the Christian faith. The only alternative to religious activism was heresy — punishable by the church through excommunication, social and political exclusion, or worse. The Reformation crisis and the subsequent Peace of Westphalia marked the end of the influence of religion in public sphere through the institutionalised separation of the church and the state — a development coming since the time of the Reformation. At the dawn of the Enlightenment era, the social atmosphere of

Western society became charged with an intellectual and scientific spirit leading to a shift from theological dominance to rule of rationality. Religion declined as people gave up their faith in the supernatural. Religious leaders also no longer enjoy the same social and political position as in the medieval times.

The problem with this conventional understanding of the origin of secularism is that the wave-like trajectory of religious change it suggests from the classical through the medieval to the modern era is not supported by empirical data from sociological studies or current developments in global politics. The alternative narrative that has been developed here is that Enlightenment marked a shift in social ideas from the theological to the scientific, but the historical interaction between religious and secular ideas that preceded the Enlightenment as well as took place during that era were far more complex than what could yield a linear trajectory of progressive secularisation.

Secularisation theories perceive a decline in religion because they mistakenly believe that the medieval period was a time of exceptionally high religious fervour, while remarkably declined in the decades of the Enlightenment due to advancements in science and technology. By revising the secularisation debate, a question that emerges is that whether decline is an accurate variable for assessing contemporary religious behaviour and accounting for historical developments (Smith 2008: 13). For one, decline is a relative term, and notions of decline are premised on the belief that previous centuries had more religious activism than the present one. The narrative developed would seem to challenge this belief. Something consequential did happen in Western Europe which continues to shape the secular West. But it did not happen at Westphalia, as is widely supposed. Nor did it happen at Enlightenment, which is when the West supposes to have rejected the Christian faith in favour of secularism. Instead, it happened over the post-Enlightenment decades, when doctrinal Christianity was replaced in the public eye with an ethical version that professed ideas such as liberalism, individualism, humanism, progress and tolerance. These ideas were born in the minds of so-called secular philosophers but they contained Christian genes. Over time these ideas travelled so far that they are no longer identifiably Christian. Today, these ideas form the backbone of Western secular identity and morality and are unchallenged in the West but are increasingly challenged by the non-west.

The next chapter focuses on the main themes of this research — reconciliation and interreligious dialogue. The first part of the chapter describes the chief characteristics of the aftermath of collective violence, namely trauma, concealment and denial of violence. The second part explains four pillars reconciliation: search for truth through criminal trials and truth commissions; establishment of justice through retributive and restorative mechanisms; patterns of collective and individual memorialisation; and ethics of forgiveness, and the relationship between forgiveness, truth, and justice. The third part deals with the interreligious dialogue approach to reconciliation. This entails a discussion on the traditional normative theories of interreligious dialogue and their critiques, and developing a framework for an ethical approach to interreligious dialogue.

CHAPTER III

Reconciliation and the Interreligious Dialogue Approach

The theory and practice of reconciliation in deeply divided societies is a field of peacebuilding that has received serious attention from scholars and practitioners alike in recent decades because of the worldwide increase in the number of post-conflict settings where violence or antagonism continues to fester (Skaar 2013). The term 'reconciliation' causes vagueness in people's mind about what it might entail and how it might be pursued. Many are not particularly comfortable, some even reluctant, to use the term to describe their daily work, preferring to it, broader terms like peace building, community relations, so on. Some consider reconciliation to be a part, exclusively, of Catholic and Protestant traditions (Hamber and Kelly 2005). Others, especially politicians, dismiss reconciliation as irrelevant to peacebuilding or see it as a dubious process laden with theological meanings. Still others see reconciliation as an "extra-curricular" activity in the otherwise harsh reality of domestic and international peace building (Omer 2012: 13). In many post-conflict and conflict-ridden societies, local communities are not ready to engage in reconciliation. In some other cases, communities feel threatened at the mention of reconciliation because they believe, it involves becoming friends with former enemies in some process of social and political transformation (Hamber and Kelly 2005). There is an eminent lack of understanding about reconciliation among those pursuing it, academically or in the field, and those participating in it, directly or indirectly. Both as an enterprise and an idea, reconciliation therefore remains elusive.

The conceptualisation of reconciliation ranges from stringent political and legal definitions to flexible or vague moral and theological notions. Many have tried to come up with working definitions of reconciliation. Others think that definitions of reconciliation are not workable because reconciliation discourse and practices must be contextually developed by studying profiles of individual conflicts and needs of each of the affected communities. Some believe that as long as activities done under the banner of reconciliation have peace-promoting outcomes, developing definitions of reconciliation is not important. In terms of operationalisation, reconciliation happens at multiple levels. The goals, activities, actors and outcomes at each level are debatable. At the state level, reconciliation is primarily a political process entailing measures which have a strong legalistic component, such as setting up

criminal tribunals, as in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, or truth commissions, as in South Africa. State-level (or civil society) reconciliation depends on national and international policymakers and leaders. At the societal level, reconciliation is a community-based activity which deals with past violence. Social reconciliation is about changing hostile attitudes or behaviours of communities and repairing fractured relations between communities. Uncovering the truth about the past, even discussing the past publicly, is a difficult and painful procedure in societies emerging from mass violence; therefore, social reconciliation is considered to be a long-drawn process requiring sustained efforts. The work of social reconciliation is undertaken by mostly local people, who may be part of civil society organisations or simply motivated individuals from different walks of life. At the individual level, reconciliation is understood as spiritual transformation through which sufferer comes to terms with his or her grief, finds strength to resume life and alter the hostile relation with those who perpetrated crimes against them and their community. Individual reconciliation involves expressions of forgiveness, guilt, repentance, truth and justice, all of which have theological overtones.

Reconciliation was originally a part of the transitional justice (dealing with the past) debate: scholars attempted to explain why and how formally addressing past human rights violations, through mechanisms such as criminal tribunals, truth commissions, amnesty and local justice initiatives, create a better environment for reconciliation in societies emerging of mass violence. Transitional justice, as the term suggests, seeks to deal with the challenges that confront societies attempting to make the transition from a violent past to a non-violent future. The societies emerging from violent conflicts mostly also make a transition from dictatorial regimes to democracies; therefore, transitional justice is meant to be the driver of political transition in these societies rather than merely a form of intervention that follows a conflict. Following the Second World War until the start of the Cold War, the system of delivering justice in the aftermath of mass scale violence was through international criminal tribunals like the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials for punishing individual war crimes.[1] By the

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[1] Nuremberg trials (1945-1946) were held after WW II to prosecute the prominent members of Nazi Germany who participated in the Holocaust and the other war crimes. Tokyo trails (1946-1948) also known as International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) were held to prosecute the leaders of the Japanese Empire for three categories of crimes: waging of war; committing war crimes; and committing crimes against humanity.

last decades of the 20th century, however, it was increasingly felt that criminal prosecution alone was not sufficient in bringing about a sense of justice in conflict-ridden societies (Skaar 2013). Especially where mass exterminations had taken place, there were simply too many perpetrators and too many crimes to hold accountable. Moreover, punishing criminals through courtroom trials was lengthy and expensive, and since in post-conflict societies legal institutions were mostly in disarray, justice was left to the vagaries of the international community's conscience. Focusing justice exclusively on nailing down criminals was also resulting in neglect of the emotional needs of victims. With retributive justice[2], the potential of local actors and grassroots peace builders in contributing to justice was left under-utilised. Thus developed the idea of transitional justice which went beyond criminal justice to have a more holistic sense justice. Along with prosecution of perpetrators, it addressed the needs of victims and engaged with the deeper forces of violence (Boraine 2004). "[T]ransitional justice must be associated with the restoration of the dignity of the victims. And that should by no means be confused with patronising them," notes Goldstone (2004: vi). The goal of transitional justice is to address the causes of conflict more permanently so that the likelihood of outbreak of violence would be lessened and a more just society could be built. Transitional justice is intended to bring about the transition of a society emerging from violence, that is to say, merge former enemy groups into a new civil society by uncovering the past. Knowing the truth about the past is more important than punishing those responsible for the past (Shriver 2001).

In the last few decades, the academic debate on transitional justice has shifted from an exclusive focus on the rule of law to discussions on restorative justice[3] and reconciliation. Currently, reconciliation is a theme within the subfield of religious peacebuilding. Religious

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[2] The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy explains the concept of retributive justice as that form of justice committed to the following three principles: (1) that those who commit certain kinds of wrongful acts, paradigmatically serious crimes, morally deserve to suffer a proportionate punishment; (2) that it is intrinsically morally good—good without reference to any other goods that might arise—if some legitimate punisher gives them the punishment they deserve; and (3) that it is morally impermissible intentionally to punish the innocent or to inflict disproportionately large punishments on wrongdoers. The idea of retributive justice has played a dominant role in theorising about punishment over the past few decades, but many features of it—especially the notions of desert and proportionality, the normative status of suffering, and the ultimate justification for retribution—remain contested and problematic (Alec 2016).

[3] The SAGE Dictionary of Criminology defines restorative justice as a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implication for the future (McLaughlin and Munice 2013: 384).

peacebuilding is a part of the conflict transformation approach, which explores the relevance of religion and culture to see how ideas and practices pertaining to the religion and culture of those directly and indirectly involved in a conflict can contribute to managing conflict constructively. Religious peacebuilding includes the study of interreligious dialogue, the peace-promoting elements within the resources of individual religious traditions, the role of religious institutions and groups in the dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding, and the role of faith-based (track II) diplomacy in international politics. Discussions within religious peacebuilding on how to make the political process of reconciliation more meaningful to individuals and more lasting for society have led to the development of an ethical or moral discourse based on religious traditions that pertain to reconciliation, such as forgiveness, acceptance of wrongdoing, repentance and retribution. Scholars believe that morally good religious concepts can enrich societal and individual level reconciliation. Since the coming of the ethical conceptualisation of reconciliation, scholars from different fields have actively engaged with it, turning reconciliation into a highly debated theme.

The thrust of the debate has consistently been a humanitarian one: in situations where widespread violence has been committed, it is necessary to heal the pain of those who have suffered and restore their relationship with those who have inflicted the suffering, so that both parties are able to resume their lives in society, not as victims and perpetrators, but as neighbours. The need of finding ways which would enable people divided by war, structural and cultural injustice, physical violence, and/or psychological and emotional trauma, to come together in acknowledgement of their common humanity is the beginning of what is called reconciliation. Reconciliation, therefore, is the process of restoring trust in a relationship where trust has been broken, sometimes repeatedly, through the occurrence of violence (Worthington and Drinkard 2000).

> [R]econciliation can be seen as dealing with three specific paradoxes. First, in an overall sense, reconciliation promotes an encounter between the open expression of the painful past, on the one hand, and the search for the articulation of a long-term, interdependent future, on the other hand. Second, reconciliation provides a place for truth and mercy to meet, where concerns for exposing what has happened *and* for letting go in favour of renewed relationship are validated and embraced. Third, reconciliation recognises the need to give time and place to both justice and peace, where redressing the wrong is held together with the envisioning of a common, connected future (Lederach 1997: 20).

Reconciliation requires the following six elements: victims' willingness to let go off the losses of the past and forbear from seeking vengeance; truth about the past and present

violence; shared acknowledgement of injuries suffered and losses experienced; some measure of justice, criminal or punitive or both; willingness and commitment of the adversaries to repair and re-establish their relationship; and members of the communities should explicitly establish the terms of a new and common future (Chapman 2001).

Most scholars, whether of a theological or non-theological turn, consider reconciliation as being founded on renouncing victimhood through forgiving the perpetrator; recovering the truth about past violence and injustices and coming to terms with the truth; and a certain degree of justice that would restore the imbalance in society caused by the acts of violence. Scholars disagree widely over the order of significance of these elements: which promotes what in the process of reconciliation. Some believe that reconciliation begins with forgiveness: when victims forgive perpetrators, perpetrators are motivated to speak the truth about their crimes, and once the truth is known, measures can be undertaken to bring some sort of justice to the victims. Others believe that knowing what happened is the only way to elicit forgiveness from victims. Without correct knowledge about the circumstances under which crimes were committed and the nature and extensiveness of the crimes, victims can never feel inclined to forgive perpetrators. Still others believe that justice should precede or go hand-in-hand with forgiveness and recovery of truth. Retributive justice helps in affirming that gross violations of human rights are not tolerated; this helps victims in reclaiming their sense of dignity and motivates them to reconcile with their loss and forgive perpetrators. Restorative justice measures help perpetrators to return to the society and participate in repairing the physical and psychological damage caused by their violence. Reintegration of perpetrators in the society is in the interest of victims because it helps to heal the fractured relationship between victim and perpetrator and offers the chance to return to normal community life and even go back to the situation prior to the outbreak of violence.

This chapter concerns itself with the ethical conceptualisation of reconciliation but instead of parsing out the ethics into discrete categories of forgiveness, truth, memory and justice, as is conventionally done, the chapter seeks to analyse them in an interrelated way so as to arrive at a deeper, more contextualised understanding of how individuals and communities emerging from massive violence grapple with political and sociological effects of the violent past. Section 1 looks at what the situation is in a society that has experienced large-scale

violence. It is obvious that where widespread atrocities have been committed, there is extensive physical and psychological harm incurred; however, what is less apparent is the collective effort at concealing truth about the violence (usually by perpetrators but sometimes also by victims and society at large) and denying responsibility for crimes. Suffering, on the part of victims, concealment of violence, on the part of perpetrators, victims and/or society, and denial of crimes, on the part of perpetrators and/or society serves only to underline the importance of facing the truth for normalising people and relationships in a society emerging from violence. Section 2 discusses views of scholars who emphasise the need of knowing the truth for dealing with the aftermath of violence: recovering the truth through witness and survivor testimonies where field and forensic investigation is a way of establishing and acknowledging the harm suffered by victims and subsequently providing them justice through legal measures; truth about mass-scale crimes generates awareness in society about the causes, nature, perpetrators and victims of the violence; validated truth is knowledge which can be incorporated into the formal history of a society. Section 3 talks about the significance of collective remembrance in reconciliation. It begins by providing some terminological distinction between words commonly used in memory studies but often confused with each other, namely past, history, memory and remembrance. It goes on to discuss the nature of remembrance work through a distinction between remembrance undertaken by state and that by civil society. The role of civil society in remembrance is elaborately discussed by drawing a further distinction between remembrance by individuals and that by collectives. Afterwards, the section highlights the various reasons which make remembrance central to reconciliation. Prominent among them are its contribution in overcoming traumatic memories, reinvigorating group solidarity and influencing the current socio-political situation. In the final part, the section deals with the debate around the ethics of remembrance, focusing on the questions of who has the moral responsible for remembering, what should be remembered, and how. Section 4 talks about the importance of forgiveness in the process of reconciliation. While most scholars consent to the interrelatedness of forgiveness, truth and justice in dealing with the aftermath of mass-scale violence, they differ in priority given to one over the other. Some believe that forgiveness is a prerequisite for any meaningful reconciliation to take place; others believe that forgiveness is an integral part of reconciliation, but forgiveness must not be expected from victims before

truth and justice of some form has been sought. The section discusses at length the views of such scholars. Although the chapter does not take a position on whether forgiveness must precede reconciliation, in the next section, it points out some of the conceptual problems arising out of over-emphasising on forgiveness in the ethics model of reconciliation. These problems pertain to the secularist bias of international relations discipline (assuming that religion and politics are separate spheres), an uncritical outlook towards religious peacebuilding (assuming that religious morality is good and therefore will always have positive effects in peacebuilding), a tendency to posit reconciliation at odds with justice (assuming that demands for justice will obstruct the pursuit of peace) and an overall decontexualised understanding of religion, conflict and peace (assuming that all post-violence settings have similar structural and sociological problems emanating from violence per se). These lingering pitfalls signal a scope, albeit need, for a more constructive and pragmatic ways of thinking about reconciliation in the aftermath of politically motivated collective violence. Section 6 engages with the idea of interreligious dialogue, one of the less acclaimed and under-utilised but nevertheless approaches to reconciliation. The chapter argues that an interreligious dialogue-based interventions have the potential of making subtle positive changes towards reconciliation because they are participatory, non-competitive, morally inclusive and creative methods of interaction between individuals and communities.

1. Aftermath of Mass-scale Violence

In the context of conflicts, the question of reconciliation arises following the occurrence of violence between communities which damages the relations between them, making future coexistence extremely difficult. The aftermath of widespread violence is a situation of extreme psychological trauma and physical pain among those who have suffered violence directly, who have lost their loved ones or whose loved ones have suffered. The consequences of large-scale atrocities cannot be measured. Suffering can be an individual lived experience and at the same time a collective feeling. Suffering can be physical and/or psychological. Suffering can be temporary or lasting, if not everlasting. In all these ways of suffering, however, there is an extreme sense of fear, anxiety and panic in the victims and their families leading to the collapse of their own physical and psychic defences. The breakdown of self-protective shield also induces a feeling of powerless and of being exploited. The despair and

dejection felt by victims and survivors is so enormous that it amounts to an "existential crisis" for them (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014: 299). The magnitude of their loss and the intensity of their suffering overwhelms them to such an extent that there arises a sharp break in life before and after the violence, where the suffering characterising life after violence continues till the very end of life. The change brought about in the lives of victims and survivors by the violence is irreversible — there is no going back to the former life and even to former self.

> [T]there is no *way* of out of the past. Bundled as memories and reinforced through commemorative practices and altered landscapes, the past travels across time and space. Dead bodies remain; memories persist; dispersal of a people is permanent (Wagner 2014: 299).

The context in which reconciliation is supposed to happen is therefore one not only of fractured relationships but also of shattered minds and bodies. In a post-violence situation, reconciliation must happen in several ways. For the individual, reconciliation would mean healing of the damage caused to the person's dignity and physical and emotional well-being. Within the community, reconciliation would require moderating the sense of loss felt by the members of the community as a collective (although some psychologists argue that sense of loss is never collective but personal). Between communities, reconciling would mean restoring the broken bonds between members of the two/different communities — between neighbours who once lived together and trusted each other — as well as the relation between the communities as collectives.

1.1. *Concealment of Violence*

When widespread atrocities take place, the spontaneous reaction in society is to conceal the truth about the atrocities. By not speaking about the violence, keeping it a secret, forgetting it, downplaying it, isolating it or leaving it ambiguous, people collectively attempt to subvert the violence committed. Violence, it is widely believed, is more an act of oppression (violator exercises power over the violated) than the one intended to result in harm or death. By this logic, the violence committed in different contexts, is similar, if not the same in terms of the psychology driving it: killing, torture and rape in war, domestic violence, violence between strangers or violence in sex industry, all characterise an unequal power relationship between the oppressor and the opposed. In this asymmetric power dynamics, it is not difficult to achieve silence over the violence committed because the dominator as well as the dominated

derive some sense of comfort in maintaining the status quo. In a moving study on the hidden violence against women and children, Romito (2008) mentions that the most powerful weapon at the disposal of the dominator is the minds — the terror therein contained — of the dominated. Because of this terror, it is the dominated or the sufferer of violence who are most eager to cover up the act of violence. For the violator, concealment of violence is ironically the bonus for committing the crime. Concealment ensures their protection from society and law and leaves open the opportunity to repeat the crime. Hence, violators resort to every possible strategy or explanation to conceal their crime. Studying the nature of male violence in the sex industry world over, Romito describes a set of hiding strategies that offenders usually use:

> When sex tourists are interviewed, they maintain that it is better for these little girls to earn a living as prostitutes than die of hunger (advantageous comparisons); on the other hand, it is not prostitution, but rather an amorous adventure where men are giving some kind of present (euphemistic labelling); everybody does it anyway (diffusion and displacement of responsibility); there are no negative consequences for the girls (distortion of the consequences); it is also the girls themselves who are looking for clients and hooking tourists (attribution of blame to the victim); in these countries children mature earlier and are more sensual (dehumanising) (Romito 2008: 115).

It may be useful to draw parallels between these strategies and the ways of concealment following mass-scale violence. In conflict settings, where violence has occurred between members of two or more communities, the same strategies of concealment or political rhetoric can be found. Members of the other group were committing violence too (advantageous comparisons); it was not offensive but defensive violence (euphemistic labelling); it was war and in war violence is normal (diffusion and displacement of responsibility); there are not as many victims as projected by statistics (distortion of consequences); if we would not have harmed them, they would have harmed us (attribution of blame to the victim); they do not deserve to live with us because they are not like us (dehumanising).

Concealing individual acts of brutality belies the reality of violence, producing instead, a kind of vagueness about the violent acts — people are aware violence happened yet who committed it, who suffered and what was the nature of the violence, these questions are eliminated. But the fact remains that violence was committed — the deaths, the physical injuries and the psychological traumas which victims and survivors live with happened through real, individual acts of violence.

Violence is striking with the hand, the fists, striking parts of the body with objects, the stomach, the back, the face, the genitals, violence is kicking, pulling, strangling, biting, pushing, violence is penetrating the body forcefully, tearing clothes. Violence is bruises, contusions, hematomas, broken bones, stab wounds, and lacerations to various parts of the body. This described reality is primarily physical violence, including sexual violence. Each of these physical forms of violence also entails a psychic occurrence, of experiencing and coping. It ranges from fear, humiliation, powerlessness, anger, and desperation to rigidity and apathy (Kunze 2002: 121).

When such details about violent acts are suppressed, the image which the word 'violence' produces in our minds is a very sanitised one.

The silence, the wordless of violence often leads to a characteristic generalisation in the discussion of violence. The use of the word concealment blurs its different levels of meaning for the intrapsychic reality, for the interpersonal reality, for the social situation, for politics, morality and culture (Kunze 2002: 121).

For the survivors of such violent acts, the fear and panic experienced during the act and afterwards, causes a breakdown of their physical and mental strength. Victims feel powerless in the face of the violence, and succumb to a form of senselessness during which they feel an urge to withdraw from the surrounding and be alone or find some way of escaping the reality. Keeping silent about the suffering, helps victims to cope with the unpleasant feeling, inner devastation and painful memory launched by the violence. For perpetrators, concealment becomes a way of avoiding self-confrontation, confrontation with the victim and confrontation with the society. Especially in ethnic conflicts, where violence is seen as an act of self-defence necessary against the ethnic other, concealing violence gives perpetrators a sense of self-justification and spares them of the psychologically difficult experience of self-confrontation and confrontation with the victims.

1.2. Denial of Violence

For the society, the way it deals with past violence reveals the position the society takes on the violence and determines the situation of victims and perpetrators and the likelihood of the process of healing relationships. Where mass atrocities have taken place, concealing such details of violence serves to dull the morality of society: people become indifferent to the crimes committed and apathetic towards the suffering endured by victims and survivors. In wars and ethnic conflict situations, concealment of violence is a premeditated strategy of those associated with the crimes. It entails more than simply refusing to acknowledge crimes; it happens in phases, first downright retraction from acknowledging crimes, to vilifying as

baseless or exaggerated the claims of sufferers, then suitably re-narrating criminal acts, and finally, bluntly justifying crimes (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014).

> Denial involves many people and works in many ways. The perpetrators of the violence deny it; their friends, relatives and accomplices deny it; the witnesses deny it, because they share fundamental values, because they are ignorant and because they are cowardly; sometimes even the victims deny it (Romito 2008: 122).

Where the individuals associated with crimes are in power, denial happens through active propaganda backed by elites and state institutions. State-sponsored rhetoric tries to muffle the voices of victims and feign ignorance of crimes, malign the activism around recognition and justice for crimes, misrepresent evidence of crimes and testimonies assembled by legal institutions, and issue public statements to the effect that victims invited the trouble or rightfully deserved the harm. For crimes like genocide, where neither outright disavowal nor inventing justification is possible because of the presence of overwhelming factual and narrative evidence and strong international sympathy, elites resort to 'interpretive denial' where they come up with an entirely different logic and time frame of the crime using the very instruments — documentation efforts, government reports, official statements — that were used to establish the crime. Thus, where denial exists, it clearly constitutes a political policy (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014).

In the *Hidden Violence against Women and Children*, Romito (2008) analyses the historical and sociocultural phenomenon of denying 'male violence' by referring to three principal methods of denying violence identified by Rhodes (1977). First, denying inequality: it allows a part of the problem to be ignored and only isolated events to be seen. The strategy is that if inequality (between men and women) cannot be avoided, recognising the inequality can be, that is to say, using self-deception for self-protection. Second, denying injustice: it comes into play when it is no more possible to overlook inequality. Here the strategy is that if the inequality cannot be ignored, it can be explained away as difference and not injustice (violence by men against women is not *male violence* but a manifestation of socio-biological difference between men and women). When both inequality and injustice cannot be ignored any further then, the final strategy, denying responsibility, sets in where any association with the cause of the inequality and the injustice is refuted (*male violence* is basically passionate courtship or unsatisfactory sexual relationship). Similar to Nettlefield and Wagner's concept of 'interpretive denial', the strategy of denying responsibility operates through what Rhodes

calls "interpretive control" where, since controlling the reality is not possible, attempt is made to control its meaning. Rhodes' three-fold denial mechanism can be used for explaining denial in the aftermath of large-scale conflict. Denying equality would be equivalent to denying the context — the socio-cultural circumstances — under which the violence took place. Denying injustice would be denying that those who suffered were innocent and the violence launched against them were criminal acts or violation of their human rights. Denying responsibility would mean denying that they have perpetrated and allied in perpetrating those crimes against the innocents.

In the case of Turkey's denial of the mass murder and trauma of Armenians, Turkey has been trying to remove all collective memory of the Armenian genocide[4] for decades not only in Turkey but everywhere else in the world. To contort the memory, two narratives have been proposed by the Turkish authorities and have found support among a small number of Western scholars too. The first narrative draws on the extraordinary circumstances of the war. The hardships of the war claimed the lives of both Christian Armenians and Muslim Turks. To save as many Armenians as possible, the Young Turks organised the deportation of the Armenians, but the plan did not succeed because of extreme chaos of the time (denying inequality). The second narrative draws on the claim that Armenians sided with the Russians in the First World War to bring about the defeat and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and pursue their own nationalist aim of establishing an independent state for the Armenians. To prevent Ottoman Turkey from breaking up and address the problem of collective treason of the Armenians, the Young Turks decided to deport them away from the frontiers to the interior of their territory (denying injustice). The number of Armenian victims according to these narratives are significantly diminished than the figures estimated by mainstream genocide analysts. The period 1970s onwards marked a phase of concerted political and diplomatic propaganda by the Turkish government to repudiate any claims of the Young Turks' association with the genocide of Armenians (denying responsibility). This campaigning was meant to directly counter the increased activities of second and third-generation Armenians to enlarge the audience of the genocide memory. Turkey's pertinacious denial of a crime committed by its imperial predecessor, a state which though had a Turkish

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[4] Armenian genocide was a genocide of approximately 1.5 million Armenians residing within the borders of the Ottoman Empire between 1914-1923 at the orders of the leaders of the Young Turk nationalist movement.

cultural and political nucleus but has ceased to exist since the First World War, can be attributed to five reasons: Turkey's self-image as a democratic state steeped in national honour; the risk that accepting the genocide would require it to pay reparations to the survivors; the surviving relatives of victims and the Armenian state; the fear that admitting guilt could provoke unrest in the transitional society; the difficulty of altering, after ninety years, the long-standing policy of denying; the confidence that since the genocide remained largely unpunished by the international community denial can also be done with impunity (Karlsson 2007). By denying, distorting, removing, contradicting, countering, rationalising, revising, revitalising, trivialising, justifying, mitigating facts, elites try to escape legal indictment and make political gains (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014).

Denial as a political discourse does not exist in isolation. Ordinary people too subsume denial in their everyday lives. For ordinary people, denial is not a result of the failure to come to terms with the past, but a deliberate effort to justify the atrocities in the interest of their perceived wellbeing. Ordinary people want to understand and incorporate the legacy of crimes; but they want to do it within socially and culturally acceptable boundaries. Hence they usually resort to denial with regard to violence. Denial comes to be deeply ingrained in the beliefs, narratives and practices of the community or society and often coexists with a subdued consciousness about the falseness of the denial. In the case of Turkish denial of the Armenian genocide, silence and outright denial concerning the Armenian genocide is shared by not only the state apparatus but such a large part of the Turkish population that it permeates all cultural-political manifestations in Turkey, from school textbooks to newspaper articles to legal provisions (Karlsson 2007).

Sometimes crimes are committed in a way that denial is integral to the crime. In the Srebrenica genocide where Bosnian Serb soldiers captured and clandestinely executed more than 8000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in the days between 11th and 19th July 1995, the Bosnian Serb soldiers made the non-combatant Bosnian Serbs, like the drivers who were bringing prisoners to the execution sites in their trucks, commit murders too, often by the lure of money, so that no one was guilt-free and therefore, no one would give away the truth when the crime would be found out (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014).

The effect of denial is far-reaching. Denial is a humiliation to victims and survivors because it negates their extreme experience. Information is made scarce; even basic facts are not accepted; family members of the missing have no way of finding the location of their loved ones. The result is that victims and survivors are not able to put the past behind and move on without violating the memory of their loved ones.

> By the twisted logic of annihilation, there is no exit, only limited human attempts to repair the social fabric, address the harm, and reconcile the past with the present, not by grand gestures or commissions, but by attempts to ameliorate the difficulties of everyday existence in a post war society incredibly marked by genocide (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014: 299).

The devastating impact of denial after mass atrocities is not limited to victims and survivors alone; it also affects those who are party to the denial and, more importantly, it poses a predicament for the world. In a daring book on the history of Israel's denial of crimes against Palestinians titled *Death of Judeo-Christianity*, author Lawrence Swaim (2012) conceptualises something called "systemic evil". Israel used various strategies of ethnic cleansing against Palestinians — from stealing from their homes and farms and dispossessing them of their houses and properties to torturing them and unleashing death squads. As a matter of fact, Israel owes its birth to the elimination of nearly 750,000 which was necessary to give Jews the demographic majority required to claim a Jewish state of Israel. But in the following decades, Israel relentlessly denied each of the accusations of crimes against Palestinians. Swaim argues that when a group of people lie in a systematic way to conceal an injustice, they are engaging in what can be called systemic evil.

2. Mechanisms in Search for Truth

Recovering the truth about past violence — documenting acts of violence and the political and social circumstances in which they were committed — has tremendous bearing on victims, perpetrators and the society. "How violence is perpetuated structures how violence may be addressed afterwards," note Nettlefield and Wagner (2014: 297). This means to delineate how reconciliation should proceed in a given context, it is necessary to know what all happened in the course of violence: what crimes were committed, under what circumstances, against who and by whom. Truth serves many purposes. First, discovering the truth is also a way of acknowledging the suffering of victims and proclaiming that the violence done to them is not acceptable. These conditions make victims feel safer and restore

their connection with the world. While dealing with mass atrocities, the central concern should be the restoration of meaning in the life of victims and survivors. When truth is exposed, victims' suffering becomes publicly recognised and that helps the victims in personal healing as well as transforming their relationship with the perpetrator (Kunze 2002). Second, investigating the truth reduces perpetrators' tendency to claim that victims deserved the atrocities unleashed on them and that it is they (the perpetrators) who are victims of false accusations. If there has been mutual victimisation in the history of the communities, acknowledging it may help perpetrators heal and open up to their victims (Staub and Pearlman 2001). Third, confronting the truth contributes to the advancement of democratic values in society. A society which denies past crimes faces serious risk of instability because crimes get found out sooner or later and then the knowledge of those crimes interferes with the current life of the public in unforeseen ways (Kunze 2002). Fourth, truth is necessary for bringing about forgiveness. When truth about atrocities is forgotten or repressed then forgivingness cannot be genuine (Chapman 2001). For repentance and forgiveness to come about, it is important to uncover the truth about the past, debate it publicly, and perform public remembrance of the truth (Shriver 2001). Fifth, truth is important in the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation can be meaningful only when the legacy of violence has been acknowledged, the crimes of the current and previous regimes have been made known, and causes of the atrocities have been determined. When social knowledge is created about the causes, nature, extent and severity of atrocities only then victims can feel motivated to forgive and reconcile (Chapman 2001).

> Memory is clearly foundational for forgiveness, since forgiveness is a means of confronting past wrongdoing that one holds before the mind, and it overcomes the emotions it engenders without relinquishing the judgement that one was wronged. There can be no forgiveness, as a conceptual matter, if one experiences amnesia with respect to the wrongs one suffered (Blustein 2014: 3).

Truth-telling should be a mutual exercise: if victims gather the courage to tell what they went through, perpetrators too must find the strength to tell what crimes they did, otherwise the truth produced would not be a shared narrative but a one-sided account of victims' suffering. When perpetrators own up to their crimes, and perhaps, show formal repentance (apology), then it becomes easier for victims to reckon with the idea of forgiving the perpetrators and reconnecting with them in a new civil or political community — one which is not based on wartime or old ethnic solidarities (Shriver 2001).

Truth about the past can be elicited both formally and informally. Formally, truth is recovered through institutions carrying civil or legal authority like truth commissions and criminal tribunals respectively. Truth commissions and legal trials are mostly studied as transitional justice mechanisms, where transitional justice is "seen as a driver of transition rather than only as interventions that follow a transition" (Skaar 2013: 60). The truth thus produced serves more purposes than encouraging forgiveness and reconciliation; it contributes to building sustainable peace, strengthening the rule of law, generating transparency and accountability, and advancing democratic values. Informally, truth is recovered through mechanisms of collective remembrance like commemoration ceremonies, monuments, films, theatre, novels, poems, works of art and so on. The informal mechanisms of dealing with truth shall be discussed in the next section.

In the post-conflict setting, most government have opted for either truth commission or criminal tribunal. Some nations have prosecuted, or aided in prosecuting, those responsible for crimes in international or domestic tribunals. Internationally noteworthy prosecutions are the Hague tribunal which prosecuted criminals in Former Yugoslavia and the Arushi tribunal which tried perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide.[5] These trials were inspired by post-Second World War Nuremberg trials set up to prosecute perpetrators of the Jewish Holocaust and the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 1945 on the principle of universal justice. In contrast to setting up criminal tribunals, some 21 other countries have established truth commissions. These are mandated to investigate and report their findings about the causes of major crimes in conflict settings, and sometimes, grant amnesty as well. Perhaps the most well-known is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Countries can establish both tribunal and truth commission. However, considering the complexity and volatility of post-conflict societies, most countries have usually chosen only one of the two. There is considerable debate among scholars as to which of the two approaches is more suitable for a given context because while both truth commissions and tribunals generate truth, the latter is associated

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[5] The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) established in 1993 is a United Nations court of law dealing with war crimes that took place during the conflicts in the Balkans in the early 1990s. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) established in 1994 is also a United Nations court for prosecuting persons responsible for genocide and other violations of international humanitarian law in Rwanda and neighbouring countries between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994.

with the goal of pursuing justice at the cost of the entire truth, while the former is supposed to mainly pursue deeper and wider knowledge of the real events, in search for truth.

2.1. Legal Tribunals

Domestic and international criminal tribunals are the most crucial legal channels for generating truth. Courts produce 'social knowledge' about mass atrocities, their methods of investigation are thorough and reliable and most of the legal findings are accessible to the public, which helps in deepening people's understanding of the true nature and intensity of the crimes committed by those being indicted. This contributes to broader discussions about the atrocities especially about the effects of the atrocities on society at large (Nettlefiend and Wagner 2014). The International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) that was established in Hague for prosecuting criminals of the Bosnian war (1992-95) has acted beyond legal redress to shape the international community's understanding about the events that led to the war, the crimes that happened during the war and its consequences. The Hague tribunal, as it is commonly called, made an especially significant contribution to the investigation of the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995. The exhumation of bodies from mass graves, forensic tests to establish victims' identity, documenting testimonies of survivors of the genocide, sourcing video footages shot by Bosnian Serb soldiers, and finally eliciting accounts from persons involved or witness to the killings; all contributed to establishing the fact of mass murder beyond the scope of doubt. The gradual revealing of the truth and slow prosecution of the principal characters responsible for engineering the genocide awakened the world to awaken to the nature and magnitude of violence that was done in that particular episode of the war as well as in the course of the entire war.

First hand accounts of survivors have a distinct place in the production of post-war social knowledge. Their accounts arouse the conscience of the international community to the horrors of the crimes committed. The surviving relatives of missing people are also a type of witness, who do not speak of the crimes but exhibit lasting trauma caused to the lives of their own, families of the victims, the communities and society as a whole. Video footages carry visual authority; they are hard to deny; they force the world to confront the barbarity present within it. Replaying footages as part of the prosecution for domestic and international audience is necessary because only after seeing and recognising the face of crime can people

understand and acknowledge those crimes (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014). For example, during the trial of Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb commander who personally ordered the Srebrenica massacre, the Hague tribunal presented video footages in which Mladic walks through a street in Srebrenica on 11 July (the day of the beginning of the genocide) famously issuing statements to the effect that by taking 'revenge' on the 'Turks', he was offering the town of Srebrenica as a 'gift' to the Serb people. Interestingly, while the world was shocked at seeing Mladic's footages, Mladic himself remained indifferent and unperturbed by the charge of crimes against humanity. It is reported that on the opening day of his trial in 2012, seventeen years after the massacre, Mladic gestured a throat-slitting motion in the courtroom in the direction of the survivors of the massacre who had come to witness his trial (The Guardian, May 16, 2012). This shows that trials can give perpetrators a global stage while diminishing victims (Kende 2007). Moreover, even in the face of overwhelming evidence, criminals and their supporters do not budge from denial of their crimes. The Bosnian Serbs have denied the Srebrenica genocide for the last twenty years and hailed Mladic as a hero who fought for the Serb people. The Hague Tribunal too has been reluctant to use the term genocide for the crimes in Bosnia including Srebrenica, perhaps because the legal definition of genocide is such that no amount of factual and narrative evidence can quite fulfil that definition. The reason for the lack of recognition of the Bosnian genocide is that the international community still considers the Holocaust as the yardstick for genocide. As a result, it has applied the term very inconsistently ever since it was coined and defined — the case of the lack of recognition of Bosnia being only one among many (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014).[6]

Furthermore, in transitional contexts where people of the prior regime stand accused of wrongdoings, prosecutions can generate new animosities between supporters of the previous regime and the rest who want to see social change. In conflicts involving two or more communities, where widespread atrocities have been committed, prosecutions can be problematic because there are too many offenders and each community wants to see the criminals of the other community in prison. Since it is not possible to indict every one of those responsible for crimes, communities are left with a feeling that prosecutors have been

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[6] Article 6 of the 1998 Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court defines the crime of genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

selective in indicting criminals. Some scholars also argue that retributive prosecutions have very little restorative value for victims. Seeing wartime state and paramilitary leaders under trial or in prison does not exactly help in alleviating the loss and suffering of victims and survivors. Prosecutions may even limit a final closure for victims and their families. Some scholars go further to argue that those victims and survivors who desire to see criminals and wartime leaders in prison are driven not by a sense of justice but revenge.

In terms of recovering the truth, certain scholars feel that since victims testify under the constraints of evidence rules, the truth-telling that happens during trials is not complete. Victims become subjects of investigation. The profile of victims as sufferers loses significance.

> Victims are rarely central at trials. They are spoken for and about, and they can appear as witnesses. Yet in order to make sense of and judge the violence, courts craft broader images of the victims. In many trials, survivor-witnesses find that they are not invited to talk about their experiences in a vocabulary and narrative form they find appropriate. Instead, survivor-witness testimony is often constrained, interrupted and redirected by questions, and gathered for purposes that are of little concern to the survivors themselves. Some trials might be more accommodating of survivor-witness testimonies that do not fit the scripts that are expected. Yet all trials will face the problem that witness testimony is received not (or not only) in an atmosphere of emphatic listening, but in the context of a criminal case in which much is at stake for the defendants and the prosecution. Witness testimony placed in an adversarial context necessarily becomes part of the courtroom contestations about narrative, causation, and responsibility. None of the trial participants has an institutional interest in listening to survivor-victims for their own sake, but most of the participants might want to use parts of witness testimony to further their own goals at the trial and beyond. There is a well-founded fear that "the translation of human suffering into the language of law and rights will always satisfy the interests of legal authorities more than those who are called to narrate their pain (Wilke 2011: 146).

From the academic point of view, however, criminal tribunals set up for prosecuting crimes in situations of mass scale violence can be a highly valuable space for understanding identities. Trials are aimed at establishing the rule of law by passing judgement on acts of violence. The trial procedures involve explaining why certain persons or members of a certain group were physically targeted by other persons or members of another group. In explaining this, trials have to understand the profile of victims, of perpetrators as well as of accomplices to the violence. By seeking to understand the profiles of victims, perpetrators and accomplices to the violence, trials bring to light the identities of these groups involved in the violence. Not only this, trials also reveal the identities of judges, prosecutors, defendants, and defence lawyers. The participants in trials (judges, prosecutors, defendants, defence lawyers and victims-witnesses included), in their turn, also often 'perform' their identities based on ethnic, racial, regional or political affiliation. Thus, although trials are meant for legally judging and

prosecuting acts of violence committed on the basis of identity, trials actually revive, reinforce or reshape identities, which were at the very root of violence.

The identities of victims of mass scale violence, for instance, is articulated by prosecutors of trials in a manner that does not necessarily accord dignity to victims or acknowledge their suffering but allows the prosecutors to frame a set of legal charges against the defendants and narrate those charges in a way that trials become acceptable to the wider population. In this manner, prosecutors often shift the focus from those facets of the victims' identities that made them targets of violence. The identities of perpetrators are articulated by prosecutors as well as their own team of defence lawyers. While prosecutors see perpetrators as criminals, defence lawyers glorify them as carriers of the nation's proud tradition. Trials also project a collective identity of the victims and of the perpetrators. The representation of the collective identities of victims and perpetrators gives trials the potential to make citizens think about their responsibility in the occurrence of violent events.

> The different actors in the trials ask the audience to identify with the victims or the perpetrators of violence. The nation of "bystanders" might feel pity or contempt for the perpetrators, be ashamed or oblivious of their own complicity, and regard the victims as suspicious, tragic or heroic (Wilke 2011: 119).

Therefore, by raising the issue of identity, trials go beyond their legal function to make a lasting impact on the way identities are perceived and shaped in society. Though at one glance, it appears that trials are limited in their impact because they can only pass legal, not moral, judgement on crimes and articulate injustices in legal terminology thereby side-stepping or downgrading the victims' sufferings, trials are actually an arena where a lot of social change takes place as far as identities are concerned. Trials are legal processes but within those legal processes, identities based on social and political affiliations are always at work. Identities are represented, enacted and debated in the courtrooms in the presence of victims, perpetrators, judges and national and international audiences. The first question of the investigation procedure in trials — who killed whom and why — can be the basis for understanding perpetrators' perception of victims. The answer to the question of who killed whom throws light also on perpetrators' self-identification. As the trial process unfolds, various identities — perpetrators' and victims' perception of each other and their respective self-identification — becomes emphasised and solidified. In the aftermath of mass-scale

atrocities, the victims' imposed and chosen identities, both become highly crucial. For framing charges of genocide, for instance, prosecutors must show that perpetrators intended to destroy a ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part. Thus, the victims' identity, as perceived by themselves, by the perpetrators and by the wider audience becomes reinforced in the charges of genocide. In other words, even in the process of testifying, identities become salient. Victims and witnesses refer to their identities in their testimonials by way of which, they are actually performing or staging their identities. Not only identities, the violence that took place is also restaged for national and international audiences and submitted for judgement. By re-staging the violence through investigation and narration in the courtroom, trials dispense educational and transformative roles, apart from the known juridical role (Wilke 2011).

In spite of having educational and transformative potential, trials may be limited in their capacity to question, unsettle and address collective identity categorises or generate reflection on collective responsibility for mass-scale atrocities. Trials may not be effective in addressing the social consequences of identity-based violence because they may resonate with the general sense of identity-based discrimination that led to the massive violence in the first place. Audiences, on their part, may fail to understand the distinctiveness of victims' identities that was at the root of commission of crimes against them. Indeed, victims of identity-based violence have the burden of representing the identity that caused their victimhood in the courtrooms. If the audiences are uncomfortable with that identity, audiences, both national and international, clearly dissociate themselves from the victims' suffering. Audiences may also choose to dissociate themselves from the perpetrators, in doing which, they withdraw from reflecting on their own passiveness, complicity or involvement in the crimes on trial. From the point of view of fostering reconciliation, trials may not go very far in dismantling the hardened identity-categories that prevailed and probably motivated the violence that happened. Trials certainly engage with identities, but these engagements are limited and strategic. They can at most capture and articulate the identities that existed or emerged in the period of the violence. Trials cannot show the way of unsettling the politicised identities. "Trials can only stage, express and embody what is thinkable and profitable to do on a national stage at a particular point in time. Trials can be valuable precisely for their obvious limits" (Wilke 2011: 148).

2.2. Truth Commissions

The second type of formal mechanism for generating truth in transitional societies is truth commissions. Truth commissions are temporary bodies created by national governments or international actors to investigate about acts of gross human rights violations and patterns of violence that took place during a specified period of time such as a conflict or under a regime. In the book titled *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, Hayner (2001) describes the role of truth commissions.

> (1) [T]ruth commissions focus on the past; (2) they investigate a pattern of abuses over a period of time, rather than a specific event; (3) a truth commission is a temporary body, typically in operation for six months to two years, and completing its work with the submission of a report; and (4) these commissions are officially sanctioned, authorized, or empowered by the state (and sometimes also by the armed opposition as in a peace accord). This official status gives a truth commission better access to official sources of information, increased security to undertake sensitive investigations, and a greater likelihood that its report and recommendations will receive serious attention from authorities (Hayner 2001: 14).

Unlike criminal tribunals, truth commissions are not mandated to carry out prosecutions. Their role is to document information related to criminal acts and create a narrative of the legacy of violence during the specified period. Once the findings of the truth commission are verified against accounts of the victims, an official acknowledgement of the abuses suffered by the victims in engendered. This lends credibility to the suffering of the victims and helps in restoring dignity to them forming the basis for further healing of their wounds (Chapman 2001: 257).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was established in the year 1996 on the same logic that the responsible way for dealing with past violence and its victims would be to end the collective amnesia about the violence and thereby create the condition needed to help victims regain their lost dignity and give them a befitting place in history. Given the disproportionately large number of victims, the seriousness and pervasiveness of the violations against them, and their critical emotional condition, it was believed that knowing about atrocities that had taken place would heal the victims and their relatives more than if they saw the perpetrators of these atrocities punished for their crimes. In other words, implicit in the decision to set up the commission was the prioritisation of truth over justice because concerns about the well-being of victims were put before the political obligation to

indict criminals. The South African Supreme Court President explained why truth was chosen over justice:

> That truth, which the victims of repression seek so desperately to know is … much more likely to be forthcoming if those responsible for such monstrous misdeeds are encouraged to disclose the whole truth with the incentive that they will not receive the punishment which they undoubtedly deserve … Without that incentive there is nothing to encourage such persons … to reveal the truth, which victims desperately desire (as quoted in Ntoubandi 2007: 168).

Truth commissions, and the process of truth-finding in particular, have two pitfalls. First, while truth is an essential ingredient for reconciliation in the long-run, but in the short-term, truth may have a destabilising, if not dividing, effect in society, for the obvious reason that one or the other section of the society would not be happy with the truth generated. Second, developing a formal account of a contested period, and being obliged to do so in an impartial way conforming to the academic standards of history or social science research, requires more than hearing testimonies of victims, survivors and witnesses, and crosschecking it with widely held beliefs and only occasionally with confessions of perpetrators. The authoritativeness of the truth generated by truth commissions stands on the legitimacy accorded to it by those affected by the truth — victims, perpetrators and witnesses. Only when they feel that the truth commission worked in an objective manner, adopted fair methods for eliciting truth, used reliable sources of evidence, would the truth generated have any meaning in society and would contribute to reconciliation (Chapman 2011). Truth commissions have often been criticised for tailoring testimonies to make them fit into larger narratives of violence and redemption. This points to a need for alternative platforms of truth where testimonies would be welcome but not directed and where testimonies would not serve someone's needs but help everyone understand the complexities of identities and commitments of those who suffered violence and state repression (Wilke 2011: 146).

3. Contestation over Remembrance

The search for truth about a violent period of the past yields factual and narrative information of the atrocities that were committed during that period, the identity of perpetrators and victims, and the political and sociological conditions under which the atrocities were committed. Truth, however, does not remain confined to personal memories and official documents, it affects the society and the different communities within it prompting a wave of responses which sociological theory terms as remembrance. For the individuals and society

that are witness to the violence, truth about the past evokes overwhelming grief and extreme trauma, shaking people's emotional and psychological balance and leaving other forms of lasting impact on their lives and well-being. Restoring this disrupted personal and social equilibria, requires a conscious effort at dealing with the violent past. In other words, to prevent violence from paralysing those directly or indirectly affected by it, a voluntary endeavour is required on the part of individuals and collectives, starting from simply facing the past to ultimately overcoming its grievous impacts. This endeavour of individuals and collectives to engage with narratives, facts and myths about their violent past with an aim to reconcile with it is the work of remembrance.

Remembrance is a conscious exercise resulting from deliberative recording of the past but is not as reliable or structured as history because it is constituted of individual testimonies, stories that have been circulated among people, and memories that have been passed on from generation to generation. Remembrance becomes especially crucial for societies emerging from violent pasts lies because it is this practice through which the public or the affected section of the public tries to make sense and construct meaning of a seemingly irrational episode of violence and the resultant trauma. Individuals come together to share their personal lived experiences of trauma and loss. Through collective actions, they forge the highly personal experiences into a complex, composite social narrative. They use a variety of literary, visual and physical mediums to create the remembrance. Remembrance is, therefore, not removed from personal memory nor does it depart from institutionally generated historical knowledge; it draws on both and moves beyond. Remembrance connotes a public refusal to push a negative past into oblivion and at the same time making a conscious effort to recover and perpetuate the memory of that past. "The work of remembrance both summons and re-enacts the past through movement and space" (Nettlefield and Wagner 2014: 38).

In recent years, there has been a worldwide escalation in the desire — or need — to remember the past causing, what theoreticians call the 'memory boom'. The attraction which the future held some decades ago, has now been replaced by an overwhelming interest in the past. The question that need to be asked is what make the past so pertinent? First, the coming of modernity and capitalism have created an environment of progress but at the same time they a caused a feeling of insecurity and disconnectedness — technology and culture are

advancing so rapidly that keeping up-to-date is a never-ending and unachievable goal. Under these conditions, remembrance of the past establishes continuity between the overly dynamic present and a supposedly more stable past, providing a sense of reassurance against the feeling of insecurity and uprootedness. Second, remembrance of the past has brought to prominence individual memories, diminishing the traditional reliance on the rhetoric of historiography (Pine 2011). Due to the growing interest in the past, the field of memory studies now has four overlapping concepts: past; history; memory; and remembrance.

Past refers to what happened in the days gone by (e.g. Malacca has a past of colonisation by the Dutch). Past constitutes of elements that represent or commemorate the days gone by including tangible elements like natural landscape, settlements, buildings, monuments etc. and intangible ones in the form of political and cultural knowledge passed down from generation to generation. These tangible and intangible elements of heritage are of little worth in themselves but acquire value when people give meaning to them derived from identity markers such as nationality, religion, ethnicity, class, wealth, gender, personal history and so on. Since it is people who accord meaning to the physical representations and narratives from the past, there is always diversity in how the past is understood and projected. The past has multiple interpretations therefore. Representations and narratives of the past are created in the present times. Whatever we consider to be the past is actually a product of what we need in the present. Interpretations of the past serve to justify actions and policies undertaken in the present. Since the present is ever-changing, the past is also not static since its representation is constantly changing and getting revised. At any given point in time, there are various versions of the past circulating in political and social discourses. These versions are usually in contestation and sometimes in dialogue with each other. The politics over the whose version of the past would prevail reflects the power equation in the state and civil society. Moreover, since the markers of identity, like nationality, religion and ethnicity on which the meaning of the past is based are usually exclusive in nature, the process of according meaning to the past takes the form of a zero-sum contest. In other words, creation of the past by one group, actively or potentially, disengages other groups from that past. Past belonging to one collective is not meant to simultaneously belong to another collective (Graham and Howard 2008).

When the past is written down by institutions or individuals carrying some form of authority, the past may be referred to as history (e.g. Lawrence Freedman's book titled *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign* considered to be the most authoritative narrative of the 1982 Falkland War because it is based on government documents and interviews with key participants). Most of the time, the production of historical knowledge (or historiography) is a state-sponsored task because of which history can be considered the official narrative of the past. However, it would be incorrect to say that history is always official. A lot of historical knowledge exists that was produced privately by historians, journalists, novelists and laypersons. These histories do not carry legal authority, but still are widely read and accepted (e.g. works of British historian Eric Hobsbaum on the 19th and 20th century history of Europe). History is supposed to be an impartial account of the past, but despite all claims to impartiality, there is some degree of bias always present. The history of most transitional and post-conflict societies, though created through the conscious recording of the past, contains myths that produce or feed into collective fear and periods of partial or complete blackout. So long as the context, causes and consequences of the past violence is not closely investigated and revived in contemporary debates, the past continues to live in the popular consciousness in vague or distorted and often torturous ways. Societies need to re-interrogate their past and revise their official history in order to come out of the horrors of the past. Today, our knowledge of the past is derived as much from historiography as from images and texts circulating unchecked in media and internet. It would not be incorrect to say that more people rely on media and internet than history books when they want to — or need to — learn about the past (Simac 2002). Although the historian has lost his monopoly over defining and presenting the past, when it comes to probing the truth about the past, examining evidence and interpreting them anew, there is no alternative to the work of the historian because the media may represent the past according to demands of a specific group or market needs (Assmann 2010).

Whereas history is a discipline whose rules and limits we learn and teach, memory is a faculty we live with. "Memory is the mental faculty by which we preserve or recover our pasts, and also the events recovered. Without that link - *now* reaching back to *then* - you may have an image of the past in your mind, but it isn't memory but something else, a social construction, history" (Hynes 1999: 206). This is not to say that history and memory are set

in isolation: when historians examine and document historical developments, they engage their own memories in forming their opinions on events and characters involved; when we think about the past, our mind imagines visuals and narratives, some of which are derived from historical writings, films, websites, museums etc. "History is memory seen through and criticised with the aid of documents of many kinds — written, oral, visual. Memory is history seen through affect. And since affect is subjective, it is difficult to examine the claims of memory in the same way as we examine the claims of history" (Winter 2010: 12). This means that memories recall the past experience but supplement the initial story with other elements. In other words, memory is not an exact replica of an experience because when the past is recalled, it is restructured at the same time — a number of incidents and personalities are contracted into one or some aspects of an event are highlighted or order of experiences is adjusted to cater to a particular worldview. Furthermore, memory also has a shelf-life. Memory is kept alive by constant iteration and reiteration. Retelling of stories enhances memory. Alternatively, if no active attempt is made to perpetuate memories, they exist passively, and sooner or later, die out. Passage of time too can diminish memory. As new memory deposits on older ones, older memory may lose their intensity or significance and decay eventually. Sometimes, flow of memory from victims and witnesses to next generations can also lead to forgetting or gradual fading out of memory, especially if social priorities have changed with times. Most of the time memory is forgotten or fade out — remembrance is an exception (Winter and Sivan 1999). Finally, memory of lived experiences are critically different in nature from memories of others' experiences. The former has a primary nature as opposed to the secondary nature of the latter. In the context of mass-scale violence, memory of those who survived or witnessed violence is characterised by trauma while memories of those who came to know about violence though hearsay is a dramatised narrative of the violence that has evolved in society to deal with the trauma associated with the violent. The myth about a violent event is constructed through the amalgamation of many individual narratives. Over time, a process of selection takes place: one incident is preserved, another forgotten or one character is highlighted, another downplayed. Usually, it is those incidents and characters which conform to the emerging myth of the violence that are retained. The mood of narrating the violence determines the selection of incidents and

characters. Incidents and characters in turn influence the mood of narration until a complete coherent collective narrative of the violence emerges (Haynes 1996).

When memory is relived, revived and refashioned through acts embodied in speech, movement, gesture, art and so on, such performance of memory is referred to as remembrance. Individuals and groups interpret, express, embody or repeat a script about the past. In the process, they invigorate the ties that bind them together while adding further memory traces about the past in their own minds. Ultimately, they create renewed and revamped memory which although being derived from earlier memory transcends the earlier memory significantly (Winter 1999). By revisiting previous memory, many of which may have been forgotten or sidelined for a long time, and framing memory to fit the necessities of contemporary culture and politics, remembrance gives birth to new and more complex narratives. These new narratives expand the traditional notions of collective identity that were built within the framework of history, and reconfigure it within the framework of memory and remembrance. Thus, remembrance serves a dual purpose: it is a means of knowing the past as well as of reflecting on the needs of the present. Moreover, remembrance is not a one time affair. It is an ongoing process, repeated ritualistically, thereby reshaped constantly. Since remembrance is founded on memory, it follows that memory and remembrance overlap conceptually. There is a lack of clarity about how memory turns into remembrance. Here it is important to note the performative nature of remembrance. Remembrance is not a straightforward act of retrieving and re-presenting the past: it begins with constructing a narrative of the past, keeping in my mind that the prospective audience may not have any direct, or even peripheral, connection with that past. The construction of narrative therefore is a meditated process — a performance. The audience in order to access a virtual past, consume the constructed narrative through books, plays, art works, films, television, newspapers, museums and memorials. In this way, the audience too participates in the performance. To be sure, the audience is not benign: it questions the significance of the acts of remembrance and seeks to identify the strategies of cultural mediation at play. The element of performance can be considered the conceptual turn from memory to remembrance (Pine 2011).

Remembrance is a way to respond to past trauma. There are several ways of remembering past trauma: it can be remembered with empathy or with distress; it can be represented in continuity with the present or as a closed chapter. In societies with violent pasts, remembrance is characterised by a distinct pattern of representing the past: remembrance is meant to evoke a discomforting vision of the past. For remembrance of a traumatic past, the passage of time is essential. When trauma is still fresh, it is very difficult to memorialise it. When trauma recedes into memory, a divide is created between the past and the present. This separation of the past from the present lessens the impact of the past trauma on the present enabling reflection on the past suffering and subsequent memorialisation. Before audiences engage in remembrance, they must be in a position of relative security in the present and for that elapsing of time after occurrence of the traumatic event is extremely necessary. Passage of time can also serve as a criterion for distinguishing between memory and remembrance. Memory is a cognitive process of recording an event. Memory-making begins within moments — if not at the same time — of the occurrence of the event. In some cases, there may be a delayed memory when the sufferer is way too devastated by the trauma to be able to cognise it at the time. Remembrance, on the other hand, is a process of memorialisation of an event. Remembrance happens when a substantial breadth of time has passed since the event. This time gap allows audiences to reflect on the trauma and then memorialise it in various ways (Pine 2011).

3.1. *State Sponsored Remembrance*

The state is an active agent of remembrance as are actors in the civil society. State-sponsored remembrance work, or national remembrance, usually represents the predominant needs and values of the general public (Koshar 1998). States subscribe to a set of ideas about the past that are subsequently embedded in the social learning process of the people through education and socialisation (McDowell 2008). States engage in producing narratives about the country's past, erecting monuments or assigning particular days for commemorating events, places and people of national importance. The question for researchers is, why do states undertake such acts of collective remembrance, what purpose does it serve for the state? Collective remembrance foster a sense of togetherness and cultural solidarity which plays a key role in forming and legitimising national identity (Lowenthal 1985). National

identity is founded on collective remembrance (Saito 2006). Memory leads to construction of personal narratives; personal narratives conjoin to become a collective narrative and the latter ultimately define the members of the nation. With every new historical development, people reconstruct their collective memory and consequently, their collective identity is redefined. Collective remembrance process is, therefore, a recurrent reconstruction of collective memory and identity. In the process of reconstruction of collective memory and identity, a traumatic event plays an especially important role because it violently disrupts people's memories and unsettles their identity. The traumatic event poses as an enduring problem which must be resolved through repeated remembrance work. From the point of view of research understanding collective remembrance then requires explaining how people construct the problem (the traumatic event), what solutions appear to be realistic to them within the current socio-political context (the possible ways of commemorating the event) and why at a given time, people opt for one solution (one particular way of commemoration) and not the other. This conceptualisation of remembrance work as the repeated attempt to solve the lasting trauma posed by a tragic event can be termed by Saito (2006) as 'reiterated problem-solving'. In the reiterated problem-solving conceptualisation of collective remembrance, the range of solutions available are not unlimited. They are narrowed down by the commemoration choices made in the past, that is to say, previous commemoration sets a limit to the possible ways of commemorating by giving a historical direction for future commemoration. In the context of nation-states, where collective remembrance serves to strengthen national identity as mentioned previously (Lothenwal 1985), the use of collective remembrance to recuperate national identity can be seen as a reiterated problem-solving approach where actors choose one way of remembrance rather than another depending on how and how far it recuperates national identity. The remembrance of Hiroshima in Japan illustrates very well the reiterated problem-solving conceptualisation of collective remembrance. Hiroshima was almost forgotten in the aftermath of the Second World War. Between 1945 and 1951, there was no national memory of Hiroshima. Then an incident in 1957 — the exposure to radiation and subsequent death of crew members of a boat, Lucky Dragon 5, while fishing for tuna near Hiroshima — led to the revival of trauma associated with Hiroshima. Following this incident, which made headlines in national news, a fear of exposure to radiation directly or through consumption of contaminated tuna spread

nationwide. The Japanese population felt that their initial victimisation, through bombing of Hiroshima, was continuing because of lasting effects of nuclear radiation. Soon anti-nuclear movements swept the country with repeated use of the phrase "thrice victimised by nuclear weapons" Saito (2006). What is more, earlier when survivors of Hiroshima were mentioned, a feeling of pity would arise from the larger Japanese community. After the Lucky Dragon 5 incident, however, the survivors came to be viewed with sympathy. Japanese people learnt to identity with the survivors. Thus, in the backdrop of the Lucky Dragon 5 incident and the subsequent anti-nuclear movements, Hiroshima emerged as a national trauma. The nationalisation of the memory of Hiroshima was also evident from the shift in attitude towards survivors, so much so that survivors became the unifying factor in Japanese community and the symbol of Japanese national identity — the victims of atomic bombing. The nationalisation of the memory of Hiroshima and the concomitant redefining of postwar Japanese national identity elucidates clearly the recruitment of collective remembrance in the process of national identity formation and legitimisation.

Governmental institutions are ever-present in remembrance work so much so that the state interferes even in common people's remembrance work. The tendency of the state to interpolate the social learning process is termed by Winter and Sivan (1999) as 'distortion'. To begin with, most governments place limits on the freedom of expression and action in people's remembrance work. The Hiroshima bombing can serve as a pertinent example here too, this time in the context of America. For example, school textbooks in America are shamefully silent on the moral and political implications of the bombing. Typically, textbooks devote one or two paragraphs or at the most one page to the event. Certain specifics of the textbook treatment of the bombing and its moral and political implications. Most texts give facts and figures in the abstract, for example, "on August 6, 1945, an atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a Japanese city. More than 90,000 people were killed or missing after the blast" (Sobel et. al 1982: 559 as quoted in Kazemek 1994: 532). There is also a glorification of the nuclear technology that went into the making of the bomb: "The United States had demonstrated the most awesome weapon of war the world had ever known" (May 1985: 669 as quoted in Kazemek 1994: 532). If the moral side of the bombing is discussed at all, there are usually arguments justifying the bombing. For example, Japan would not have surrendered if the bombs were not dropped or the United States hoped that dropping the

bomb would end the Second World War quickly and thereby save the lives of thousands of American soldiers. Such specifics clearly indicate that there is a check by the government on the truthfulness allowed in school textbooks on the Hiroshima bombing. This check is intended to prevent schoolchildren from critically thinking or at least reflecting about the ethical questions related to war and peace.

Authoritarian regimes may go further than most other governments in distorting the social learning process. They may put severe limits even on small-scale remembrance work, let alone larger ones. State elites try to manipulate or reinterpret memories of events, at the moment of the happening or much later. For instance, in a study on remembrance in Soviet Russia Merridale (1994) discusses the efforts of the Soviet elites to wipe out collective remembrance of victims of wars, famine, political and cultural purges, labour camps and industrial disasters. The Soviet case of distortion of collective remembrance is prominent because of the sheer scale of fabrication. Russia lost around 60 million people in the first fifty years of the twentieth century. 23-26 million lost their lives prematurely in the 1914-1922 Civil War preceding the creation of USSR. 10 million died from collectivisation measures. The subsequent famine in the year 1932-33 wiped out 1.4 - 4 million. In addition, 1.5 million disappeared as a result of political executions between 1936-38. More the 26 million died during the period of the Second World War, of which not everyone was combatant; many were victims of the continuing campaign of state repression. After the Second World War, Soviet elites engaged in grand and elaborate commemoration of this war calling it the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45. But at the same time, they tried to liquidate the memory of the millions of deaths that happened in the country by destroying material evidence, denying or distorting facts, and brutal repression of those who attempted to speak out. What is noteworthy is that denial existed not only on the part of the state, but also on the part of victims who collaborated with the state in suppressing stories and evidence of deaths. They feared that coming out with their stories would not lead to public acknowledgement of their suffering but also bring forth more repression from the state and thereby cause more material and psychological suffering. State suppression and people's compliance with it, however, did not manage to wipe out remembrance. Despite all this denial, personal memories were obstinately preserved and circulated privately. They did not make a political impact

immediately but over time, they developed into collective understanding of bereavement (Merridale 1994).

3.2. *Civil Society led Remembrance*

While state plays a significant role in creating or manipulating collective remembrance, much of the remembrance work that goes on in society is spontaneous and outside the control of state institutions. Actors in the civil society seek to undermine and sometimes support the state to redefine the memory of the past. This contestation and dialogue, between civil society and state institutions as well as within civil society, all of this constitutes collective remembrance. "Remembrance consists of negotiation between a multiplicity of groups, including the state. In this process, all actors are not equal. Repression happens, but counter-voices can also be heard" (Winter and Sivan 1999: 30). Civil society is a hardly straightforward domain. It comprises of several actors such as individuals, families, social groups led by secondary elites, non-governmental organisations among others. Their identification as a civil society actor of remembrance is primarily based on their position with respect to the state.

3.2.1. *Individual Remembrance*

In the aftermath of mass violence, the individuals who usually participate in remembrance are those who suffered violence intimately or were peripherally affected by it. The occurrence of violence is a traumatic experience for them, a serious and enduring shock whose memory lies latent and may recur suddenly depending on the individuals will to recall and the existence of an external trigger such as similarity in environment, smell, noise, etc. Under specific conditions, even long after the actual occurrence of the traumatic event, the presence of extrinsic triggers can produce overwhelming memory of the event, which at one point, may potentially become paralysing for the individual experiencing it. These individuals engage in remembrance then, not necessarily to raise the society in consciousness about the violence, but to deal with their own grief, fill the void and restlessness inside their selves, to create a lobby for achieving material gains, to get revenge or exoneration, or to honour the dead. From this, it is not to be inferred that traumatic memories are always mobilised. For various reasons, many survivors and witnesses prefer to push their memories into oblivion and never

speak out in public. Interestingly, silence over trauma is just as — if not more — frequent and widespread than remembrance. Some traumatic events may have such an overwhelming effect on sufferers that they are unable to register anything at the time. Later on, and involuntarily, the events may be recalled vividly by the sufferers, a phenomenon termed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This may lead to a recurrence of memories and resurgence of remembrance work (Winter and Sivan 1999).

The stories of individuals who experienced the violent event directly or peripherally can be called personal narratives. Personal narrative as not a mere record of what actually occurred but also a deliberation on what can be done of what has occurred. The closer the act of recording is to the time of occurrence of the event, the greater the purity of the narrative will be. Correspondingly, the further the narrative is from its event, the greater the element of reflection and the less pure the narrative will be. Examples of least reflective personal narratives are letters and journals. Letters and journals involve very little or no retrospection, they simply report; hence they can be considered the purest form of personal narratives. Passage of time allows for retrospection. Personal narratives produced after some or significant lapse of time do not simply report what happened but contain reflections on the questions: what did the happening mean, how did it affect me, how did it change my life? The most reflective personal narratives are war-memoirs (Hynes 1999).

Personal narratives are based on the subjective experience of individuals. However, in essence, personal narratives include much more than what individuals have themselves experienced. In the process of narrative construction, individuals interact with the surrounding, sharing their lived experiences and learning about other's experiences. This communication already renders a social quality to personal narratives because they are interactively constructed and connect with others memories. Furthermore, in verbalising memories or writing them down for audiences who did not live in the time or space pertaining to the memories, individuals use the medium of language and memory aids like documents and images, most of which are not unalienable property of the individuals. Once again, there is exchange of information and complimentarily of memories. The personal narratives thus constructed are no longer purely personal — they acquire a social quality — and can therefore be regarded as a collective (Assmann 2010).

3.2.2. Collective Remembrance

When individuals bring to task their personal narratives, in an effort to remember collectively, that process or activity is referred to as collective remembrance. Collective remembrance of war or mass-scale violence is the product of individuals and groups coming together, not at the behest of the state, but with the desire to voice and memorialise their experiences. Their resolve to act in public through various oral, visual and material means is profoundly personal, and yet they are not strictly private matters because they exist within the framework of social action. Collective remembrance thus involves agency (individuals and groups that produce, express, and consume the memories), action (acts of speaking out in public, creating associations, writing memoirs, producing films, etc.), and motivation (intention to memorialise past traumas for various social and political reasons) (Winter and Sivan 1999). Important to understand is that collective remembrance is not a one-time monolithic activity; it is an ongoing enterprise in which agents congregate and negotiate on the borderline between the private and the public, between families, civil society and the state. Important to note is that whereas collective remembrance is the product of the activities of many, or rather countless, individuals, the personal narratives which they contribute enmesh to form such a collective, which has an existence of its own. "What they [individuals] create is not a cluster of individual memories; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts," note Winter and Sivan (1999: 6). The transition from individual narratives to collective remembrance is a problematic theme. Most scholars of memory studies are not confident in explaining how, why and when a multitude of personal narratives metamorphose into collective remembrance. "In what sense are personal narratives collective? Are they generated by some common impulse beyond the personal? Are they conditioned by states of mind outside themselves? Do they individually belong to the art of public memory? Of national memory? Or are they a set of essentially private transactions between a man [individual] who was there and the things that happened where he was?" asks Hynes (1999: 205). Indeed, the conceptualisation of collective remembrance leaves room for speculating how individual narratives that are inherently diverse, synthesise into a collective.

Some conceptual clarification in this regard is provided by Assmann (2010). She subdivides the category of collective remembrance into three: social; political; and cultural. (1) Social

memory refers to the past as experienced and communicated (or repressed) with a given society. Social memory exists within one generation — individuals of more or less same group, who witnessed the same events, and share similar beliefs, values, habits, and attitudes, create a social memory, which lives and dies with them. Social memory does not undergo gradual change but changes over a period of roughly thirty years — the time span of one generation. (2) When institutions and social groups like national, ethnic and religious communities create memory for themselves using symbolic objects like monuments, and performative actions like commemoration rites, with the intention of constructing or reconstructing their group identity, it is referred to as political memory. Construction of such memory is a deliberate action based on inclusion and exclusion of certain elements and people. Together with political memory, these institutions and groups construct and reconstruct their identities. There are four differences between political memory and social memory. First, while social memory lasts one generation, political memory is designed to endure generation after generation. Second, social memory is inherently diverse, fragmented, and volatile; political memory strives towards homogeneity, unison and stability. Third, social memory it is not recruited for fulfilling a purpose, it simply exists; political memory is charged with emotions, moral messages and a political agenda such as reinvigorating group identity, reviving past traumas, and honouring the dead. Fourth, social memory may or may not have temporal representations, political memory always has so. Political memory is anchored around oral, written and visual materials as well as perforative actions. (3) Cultural memory refers to the systematic and highly elaborate strategies for storing and transmitting information deemed essential for perpetuating the identity and existence of a specific group. The carriers of cultural memory are educational institutions, museums, arts, literature, customs, rituals etc. Like political memory, cultural memory is also designed for trans-generational audiences, but whereas political memory involves selection and rejection, cultural memory does not necessarily bear the validation of cultural institutions, media or the general public. As a result, cultural memory has the potential for innovation and reconfiguration. Another aspect of dissimilarity between cultural and political memory is their orientation: political memory is oriented towards homogenisation and some political agenda; cultural memory has a participatory orientation such as involving individuals in learning, reading, writing and critiquing (Assmann 2010: 41-44).

Related to the theme of how a large number of individuals working separately can be attributed the quality of a collective is the question whether groups can remember. Blustein (2014) offers a useful threefold typology of groups: random assortments of individuals; nonrandom assortments of individuals; and collectives. (1) Random assortment of individuals is a group in which the individuals do not share any common trait and have come together by chance, without really having the need to or intent to. For example, victims of a train wreck, who in the aftermath of the accident come together to express grief. These individuals form a community of grief but they do not have familial ties nor do they share a common identity. (2) Nonrandom assortment of individuals is a group in which individuals share a common trait but have come together by chance. The Jews of eastern Europe who were rounded up by the Nazis during the Holocaust, for example, shared a commonality of being Jews, but gathering together as a result of Nazi persecution was against their will. They did not desire to gather as Jews nor act unitedly as Jews, except in some cases of organised resistance. Nonrandom assortment of individuals lack the capacity to decide and act jointly. In collectives, individuals are conscious of belonging to the same group, act in coordination or solidarity to achieve some common objective, and make their contribution as individuals to achieve that objective. (3) In collective remembrance, In collectives, the individuals who comprise the collective are related to each other in various ways and act together in pursuit of a common goal. This does not mean that every individual in the collective must be related to the other nor that every individual must act in pursuit of the common goal or even pursue the goal. At the core of it lies certain individuals highly committed to the act of memorialisation. Other individuals may join them on the basis of ideological, social, cultural, religious, ethnic, national, gender and other similar forms of affiliation. Therefore, while it is logically correct that groups cannot actually feel grief or hatred — only this individual and that individual can — yet social groups can be attributed with emotions, attitudes and other mental states depending on how we conceptualise the collective. Blustein insists that it is only in the context of the third type of group that we can speak of collective remembrance.

> [R]esistance to the idea of collective attitudes and emotions may in part be traceable to a confusion about what collectivity commits us to in this context. It does not commit us to holding that a collective is a sort of ontologically distinct entity that feels emotions, that is just the individual writ large with all the mental states that the individual has only magnified. On the contrary, these are still the emotions of individuals, only now they are collectivised. Like collective memories, these emotions are transformed by being communicated to and shared with others in the group, and they are collective because the emotions of

each are adjusted to, shaped by, integrated with the emotions of the others. rather than my and your hatred, or disappointment, or grief, the emotion becomes ours (Blustein 2014: 8).

The agents of coalescing memory are media such as spaces, memorial books, theatres, poems, songs, commemorative performances, websites, newspaper and television. These media converge and invigorate each other, and at the same time ensure the circulation of memories. In so doing, they assist in forming mnemonic communities by providing a means to articulate and to perform affiliations in a public way (Rigney 2008).

> Once verbalised, the individual memories are fused with the inter-subjective symbolic system of language and are, strictly speaking, no longer a purely exclusive and unalienable property. By encoding them in the common medium of language, they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed — and, last but not the least, written down, which preserves them and makes them potentially accessible to those who do not live within spatial and temporal reach. … Individual memories are not only inseparably fused with language and texts, but also with material images. Photographs are important props of memory which not only trigger specific individual recollections but also tend to represent them. In these cases, the boundary between individual memory and shared material document is often not easy to draw (Assmann 2010: 36).

Agent of Remembrance	Nature of Remembrance	Process of Remembrance
State	National remembrance	Commemoration ceremonies, monuments, marking places, collecting artefacts etc.
Civil Society - Individuals - Collectives (including identity-based groups, non-governmental organisations and other informal groups associations like youth, women, widow, invalid's associations)	Personal remembrance Collective remembrance	Personal narratives in the form of letters, diaries and journals written from the warfront, memoirs developed from personal recollections of violence experienced firsthand, memoirs developed from hearsay etc. Commemoration ceremonies, marking of places, collecting artefacts, books, monuments, novels, movies, documentaries, paintings etc.

Table 1. Tabular representation of state sponsored and civil society led remembrance showing agent, nature and process of remembrance (based on above discussion).

3.3. Ethics of Collective Remembrance

In societies that have experienced widespread violence or mass atrocities in their recent past, remembrance is extremely necessary for dealing with memories of the traumatic past. As

discussed earlier, remembrance is an ongoing multi-dimensional process involving both public and private actors, involving different social, political and cultural activities, and recruiting a wide array of material and symbolic tools; because of this, remembrance has a strong and lasting impact on society as a whole and its members individually (Rigney 2008). Remembrance signals, first and foremost that the past is over, providing some sense of relief from the trauma of lingering memories. Through remembrance, both sufferers and observers get a chance to reflect on the past and introspect on their pain. This can lead to an unlocking of emotions withheld for a long time.

> Memory work has several dimensions in addition to the political, among them existential, moral and ideological ones. The existential dimensions are related to personal identity, to stability and meaning in individual life, whereas the moral dimensions draw on indignation over various perceived or real injustices and maltreatment. The ideological dimensions, finally, are connected to beliefs and convictions that both stimulate the recollection of certain images and are strengthened or undermined by them (Karlsson 2007: 19).

Second, remembrance establishes continuity between the traumatic past and a promising future. The occurrence of widespread violence or mass-scale atrocities leaves an enormous void in the lives of survivors, witnesses and society at large, which is extremely difficult to fill. People living in the aftermath of such outrages constantly battle with their memories to stay connected with reality. Remembrance helps in dispelling, in the long-run, the vagueness and uneasiness associated with the traumatic memories, helping people to return to the present life. Third, by repeatedly reminding of past tragedies, remembrance serves as a lesson for the future, or more precisely, for the present. Remembering is an obligation of every society, but more so of societies emerging from mass violence because forgetting the past threatens its return in unforeseen ways. "We remember the past to avoid a future that will result from the nefarious effects of an uncritical present," says Souffrant (2011: 18). Remembrance invokes reflection and judgement on the past by way of which similar tragic occurrences can be avoided in future. Finally, remembrance of past wrongdoings is an attestation of the suffering of the victims (Blustein 2014). Memorialising conveys the message that the dead are not forgotten nor the suffering of victims is ignored. Therefore, "the dead have given everything; the living, symbolically or tangibly, offer something in return," or put differently, "…since the dead aren't present: hence the need to represent them" (Winter and Sivan 1999: 38). Alternatively, remembrance is a refusal to let wrongdoings escape into oblivion. Remembrance warns perpetrators and audiences that wrongdoings are

not evadable. In societies that are recovering from painful memories of mass violence, remembrance therefore contributes to reconciliation in more than one way.

The above mentioned effects of remembrance, however, present an ideal scenario. In reality, the effects of remembrance are far more complex. To begin with, acts of memorialisation performed by one group may face objection by the other group or certain members of the other group. This is especially common in the aftermath of identity-based violence where members of two or more groups have targeted each other. Remembrance for the victims of one group outrages the other. The other group may engage in counter-memorialisation to discredit their remembrance work. There may also be instances of dissension within a group where members disagree over what, how or who to memorialise. Further, memorisation may produce mixed feelings in victims, audiences and perpetrators. Not all victims would find consolation through remembrance. Similarly, not all sections of the audience would like to remember horrifying crimes as a way to overcome the resulting trauma. As for perpetrators, they seldom, if not never, engage in remembrance. They may even try to undermine the remembrance work of victims.

Considering that those who engage in remembrance face such odds, the work of remembrance cannot be taken at face value. Memorialising is certainly the core activity but there is a twofold intention behind memorialising. First is to give meaning to the past, and thereby influence the present. Remembrance is a way of interpreting the traumatic past in such a way that would validate or legitimise actions and policies undertaken in the present (Harvey 2008: 19). In contemporary power struggles where one of the arenas of contestation is control over representation of the past, remembrance is a method of influencing that representation. Actors compete to remember the past in their own way to be able to predominate the present scenario. Remembrance has actually more to do with the present than the past: remembrance is meant for the people who are involved in remembering than those who are being remembered. "Acts of remembrance are often less about the past and the dead than about the present and the living. Memorialising people, places and events produces knowledge that actualises the past both in the present and the future," claim Nettlefield and Wagner (2014: 38). The second motive behind remembrance is to influence collective identity of those performing the remembrance. Interpretation of the past plays a very

important role in defining collective identity — who we are and who others want us to be (Saito 2006). Remembrance is one of the ways of ensuring that a certain version of the past prevails over others. In this way, remembrance can be a medium through which collective identity can be revisited, revived, reshaped or reasserted. In the aftermath of mass-scale violence, groups that suffered violence engage in remembrance to foster a sense of collective trauma which then heightens their sense of belonging to the group. Acts of remembrance are usually performed by the victims, survivors and witnesses of the actual violence. With the passage of time, the work is joined and taken over by members of the second and third generations. Through remembrance, they all try to prevent the forgetting of the traumatic events and at the same time reinvigorate their collective identity. For example, genocide remembrance among present-day Armenians is aimed at, first, expressing their frustration at the persistent Turkish denial of the genocide and at the international community's lack of sincere interest, and second, fostering camaraderie among the huge and vastly displaced Armenian diaspora and the Armenians living in Armenia (Karlsson 2007).

Among memory scholars, the debate on remembrance revolves around two questions: whose responsibility it is to remember and what is it that should be remembered. In the aftermath of widespread violence or mass-atrocities, there are simply too many perpetrators and victims, blurring the distinction between victim and perpetrator and between perpetrator and bystander. Also, such is the intensity and extent of violence that it is impossible to tell what crimes were committed and on what scale. Due to these reasons, the question of responsibility to remember and content of remembrance become very complicated. Most memory scholars although agree that remembrance is necessary in the aftermath of widespread violence, debate over the moral responsibility and subject of remembrance.

Moral responsibility of remembrance is a theme we often overlook assuming that it is victims who would want to — or need to — memorialise the traumatic past. In cases of widespread violence, however, where entire society is affected, and where, as mentioned earlier, identities of victims and perpetrators is not clearly distinguishable or the blamelessness of bystanders is not certain, memorialisation should not be an activity restricted to victims or a particular identity-group but must involve as many sections of the society as possible. When guilt is ascribed to individual wrongdoers, all those who were associated with the crimes in one way

or another get discounted. The practice of ascribing individual guilt results from perceiving societies as atomistic where actions of one individual does not affect or is not affected by another. This atomistic view of society also informs the moral thinking on reconciliation because of which responsibility to protect is not seen as collective but responsibility of individuals. Guilt of crimes and moral responsibility of protecting rests with collectives (ranging from identity groups and paramilitary organisations to business corporations and academic institutions). From this it follows that violence committed on all sides should be equally acknowledged, and victims, irrespective of which side they belong to, should be cared for, simply because they have suffered. If guilt for crimes and responsibility to protect are perceived as collective, then responsibility to remember lies on everyone in society rather than a select few (Souffrant 2011). In most cases of widespread violence, perpetrators continue to live nonchalantly after having committed grievous crimes while victims sever in their painful memories. If victims must forbear from revenging, then perpetrators must forbear from professing innocence. This is to say that along with victims, perpetrators should also participate in remembrance. Only when both victims and perpetrators are involved can remembrance help in reconstituting their disrupted relationship (Shriver 2001). The wider the participation in remembrance work, the greater its reconciliatory reach. However, garnering participation in remembrance is easier said than done. For perpetrators and audiences to join in remembrance work that recalls victims and their pain is not at all natural. Nevertheless, that must be the goal. Remembrance should benefit society as a whole even though remembrance is primarily about victimhood. Furthermore, the extent to which the suffering of victims is recognised depends on societal interest. In the aftermath of extensive violence, a society must have continued interest in recognising the suffering of victims and learning the truth about the past — exposing crimes, finding details of atrocities committed and singling out criminals — even years and decades after the end of the violence because the past determines the future of the society. However, keeping societal interest alive is an extremely difficult task (Kunze 2002). When generations which suffered and perpetrated violence no longer exist, memories naturally tend to decay. The next generations find it extremely difficult to prevent forgetting and fading out of memories because social priorities change. Herein lies the role of remembrance: through repeated representation of traumatic memories, remembrance can keep up societal interest in uncovering the truth about the past.

Remembrance compels participants to revisit the disturbing facts and myths about the past. In the long run, this can be of tremendous importance to society as a whole for emerging from the trauma of mass-scale violence (Winter and Sivan 1999).

The content of remembrance — what to remember and how to remember — is a question equally complicated as moral responsibility to remember. Commonly, remembrance after widespread violence memorialises the dead and suffering of victims and survivors. In societies emerging from mass violence, however, perpetrators continue to live alongside victims, and audiences too often question victims' innocence or are not sympathetic to them whole-heartedly. Under these circumstances, a victim-centric remembrance process can elicit hostility or indifference from one or the other section of society. Furthermore, if remembrance arises from memories of excessive suffering, it usually leads to a kind of blindness to reality and, in particular, to the suffering of others. When there is too much suffering, the memory does not forget that suffering, and a memory burdened with torture endured is often followed by excessive remembrance of one's own suffering and a heightened forgetfulness of one's own crime (Vukovic 2001). It must also be noted that excessive remembrance of suffering can intensify trauma over time rather than abetting it. When trauma associated with an event is revisited year after year, for decades after the event, grief and anger of survivors stay alive, continuing to shape their thoughts and actions and making their memory of trauma stronger. This often results in future generations experiencing greater trauma and developing more intense feeling about injustice suffered than the generation which survived the event. In the context of Jewish memory of the Holocaust, Swaim (2012) argues that the Holocaust's ability to affect thought and behaviour has increased with the passage of time. This is because many of the people who were actually imprisoned in the camps had time to get used to that situation and experienced a sort of psychic numbness that helped them survive while members of the second- and third-generation were brought up by deeply traumatised parents who in general grew up under normal circumstances and had more or less normal childhood memories. This means that terror learned by hearsay leaves a deeper impression than that experienced directly. Remembrance keeps past wounds alive and active within the community intensifying the sense of being wronged and influencing the way community members think. In short, remembrance produces an ever-swelling experience of trauma.

Sometimes remembrance can be intentionally intended towards reproducing collective memories of a community with their misfortunes in such a way that it leaves the community with a lasting feeling of victimisation. Remembrance can be intended towards reconstructing a deceptive narrative of the past which interferes with the original memory of the past and fits political agendas of those in power into it. In simple words, remembrance can easily be prey to political manipulation (Simac 2002). The language of remembrance, for instance, can be a medium of manipulation. Language embodies emotion and power: language can inspire dialogue but at the same time can incite conflict. This implies that language is not neutral. By extension, language of remembrance is fraught with meaning. Language of remembrance can be used to acknowledge truth about the past and overcome trauma but it can also reflect the power dynamics of society. Hence, "to the extent that politics controls language, politics also controls memory" (Gay 2011: 115).

Owing to controversies in remembrance work, theorists constantly debate on what is the ethical way to remember past tragedies so that it does not renew or create new sources of feud, and at the same time memorialises criminal acts and suffering of victims. The work of Simac (2002) is illuminating in this regard. He distinguishes responsibility to remember into two types, objective and subjective. Objective responsibility refers to impartial moral judgement of crimes: recognising the evilness in acts, singling out perpetrators and recognising the evilness done by perpetrators. Subjective responsibility refers to feeling of guilt that accompanies recognition by perpetrators and those around them of the evil in crimes. The guilt of one generation is not inherited by next generations because of which, subjective responsibility disappears with the death of perpetrators. But there are many crimes such as genocide which outlive their perpetrators and victims and become a lasting burden in the collective consciousness of successive generations. For dealing with memories of such crimes, objective responsibility in remembrance work is important. After the occurrence of horrifying crimes, focusing remembrance primarily on suffering, victims and the dead, may not be enough. We want society to learn from the past and take caution to not allow such crimes to recur in future, and for that, remembrance should be carried out in a way that sinks the savagery of these occurrences in the minds of people everywhere. In other words, remembrance should highlight the tragic and evil nature of these crimes, giving the message

that regardless of who and how many the victims are, such crimes are unacceptable anywhere in the world (Simac 2002).

4. Ethic of Forgiveness

The discussion on remembrance leads to another major component of reconciliation — forgiveness. Forgiveness is commonly understood as renouncing one's need to take revenge on those who have done wrong to us. Forgiveness is sacrificing, for the sake of common good, the gratification one might feel by avenging the wrong done to oneself. It is usually very difficult, sometimes even impossible, for sufferers to forgive wrongdoers because the situation which occasions forgiveness is one of grave atrocities. Blustein (2014: 3) defines forgiveness as a means of confronting past wrongdoing by overcoming the emotions it engenders without relinquishing the judgement that one was wronged.

Political theorist Hannah Arendt (1959) was the first to claim that forgiveness is an effective response to injustices of the past. She believed that in our day-to-day lives and the realm of modern day politics, it is important to replicate the forgiveness shown by Christ on the cross otherwise revenge and violence will know no end. Following Arendt, American theologians advanced forgiveness as a way of recovering dysfunctional relations in societies which experienced violence. These theologians believed that by appealing to peace and goodness, forgiveness could be a response to situations where violence had assumed cyclic patterns. Over the last two decades, these claims have developed into a full-fledged discourse in which forgiveness is seen as a possible response of victims and is considered the ethical framework within which meaningful reconciliation can take place in the aftermath of collective violence.

4.1. Theological Origin of Forgiveness

The origin of forgiveness in the reconciliation discourse can be traced to the Catholic tradition of the Christian faith. Forgiveness was present in Christendom since the early medieval period but did not feature prominently in everyday life or in politics. It was practiced only in the private realm, that is to say, between God and the individual. For grievance redressal between individuals, some form of forgetting or ignoring was common while for redressing political offences, retributive punishment were used. Only after the Protestant Reformation and the Roman counter-reformation, forgiveness emerged as a

standard church doctrine. Initially it was not popular outside pietistic circles, however, throughout the history of church, forgiveness was the fundamental teaching of the Catholic faith (Peterson 2001).

The lesson of forgiveness is contained in the story of Jesus who, despite his evident guiltlessness, yielded to a murderous fate to set the moral precedent for humanity that violence must not be reciprocated with violence even if it costs self-sacrifice. Christ's giving himself up on the cross and eventual resurrection is explained in Christian theology as exemplifying unconditional forgiveness. Unconditional forgiveness is a virtue which requires that sufferer must forgive the one who has caused harm because sufferer and wrongdoer are bound by common humanity. Biblical tradition also lays great emphasis on good relations between neighbours: relation with one's neighbour is comparable to one's relation with God. Forgiveness also serves in restoring neighbourly relations between sufferer and wrongdoer and thereby rebuilding community life. Christian forgiveness, therefore, involves personal spiritual transformation and reconciliation between former enemies.

> Reconciliation, a restoration or even a transformation toward an intended wholeness that comes with transcendent or human grace, expresses the result of a restored relation in behaviour. Forgiveness expresses the acknowledgement and practice of this result (Peterson 2001: 13).

Cultural anthropologist Girard (1986; 1987) writes that the Christian theology of forgiveness is set in the account of Triune God, according to which, forgiveness was shown in the first instance by God: he accepted humankind following their corruption as individuals and as a collective. Forgiveness is thus a gift from God to humankind, where God and humankind share a relationship of the form of a covenant. Humankind is repentant for its sins and would like to reciprocate God's forgiveness in everyday life in interpersonal relations in order to retrieve their lost integrity as individuals and as a group. Interpersonal forgiveness would entail restraining from avenging the harm done to us. Renouncing the urge for revenge is not a sign of weakness but prudence intended at reclaiming life. The Christian theology of forgiveness is considered by many as having universal significance. It can be applied to interpersonal relations in situations other than everyday life such as in venues where grave atrocities or widespread injustices have been committed. Furthermore, though forgiveness may not be present as a sacrament in other religions, it has its parallels like mercy, compassion and acceptance, therefore, forgiveness can serve as a model of behaviour in non-

Christian circles as well. Based on these convictions, many scholars have suggested that forgiveness can be an effective non-violent means of promoting reconciliation. Their perspectives have led to the development of a thread of scholarship on reconciliation which is centred on Christian forgiveness.

Reconciliation in the aftermath of violence involves two parties: a perpetrator (one who violates) and a victim (one who suffers the violence). Reconciliation requires both victim and perpetrator to relinquish their status as the violated and the violator, and face the incident of violence without feeling revenge and hate. By introspecting on the experience of violence, the victim is moved to offer forgiveness so that the suffering which the violent act caused to both victim and perpetrator can be healed. Since the perpetrator would not be expecting his/her crime to be forgiven, the victim's forgiveness would take the perpetrator by surprise and make him/her realise the magnanimity shown by the victim. The victim's gift of forgiveness to the perpetrator breaks the cycle of hatred and presents the opportunity for restoring the relation between victim and perpetrator. When the victim reflects upon his/her suffering, s/he undergoes a personal spiritual transformation which makes forgiveness easier to come about. Spiritual transformation also leads to an altered perception of the self with God. The process of reconciliation is thus: spiritual transformation of the self, then, transformation in perception of God and, finally, change in attitude towards the perpetrator leading to forgiveness. Throughout the process of reconciliation, priority lies with the victims, and the final aim of reconciliation is reconciling with God (Sarcevic 2002).

Furthermore, forgiveness is an ethical virtue because it involves giving up oneself for others. Following the occurrence of violence, victims come to consider perpetrators outside their moral community. Through forgiveness, victims move from morally excluding the perpetrators to morally including them through acknowledging their claims. Morally including perpetrators is very difficult for victims because it means they have to extend their moral boundary to include those who have previously excluded them morally by victimising them. To promote forgiveness both victims and perpetrators need to redraw the parameters of their moral community.   One of the ways for that could be to acknowledge our common humanity. Forgiveness begins as a private act but it requires the involvement of both victims and perpetrators: only when forgiveness is acceptable in principle to all those who are

affected by it can forgiveness be a moral framework for healing. Therefore, forgiveness is the first step in the process of reconciliation: one may forgive and not reconcile but one never genuinely reconciles without some form of forgiveness. At the same time, forgiving does not mean forgetting. If victims forgive without perpetrators having accepted responsibility and apologised for their crimes then forgiveness would be meaningless. If efforts are made to institutionalise forgiveness, such as through truth and reconciliation commissions, then victims may come under pressure to forgive, which can again lead to a mock forgiveness process. The basis for healing can be created only through the involvement of both victims and perpetrators in altering the idea of their moral community in such a way that the other party gets included in that community (Murthi 2009).

4.2. *Forgiveness in Relation to Truth and Justice*

There is a long-drawn debate between scholars on how forgiveness, an essentially spiritual element, can fit within the framework of reconciliation alongside the temporal elements of truth and justice. Their arguments explore the relationship between forgiveness, truth and justice, seeking to determine whether truth and justice are necessary for forgiveness or can forgiveness be an unconditional ethic in the process of reconciliation. One of the prominent contributors to this debate is Catholic scholar Miroslav Volf (2001, 2002). He argues that there are two ways in which the relationship between forgiveness, reconciliation and justice can exist. In the first way, reconciliation does not include establishing justice. Justice and peace are seen as inimical to one another, therefore, for the sake of peace, justice is not pursued as part of reconciliation. Forgiveness is offered by the sufferer to the offender as if s/he had not committed the crime at all. Reconciliation of this form, in which justice is included, betrays the pain and loss of the sufferer. Although this form of reconciliation has often been justified on the basis of Christianity but it is not the way reconciliation is conceived in Christianity. One of the intrinsic contents of Christianity is the struggle against injustice, therefore, a concept of reconciliation based on Christian principles must involve justice. Moreover, forgiveness is not simply about overcoming anger, it requires the sufferer to give up a rightful claim against offender. Since forgoing a rightful claim is in itself unjust, therefore, forgiveness must take place in conjunction with justice. In forgiveness outside justice, sufferers make no moral demands against wrongdoers thereby discounting their

offence. In the second way, justice is a precondition for reconciliation. If reconciliation efforts are deferred till justice is established then reconciliation might never happen because the idea of what justice should entail would differ from community to community and sometimes from individual to individual within the same community. If justice of some form is established as a precondition for reconciliation, that justice serves only to satisfy the sufferer's sense of what is right without healing the sufferer because it does not rebuild the broken relationship between the sufferer and the wrongdoer. In reconciliation of this form, forgiveness is postponed until justice is established. Forgiveness after justice means that sufferer lets go off their desire to take revenge against the wrongdoer because the implementation of justice ensures that the wrong is adequately redressed. Like in forgiveness outside justice, in forgiveness after justice, the offence is not attributed to the offender whereby the sufferer is betrayed. Further, forgiveness helps to end the bitterness in the relationship between the sufferer and the wrongdoer but that forgiveness is hollow because the sufferer does not go beyond his/her duty in showing generosity to the offender. This is not in accordance with Christian theology where forgiveness is a natural gesture by the wronged for the wrongdoer — an expression of the magnanimity of the sufferer. Forgiveness cannot be separated from justice because forgiveness involves a tacit affirmation of the criminal act. The idea of forgiving presupposes that if the damage done by the crime could be completely restored by justice itself then forgiveness would not be needed at all but precisely because justice cannot be fully or satisfactorily delivered that forgiveness becomes necessary. Healing a society emerging from mass violence requires healing both victims and perpetrators, for which, it is necessary to establish some form of communion between them. When Christ gave up his life on the cross, forgiving humankind in spite of bringing him death, he set an example of forgiveness for posterity — that people should do in the world as Christ did for them. If the Christian virtue of forgiveness is applied to violence-ridden post-violence societies, it can help in healing relationships through a form of reconciliation approach in which justice is not altogether excluded but also not held as a precondition for forgiveness. In such a reconciliation process, forgiveness is unconditional, that is, it is not dependent on whether the wrongdoer repents for his/her wrong or s/he is willing to redress the wrong committed. The sufferer does not assume that forgiveness would invoke repentance by the wrongdoer. Yet, forgiveness usually brings forth repentance. When an offender who does not

feel repentant, in a way s/he refuses the guilt whereby s/he also turns down forgiveness. The unrepentant wrongdoer remains an unforgiven wrongdoer despite being forgiven by the sufferer. Forgiveness therefore is a part of the process of reconciliation, a process in which the search for justice is an inseparable yet subordinate element to forgiveness (Volf 2001, 2002).

In the aftermath of mass-scale violence, forgiveness is often envisioned as public forgiveness. Public forgiveness is crucial for transitional societies in order to restore the social bonds that get damaged when some become perpetrators and others victims. Perpetrators need to be returned to society on an equal footing with others because perpetrators are also part of the society at the end of the day. But there is a serious legal and moral dilemma surrounding public forgiveness: should forgiveness be granted without perpetrators having asked for it. Granting forgiveness without being asked for amounts to amnesty, which ultimately amounts to forgetting the crimes committed by the perpetrators. In cases of widespread violence where there are too many perpetrators, the state needs to not only forgive but also forget some criminal acts to lessen or finish the disharmony in society arising out of the past violence. It is for such political reasons usually, that amnesties are granted. There are special state legislatures for granting amnesty. There are two types of amnesties: those that let-off the criminal acts, and those that let-off the punishments. Amnesty is not given to individuals, but entire class of criminal acts, including those not yet discovered, and entire category of punishments. Following the granting of amnesty, those criminal acts that are publicly known or those punishments that are officially issued are removed from state records while those criminal acts that are not yet known are never investigated or exposed. The criminal acts or sanctions for which amnesty is granted cannot be mentioned in public discourse thereafter. By equalising sanctioned perpetrators with other citizens before the law, amnesty helps to bring back the balance in society. Amnesty thus serves society primarily, not the individual. Invoking public forgiveness when perpetrators have not asked for it is a political move done in the interest of society. It follows that though public forgiveness may be sought keeping in mind the greater good, it nevertheless remains a political catch. What victims stand to gain from it, is not certain (Simac 2002).

Publicly seeking forgiveness for one's sins exists in the Catholic faith as a way of returning to the community of those who had fallen out after they had become part of the Holy Spirit. It involves high state officials seeking forgiveness. For example, Pope Francis asked for forgiveness on in 2017 for the crimes and failings of the Church during Rwanda's 1994 genocide, adding that he hoped his apology would help in healing the trauma of the Rwandans (Dawn, 21 March, 2017). Calls for forgiveness can be accompanied by drastic fall in feeling of having sinned. Sin is different from guilt: sin is a religious notion, guilt is not; sin exists only before God, guilt exists with respect to law and the generally accepted standard of normal behaviour. Seeking forgiveness refers to release from guilt, but with release from guilt in the political realm, consciousness of sin at the personal level and everything that is associated with it also disappears — seeing one's own crime, taking responsibility and repenting for the crime, and willingness to make the appropriate amendment to compensate for the injustice done. Proponents of public forgiveness must take into account these detrimental effects of it (Vukovic 2002).

Related to the forgiveness is the notion of un-forgiveness. Un-forgiveness is produced when people deliberate over the transgression and its consequences, transgressor's motives, their own responses to it and the range of potential responses. Rumination about the transgression leads to resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, anger, and fear. These emotions motivate people to avoid forgiveness. For encouraging forgiveness, un-forgiveness has to be reduced, and un-forgiveness can be reduced through re-establishing a sense of justice and working towards social justice. In the aftermath of mass-scale violence, for reducing injustice, punitive and restorative measures can be used, for example offender might offer to engage in an act that would work to restore the victim's loss, or offender might engage in private or public ceremonial acts of admittance of guilt, apology, repentance, confession and/or seeking forgiveness. For establishing social justice, measures are needed that can progressively reduce the conditions which facilitated the crimes. Some of these measures include making social structures more just, reforming judicial system, and monitoring behaviour of offenders. When those who have suffered injustices work toward social justice, their level of un-forgiveness is reduced because their negative emotions are diverted to a socially good cause; as a result, they can be more willing to forgive (Worthington 2001).

Furthermore, forgiveness does not mean forgetting crimes of the past, pretending as though they were not committed or letting crimes go unpunished. Forgiveness means coming to terms with the past in such a way that victims are able to free themselves from the traumatic memories and make a new start. Schreiter (2002, 2008) writes that forgiveness is the work of God according to the Christian view. The one who has suffered injustice must move from a decision to forgive to actual forgiveness, but ultimately it is God who forgives sins. Reconciliation too is the work of God — the human participates and cooperates in God's work but it is God who shows the way. Pursuit of justice, in one form or the other, must follow forgiveness but forgiveness does not necessarily require establishment of truth and justice because forgiveness is a spiritual experience which depends on the relation of the individual with God. Boloban (2002) claims that forgiveness is neither exclusively God's gift nor human achievement — forgiveness comes from human cooperation with God. Forgiveness does not mean denying the crime committed, or denouncing one's rights to justice that should be executed. Forgiveness is a chance for victims to face their traumatic memories. Those who forgive do so on the understanding that although the crimes are unforgettable, the traumatic memories need to be healed, and for that forgiveness is one of the main ways. Those who do not forgive remain bound to the past making it hard for themselves to live in the present. It must be noted that although forgiveness is known to promote personal healing and social reconciliation, forgiveness cannot be extracted from those who suffered: the virtue of forgiveness lies in victims' personal decision to forgive wrongdoers.

Most of the focus on forgiveness is with regard to offering of forgiveness by victims. Equally important, however, especially in the process of reconciliation, is asking of forgivingness by perpetrators. Just as offering forgiveness is a religious way of dealing with injustice suffered, asking forgiveness is a religious way of dealing with injustice caused. Asking forgiveness should be a means for perpetrators to take responsibility for their wrongdoings — taking responsibility assumes repentance for crimes committed. The notion of taking responsibility comes from the sacrament of confession in the Catholic faith. It entails taking responsibility for one's own crime for healing the wounds caused to the victim. The sacrament of confession involves three actions: seeing one's own crime and removing the blindness that helped and followed the crime; admitting the crime and taking responsibility of one's own

crime; and rectifying or compensating for the crime. Accepting guilt in confession is different from accepting guilt outside confession. The former leads to forgiveness for sin, relief from the burden of guilt, and a chance to make a new beginning. The tendency among wrongdoers however is to avoid taking responsibility for their crimes. They may use various strategies: avoid taking responsibility for their crimes or assume some form of blindness towards the crimes; project themselves as victims of earlier injustice and expect to be excused for their crimes; deny the crime altogether instead of simply denying responsibility for crimes, that is to say, pretend that the criminal acts never happened and victims are lying; argue that victims were not innocent but deserved the violence or that victims were equally responsible for crimes as them; justify the violence in the name of higher obligations and duties such as claiming that their actions were for the good of their community, society, and nation; argue that violence was ordered by their seniors in which they had no choice but to commit the crimes otherwise they would be charged for disobedience or disloyalty; and question the morality of those who accused them of crimes and deny the right of those people to accuse. Whereas many wrongdoers may have actually been victims of injustice or violence in the past, justifying crimes on that basis only leads to perpetuation of violence. Similarly, even if victims are not completely innocent, it does not lessen the guilt of those who committed crimes against them. It may also be true that commands from higher authorities cannot be disobeyed, nevertheless, personal morality and discretion should prevent following immoral orders blindly. Finally, denouncing accusers does not relieve wrongdoers of their guilt. Perpetrators need to take responsibility for their crimes. If they do so, they will become conscious of the harm they caused and may feel repentant for their actions. Only with the admittance and repentance of guilt can wrongdoers be forgiven for their crimes, and wrongdoers and their victims be reconciled. In the process is reconciliation, therefore, forgiveness need not always be unconditional — forgiveness from victims may be expected after perpetrators have taken responsibility and repented for their crimes (Vukovic 2002).

It is extremely difficult to bring about admittance of guilt on the part of perpetrators and forgiveness on the part of victims because perpetrators and victims exist in a very complex relationship in the aftermath of mass-scale violence. Violence leads to a gross asymmetry in societal relationships: perpetrators become the victorious and dominant group while victims become the humiliated and persecuted group. For reconciling victims and perpetrators in the

aftermath of violence, the asymmetry between the two groups has to be rectified. Both groups are responsible for this. However, their responsibilities are not the same. Perpetrators need to acknowledge the harm they inflicted while victims need to renounce their feeling of victimhood and desire for revenge. The goal of guilt acknowledgement and forgiveness is to restore dignity to both victimiser and victim. Forgiveness cannot be demanded from victims because it is not easy, if not impossible to re-humanise the other who has dehumanised us. Forgiveness after all belongs to the realm of the personal and must remain as a personal choice of the victim. What can be at the most is to create conditions that would make forgiveness more forthcoming (Hicks 2001).

The forgiveness-centric ethical conceptualisation of reconciliation suffers from certain biases. First, forgiveness is a voluntary act — victim offers forgiveness to perpetrator as a gift, without the perpetrator having acknowledged his/her guilt. Promoting forgiveness as a universal ethic of reconciliation without emphasising on acknowledgement of guilt and establishment of some form of justice undermines the suffering of victims and their sense of injustice. Further, the view that forgiveness is a precondition to reconciliation shifts the burden of initiating reconciliation on the victims. The result is that victim's call for justice before forgiveness is equated mostly with the desire of revenge. Second, religion is a contextually specific category because of which, notions and practices extracted from religion cannot be universalised. Since forgiveness originates in Christian spirituality, universalising forgiveness as an ethic of reconciliation reflects a bias towards Christianity and the Western culture. What is thought of as 'generally' ethical is actually Christian and Western in particular. Privileging the ethics of the dominant culture also reasserts the historical inequality between cultures and communities. Third, universalising the ethic of forgiveness shows an assumption that what is good is also just. Forgiveness may be good, but is promoting forgiveness in non-Christian or multicultural societies just? Universalising religious peacebuilding ideas and practices disregards the peculiarities of individual conflicts and the enduring history of the concerned society. It also disregards the plurality of society, forcing non-Christian societies to conform to Christian ideals. Reconciliation in multi-religious societies based on Christian-specific ethics borders on proselytism. To harness the peacebuilding potential of religion, the subfield of reconciliation needs to move beyond applying the Christian ethic of forgiveness in a de-contextualised manner to developing ethics

that would contextualise religion, conflict and peace and view religion critically (Omer 2012).

5. Interreligious Dialogue

In the last two decades, scholars have increasingly paid attention to the potential of interreligious dialogue in contributing to reconciling hostile relations between members of different ethno-religious communities. A small but growing number of scholars argue that instead of universalising the Christian virtue of forgiveness, the theory and practice of reconciliation could benefit greatly from interreligious engagement that is not founded solely on spirituality but also on ethics that does not privilege one religion or community over another, but instead creates real opportunities for diverse cultures to meet. Most of the recent conflicts, regardless of the nature of their root causes, have taken on religious overtones because of the presence of religious diversity in societies. Religious diversity usually poses theological and moral problems for individuals with regard to how to evaluate the truth-claims of other religions and how to behave with persons of other religions. Therefore, for reconciling relations between hostile ethno-religious communities in multi-religious societies, an approach is required that can address the issues arising out of religious diversity in the long-term. Thus far, there are three theoretical approaches for dealing with religious diversity: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. According to exclusivism, there is only one true religion — one true path to salvation — and all others are false. According to the inclusivism too, there is only one true religion, however, other religions are not altogether false, they are lesser paths to salvation. According to pluralism, all religions, despite their differences with each other about the notion of the divine, are equally true paths for attaining salvation. The exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist approaches, all look at religion as asserting epistemological truth claims. However, to view religions as epistemological truth claims is, first and foremost, to overlook the ethical dimension of religion, and secondly, to pit religions against one another thereby inciting animosity and violence. Considering the inadequacy of these three approaches, several scholars have proposed a fourth approach to deal with the conflict and violence caused by presence of religious diversity — the dialogue approach.

Interreligious dialogue has existed for several decades as a practice for deepening understanding between individuals of different religious communities in order to build peace

and harmony in the world. According to the traditional conceptualisation of interreligious dialogue, it is a process in which people of diverse religious backgrounds meet in a spirit of mutual openness, honesty and trust. It is a process of synthesising, integrating or converging religious approaches on a common question or theme (Grung 2014).

> [Interreligious dialogue] is human communication that seeks to establish (or develop) a world of shared meaning (and possibly shared action) among the dialogue partners. It is also a sacred communication in which participants witness to the truth of their own faith as well as being open to a new experience of truth in the encounter. This is not to assume an uncritical approach to another tradition; but it does espouse a willingness to set aside premature judgments that arise from prejudice and ignorance, the twin enemies of truth and understanding. The other enemy of truth may well be one's own ego, the supposition that oneself or one's own tradition is the final arbiter of all that is true. In reality, as we discover in interfaith dialogue, Yahweh/God/Allah alone is absolute, so that all our human efforts, theological formulae and religious systems fall far short of describing or naming the Ultimate Reality (Hall 2005: 5).

In the wake of outbreak of several ethno-religious conflicts in the 1990s and the associated devaluation of religious voices in the public arena, politicians, religious leaders, academicians and activists felt the urgency and co-responsibility to join religions together as a common voice for peace. This gave rise to the Chicago Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993, which pleaded for commitment to non-violence, tolerance and respect for life through formulating a global ethic derived from the spiritual and ethical resources of religious traditions. The representatives of the various religions at the Chicago Parliament engaged in interreligious dialogue with a secular mindset, engaging with the non-religious others as well on equal terms. Since the convening of the Chicago Parliament, interreligious dialogue acquired a new life, as a catalyst for personal, interpersonal and social transformation, locally and internationally, directed towards to promoting cooperation on societal issues in substitution for social conflicts (Hall 2005). In terms of theorisation too, interreligious dialogue made significant progress. The models of interreligious dialogue that circulated in the 1990s were purely theological in terms of content, participation and goals. With the assailing of violent conflicts, interreligious dialogue came to concern itself with socio-political issues. Its participation diversified to include political, secular and non-religious persons. The latest models in the interreligious dialogue have been proposed from the conflict resolution and peacebuilding subfield. They aim to broaden the theory and practice of interreligious dialogue to promote religious tolerance and coexistence.

5.1. *Traditional Normative Theories and their Critique*

Several scholars have attempted to classify and name various forms of interreligious engagements that happen across the word. It may be useful to overview some of these before embarking on an elaborate study of the peacebuilding perspective on interreligious dialogue. One of the most widely quoted idea of interreligious dialogue is the fourfold classification: dialogue of histories; dialogue of theologies; dialogue of spiritualities; and dialogue of life. This fourfold approach is advanced by Gort (2008). It is based purely on Christian ecumenicism. (1) Dialogue of histories concerns itself with socio-political and economic relations in the past between the religions of the dialogical partners concerned. It raises painful issues of collective oppression, exploitation and (in)justice. (2) Dialogue of theologies is intended to remove a mutual lack of knowledge and understanding in the doctrines and values of the religions of the dialogical partners. (3) Dialogue of spiritualities brings believers of different religious traditions together to talk heart to heart about their faith and trust in God and thereby make possible the full acceptance of the other. (4) Dialogue of life brings religious and other actors together for collaborative actions on social concerns such as conflict, injustice, poverty. Interreligious dialogue progresses from the need to revisit suffering stored in collective trauma (first level), to exchange of ideas and information in the present despite the traumatising past (second level), to exchange of lived experiences that excite one's emotion (third level), and finally, putting the roused emotion into a motivated practice for preserving life (fourth level). In the first level, the focus of dialogue lies on recognition of traumatising differences; in the second level, dialogue is intended to overcome stereotypes; in the third level, dialogue is to bring about acceptance of differences; and in the final level, dialogue aims at mutual coexistence through action (Gort 2008).

According to another theological approach, offered by Tyagananda (2011), interreligious dialogue has four models: replacement; fulfillment; mutuality; and acceptance. (1) Replacement model: If dialogue is based on the exclusivist approach, according to the which there is only one true religion while the rest are false, then those initiating in dialogue intend to replace the false religions with the one true religion, which is their religion. (2) Fulfilment model: If dialogue is based on the inclusivist approach, according to which there is only one true religion but other religions also contain some truth because of which they can serve a

preparatory purpose, then those initiating the dialogue hold that followers of other religions will eventually convert to the one true religion. Those who fail to convert would be permanently deprived of divine blessing (3) Mutuality model: If dialogue is based on the pluralist approach, which recognises all religions of the world as equal socially and intellectually if not spiritually, then, dialogue can happen in a manner that members of different religious communities can gain from each other by mutual sharing. This is called mutuality model of dialogue. (4) Acceptance model: If dialogue is based on the acceptance of all religions are considered as equally true at every level, then dialogue can give every religion the freedom to express itself and grow in its own way. This is called the acceptance model of dialogue according to which diversity is not a problem to be overcome but as a reality to be celebrated. In the replacement model, dialogue is really just a monologue directed towards converting the others to the one true religion. The fulfilment model of dialogue is basically a more tolerant version of the replacement model. The mutuality model, if done in an open-minded environment, can lead to expanding and enriching one's religious consciousness. The acceptance model of dialogue has the potential to affirm spiritual unity without diminishing the value of religious diversity (Tyagananda 2011).

Yet another theological approach to interreligious dialogue based on a typology of culture and the attitudes towards religion and religious others is offered by Minnema (2014). Culture can be classified into three types: traditional; modern; and postmodern. (1) In traditional cultures, religion is assumed to be self-evident truth and an infallible way of life. Religious others are treated as strangers, not to be ostracised but not to be included either. Interreligious dialogue in traditional societies, therefore, can be in a from of 'dialogue of ritual hospitality' (making visits to each other) and 'dialogue of religious narratives' (explaining the meaning of religious texts and rituals). (2) In modern cultures, religion can be mobilised for socio-political purposes in the form of identity, ideology or symbol thus making religion a source or tool of conflict. In modern cultures, where religion has actually facilitated conflict, religious other are considered as opponents — the attitude towards religious others is one of misconception and mistrust. Interreligious dialogue in such circumstances should be aimed at reciprocal learning and confidence building. Some of the forms of interreligious dialogue which promote these are dialogue of histories (mutual sharing historical and contemporary narratives), dialogue of doctrines (clarification of theological concepts at the cognitive level)

and dialogue to promote shared aspirations. (3) In postmodern cultures, religion is seen as a field of choice and amalgamation — individuals have the freedom to choose which religion they wish to adhere to depending whose ideas appeal to them or believe in a combination of values from different religions. Religious others are considered neither as strangers or opponents because the religious borders between individuals is blurred. Consequently, interreligious dialogue in postmodern cultures is aimed at mutual sharing of personal experiences and mutual spiritual growth. In other words, a dialogue of spiritualities is appropriate for postmodern cultures. Although the purposes of interreligious dialogue are different for the three cultures, most contemporary societies display attributes of all three cultures because of which interreligious dialogue practices should not follow any one model rigidly (Minnema 2014).

Some scholars have attempted to broaden the field of interreligious dialogue by theorising it in a progressive fashion — from theological to increasingly political. Scheffler (2007) provides a classification of interreligious dialogue where the objectives widen from theological to socio-political issues. He states that interreligious dialogue can be directed towards one or more of the following goals: (1) Creation of a new universal religion, such as Ramakrishna Order, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's "Transcendental Meditation", and some branches of modern Sufism. (2) Building multi-faith organisations, such as the World's Parliament of Religions (first convened in 1893 in Chicago and revived in 1993) and the World Congress of Religions for Peace (1970). Most actors involved in these organisations are committed theologians and lay persons, not official churches. The main aim is to find the smallest common denominator between the moral codes of different religions. (3) Building networks between official religious bodies, such as the World Council of Churches (established in 1948) or the Middle East Council of Churches (1974). The main aim of these networks is to improve consultation and cooperation between the member bodies, and in some cases, to achieve a higher degree of theological unity. (4) Reaching out to other religious communities through a range of initiatives, for example: multi-faith prayers; asking forgiveness for wrongs committed by members of one's own religious communities; highlighting the peace-promoting motifs of one's own religion; interfaith encounters such as conferences, workshops, and fact-finding missions; interfaith research and education through certain institutes and journals devoted to interreligious dialogue; and awareness-raising

movements such as 'Decade to overcome Violence' (2001-2010) launched by the World Council of Churches. (5) Building closer and symbiotic relations between religious organisations, state agencies, the media, and non-governmental organisations through a number of peacebuilding and diplomatic activities. These activities are either initiated by political actors and state agencies to use the prestige, networks, and good services of religious leaders for diplomatic purposes, or by religious actors to approach political parties and governments with the aim of contributing to peacebuilding (Scheffler 2007).

Neufeldt (2011) identifies three approaches to interreligious dialogue: theological; political; and peacebuilding. (1) According to the theological approach, interreligious dialogue is a process of exchange, verbal, written or practical, between religious leaders, clerics and theologians, of theological doctrines, world views or personal experiences, to increase mutual understanding and respect through theological enrichment. This type of dialogue is often undertaken in places where there are religious dimensions to intergroup conflict with a desire to overcome religious divisions through a reinterpretation of religious doctrines. An example of theological interreligious dialogue is the World Council of Churches (WCC) Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue 'Thinking Together' series. This series of events brought together a small group of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist participants to consider issues of common concern such as religious violence and conversion from their respective theological perspectives. The meetings grew out of a stand-alone workshop in 1999 and concluded in 2009 with the production of several articles and books. (2) Political interreligious dialogue is usually sponsored by states, internationally, as part of political peace efforts. They can also be organised by political officials within the country to deliberate on faith or political issues. The dialogue usually involves religious leaders and those who speak on behalf of political and religious communities. This type of dialogue is intended to increase the perceived legitimacy of a political process or certain political actors or to produce social coexistence and harmony. An example of political interreligious dialogue is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) sponsored inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue events in 2002. A foundational event was the two-day Regional Summit on Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue in Tirana, cosponsored by the Presidency of Albania in 2004. The event brought together nearly 145 participants, including six heads of state from South East Europe, political delegations from

eleven European countries, representatives of international and regional organisations, as well as participants ranging from professors to politicians to directors of faith-based institutions. (3) Peacebuilding interreligious dialogue can be organised with three motives: to alter negative attitudes towards the religious "other" by developing mutual understanding and respect; to access and build upon people's spiritual beliefs in order to reach out to those against whom they are prejudiced; and to broaden the participation of people in building peace and developing a joint platform for actions to address the root causes of the conflict as well as its consequences. An example for peacebuilding interreligious dialogue is the activities of the World Council of Religions for Peace in Liberia. This threefold classification to interreligious dialogue is determined by the goal of the dialogue and the relationship of those involved to the political context (conflict). The theological approach to interreligious dialogue, although often stimulated by experiences of violent conflict, is largely apolitical in content. It focuses on individuals within the dialogue group aiming to change their interpersonal relationships by deepening understanding and respect for each other's beliefs, doctrines, practices, and values, and establish areas of common interest. The political approach to interreligious dialogue is often politically motivated and is political even in terms of content. It involves using the authority of religious leaders as moral leaders to increase the profile and perceived legitimacy of particular political peace processes or public statements issued by secular leaders. Its focus does not lie in individual and interpersonal changes through theological exchanges, but on enhancing harmony between different religious communities. The peacebuilding approach to interreligious dialogue is intended to increase public involvement in peace processes through undertaking community level engagement in sectors from education to livelihoods. It strives for change from the personal to interpersonal to societal levels (Neufeldt 2011).

In the acclaimed book tilted *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans*, Merdjanova and Brodeur (2009) focus exclusively on the peacebuilding approach to interreligious dialogue. They define peacebuilding as "all social mechanisms a society develops in order to promote greater understanding and cooperation towards peace" (2009: 24). Consequently, interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding refers to "all forms of interreligious dialogue activities that foster an ethos of tolerance, non-violence, and trust" (2009: 25). It is based on three principles: self-conscious engagement, self-critical

attitude (awareness of own biases and limitations), and realistic expectations with regard to the goals of dialogue (the need to see it as a long-drawn process with uneven, incremental progress). Interreligious dialogue therefore is more than verbal communication or philosophical talk about theological similarities. It is a shared action in pursuit of identified common needs in which people engage across religious boundaries. In this way, interreligious dialogue is a civic rather than religious practice — a common action between individuals of different religious communities directed at social change (Merdjanova and Brodeur 2009).

Theorisation of interreligious dialogue is in the nascent stage. There are several aspects that need to be explored deeper. First, interreligious dialogue needs to concern itself with political and economic issues such as various forms of discrimination and inequality. Second, it needs to compel religious communities to self-critically address their own role in identity politics and the impact of ethno-politics on the universalistic messages of peace and justice the religion's claim to carry. Third, in predominantly secular societies, the understanding and practice of interreligious dialogue needs to move towards more inclusion and participation by engaging people of religious as well as non-religious outlooks because even people who are not particularly religious may see the utility of interreligious dialogue on a purely secular level. Fourth, interreligious dialogue needs to critically engage with culturally and politically produced dichotomies (such as Christianity versus Islam or clergy versus lay people) historically and contextually defined unequal positions of the different religious communities (such as Christian domination over other religions in the Western world) (Merdjanova 2016).

The traditional normative theories of interreligious dialogue emphasise on exchange of theological and spiritual ideas and information and the search for commonalities in the doctrinal assertions and value systems of religions. This shows that the lion's share of attention in the academic study of interreligious dialogue has been devoted to intellectual dimensions of interreligious dialogue: search of 'goodness' in individual religions; giving and taking of theological or spiritual knowledge; and coming to terms with religious difference through conversations aimed at consensus. Preoccupation with the purely intellectual aspect of human religiosity conceals the enormous complexity of human religiosity and of the nature of religion itself. First of all, the assumption that every religion contains truth and the

presupposed commonality in the doctrinal assertions and value systems of different religions is questionable. Religions are embedded in historical and cultural specificities because of which, religious ethics are context-laden. When scholars extract ethics from particular religions and claim to find commonalities between them, they are disregarding the context in which ethics are enmeshed, little realising that devoid of context ethics mean nothing. By insisting on commonality between ethics derived from different religions, scholars are reducing religion — a context-specific variable — to merely its linguistic propositions. For example, Armstrong (2007) believes that the virtue of compassion exists in some or the other form in every religion. She resonates the mood of other scholars within the reconciliation subfield who propose the Christian ethic of forgiveness as a universal virtue of reconciliation. Armstrong and the other like-minded scholars are eager to create a discursive space where all religions can be evaluated through their "goodness." At first glance, it may seem that they are trying to celebrate the plurality of religions but at closer look, it is evident that they are blindfolding themselves to the multitude of facets that knit together in the making of religion. When Armstrong confidently locates the virtue of compassion in every religion, she is right insofar that parallels to compassion can be found in every religion, but she is wrong to equate compassion with those parallel concepts because she, in the first place, has derived compassion from Christian theology. In simpler words, the ethic of compassion, regardless of the extent to which it is decontextualised remains a Christian ethic. Furthermore, by insisting on doctrinal similarity between religions, scholars are overlooking the practical aspect of religion — actions of believers. The meaning of religion is contained not only in propositional statements but also manifested through the agent. During the process of interreligious dialogue, for instance, it is the believers who meet, not religions. Each believer is disposed to certain peculiarities. When scholars do not take into account personal religiosity, they are reducing religion to a conceptual construction. The search of commonalities between religious ethics denudes the uniqueness of each religion and disrespects the individuality of the believer. Finally, the exchange of theological knowledge for deepening mutual understanding, reduces the process of interreligious dialogue to mainly a cognitive encounter where the thrust is on understanding the other's religion rather than mingling with the other. Because of the conditionality of reciprocal learning, dialogical partners have to also be prepared beforehand with ideas and information, thus reducing

interreligious dialogue an objective discourse with expected outcomes (Urbano 2012). Thus, the view of interreligious dialogue as a systematised exchange of theological knowledge has three major pitfalls: it treats religions as decontextualised belief systems with definitive truth claims; its doctrine-centred approach to religion ignores the dimension of individual religiosity; and the rule of knowledge exchange diminishes the importance of interpersonal aspects of dialogue.

If the prospects for interreligious dialogue have to be widened to meet the challenge of religious diversity, academic study in this field must, firstly, acknowledge the complexity and fluidity of religion and secondly, enrich the notion of dialogue as a truth debate. To begin with, religion is not a rational, systematically encoded, uniformly applicable body of theoretical knowledge. Such essentialised conception of religion fail to address religion as a social phenomenon and personal religiosity. Religion is a multifaceted field constituting tradition, interpretation and performance. The meaning of religion is encrypted in scriptures, which are subject to interpretation and manifested in the actions of believers. Further, religions are not monolithic creeds clearly separated from one another. Religions are in constant metamorphosis. Consequently, religious diversity is not a clerkly discernible area. It is dynamic, reflecting the dynamism of religions. Personal religiosity plays out significantly in dialogical encounters, and because of that, there is diversity not only between persons of different religious traditions but also between persons of the same tradition. Interreligious relationships are also affected by historical, cultural, social, economical and political currents. All these factors need to be taken into account in theorisation.

Further, the understanding of dialogue itself needs to undergo change. The conceptualisation of interreligious dialogue as a discursive comparison between abstract theological entities needs to be replaced with an understanding of dialogue as an encounter between religious subjects: an interpersonal experience between persons with different religious backgrounds as well as between persons who represent different ways of being religious within the same tradition (Illman 2012). Interreligious dialogue is not a contact of religions but of persons from different religious traditions, where a person embodies not only cognition and intellect but also emotion, experiences, habits, skills and gestures. Therefore, dialogical engagement is not merely a cognitive or intellectual interaction; it is a platform for the manifestation of

personality. Theorisation needs to explore this complex aspect of dialogue. To summarise, there are two major motivations for rethinking on the traditional research on interreligious dialogue: the narrow scope of approaches to interreligious dialogue that view religions as rational systems of beliefs encoded in scriptures; and the limited practical relevance of interreligious dialogue paradigms that view dialogue as truth debate.

5.2. *An Interpersonal Ethical Approach*

The approach to interreligious dialogue outlined in this research departs from the traditional preoccupation with content and outcome of dialogue to embracing ethics as the essence of true dialogue — how dialogue is initiated and carried out and how dialogical partners treat each other. The approach rests on the works of two scholars who have contributed greatly to the ethical dimension of dialogue — Martin Buber and Emannuel Levinas. The starting point for both Buber and Levinas is an inter-subjective understanding of dialogue, that is to say, dialogue as a relationship between dialogical partners; however, the way they define this relationship marks their point of departure. According to Buber, a person's worldview always includes an "other," either in the form of a distanced *It* or a closer *Thou*. The distanced I-It relation is contrasted by the closer I-Thou relation, which represents encounter and mutuality (Illman 2012). Likewise, spirituality of an individual exists not within the self but *between* the self and the other. "Spirit is not in the I, but between I and Thou. It is not like the blood that circulates in you, but like the air in which you breathe" (Buber as quoted in Leirvik 2011: 17). When spirituality is centred on the self, it is egoistic. For spirituality to be genuine, it must be based on a relational view of human existence — I-Thou relation. This I-Thou relationship or the meeting of spiritualities is what can be considered dialogue. The I-Thou relationship is marked by reciprocity and equality — the self acknowledges the other as a self just like itself (Urbano 2012), and place where dialogue begins — the metaphysical space between the self and the other, which Buber calls 'the realm of the 'between'— is one of reciprocity and openness caused by the meeting of I and Thou (Illman 2012).

> In the most powerful moments of dialogic, where in truth 'deep calls unto deep', it becomes unmistakably clear that it is not the wand of the individual or of the social, but of a third which draws the circle round the happening. On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective, on the narrow ridge, where I and Thou meet, there is the realm of 'between' (Buber as quoted in Leirvik 2011: 19).

In contrast to Buber's notion of dialogue as a mutual relationship in a spiritual space between the self and the other, Levinas perceives dialogue as an asymmetrical relationship characterised by responsibility on the part of the self towards the other. In Levinas' view of dialogue, when dialogical partners seek to understand each other by assimilating knowledge about the other's religion, they do so through their own cultural and religious lens. Such knowledge assimilation leads to domination of the other by the self. If the self wishes to minimise domination, it must assume the responsibility of respecting the other. Levinas argues that before each dialogical partner pursues the knowledge that would help him/her in understanding the other better, s/he must discharge the responsibility of protecting the dignity and identity of the other. In other words, effort at understanding is preceded by an ethical encounter. Levinas' notion of responsibility also implies an asymmetrical relation between the self and the other: the self is subservient to the other because of assuming responsibility for the other (Urbano 2012). Further, Levinas believes that there will always remain certain insoluble differences between the self and the other. These differences must be recognised and upheld. If one dialogical partner uses the platform to convince, convert or impose what their beliefs on the other, then dialogue risks becoming adversarial instead of peace-promoting (Urbano 2012). Levinas uses the expression 'the distance of proximity' connoting that closeness of relationship does not presuppose agreement of opinion (Leirvik 2011).

For Buber, identity is always formed in relation to others. Dialogue, therefore, is the relation of different persons to one another, expressed through their whole-hearted engagement with one another, in a space designated by Buber as the 'between.' In other words, dialogue is a reaffirmation of the reciprocal space of the 'between.' Encountering the other in a dialogical relationship means accepting that person's distinctiveness. Both the self and the other are single, unique, irreducible entities. Neither diminishing the distinctness of the other or reducing the separation between the self and the other is permissible in dialogue. Levinas makes an even stronger case for preserving the other's distinctiveness. Levinas' notion of 'alterity' claims the absolute otherness of the other. The relation of the self to the other is of responsibility: it includes affirming simultaneously distance and proximity between, which is to say that ethics of dialogue lie in celebrating similarity and difference between the self and other. Thus, Buber places emphasis on the interplay between similarities and differences in a

dialogue formed by the simultaneous strategies of identification and separation. He argues that both similarity and differences are essential elements for understanding religious diversity. Dialogical relationship needs to be built not merely on similarity but on shared experience of life. For both Buber and Levinas, the bottom line in dialogue is search for common humanity, not religious commonality. According to Buber, it is the interplay between difference and similarity that brings out common humanity, while Levinas believes it is the uncompromising respect for the other and commitment to uphold differences that leads to establishment of common humanity (Illman 2011).

In the spirit of Buber's whole-hearted engagement and interpersonal relatedness and Levinas' spontaneity and immutability of interpersonal differences, this research argues that interreligious dialogue is a form of encounter between persons of different religious traditions in a free atmosphere while observing respect for the other's individuality. Dialogue, this study argues, has three important dimensions: ethical; interpersonal; and practical. (1) Ethical: Dialogue is an encounter in which person's express their thoughts, emotions and ideas freely, but with full recognition of and respect for the other's distinctiveness. If there is attempt to compete, command or condescend the other, dialogue ceases to exist. Observing good ethics — presenting oneself honestly and accepting the other's reality whole-heartedly — is the spirit of real dialogue. (2) Interpersonal: Dialogue is about communication between persons in manner that can bring in the individuals and create empathic bonds between them. True dialogue is that in which each individual is provoked to reconsider his/her identity and extend the boundaries of one's way of thinking in such a way that it is possible to conceive the other as part of one's own life. The role of dialogue, then, is to challenge old solidarities and explore new possibilities of relationships that can help in changing and liberating our lives. (3) Practical: Dialogue is active engagement of persons from different religious traditions. There is face-to-face encounter, involving imagination, creativity and communication. This relevance of dialogue is in practice not in philosophical conversations, rational discussions or rhetorical debates on theology. If dialogue is understood as a physical encounter, then dialogue can happen using more mediums than just words, such as art or education, and it can happen in different venues, such as home, school, playground or workplace. Interreligious dialogue is, thus, a forging of a relationship between persons of different religious traditions where their actions and interpretations both come into play. In

such a conceptualisation, religious differences are not seen as a problem to be resolved though attainment of consensus. Instead, religious differences are a dynamic and complex arena for exploration and creative understanding. Central to the dialogue, therefore, is ethics: showing real commitment to religious diversity by way of respecting others for what they are. This implies that dialogue is essentially a humanitarian pursuit — getting used to the other and then, if possible, liking the other; dialogue is not a rational endeavour obliged to be intellectually enlightening.

Dimensions of Interreligious Dialogue

1. Ethical
    *   Emphasising respect and responsibility of the self for the other in dialogical encounter.
    *   Redefining the boundary between the self and the other by recognising and accepting similarity and difference.
2. Interpersonal
    *   Forging a relationship between the self and the other through whole-hearted involvement.
    *   Recognising common humanity on the basis of shared experiences and common interests.
3. Practical
    *   Emphasising that relevance of dialogue lies in practice.
    *   Emphasising on creative forms of communication in dialogue.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Interreligious Dialogue (based on Illman 2011, 2012).

It is important to elaborate further on the 'interreligious' aspect of dialogue. In a study on creative interreligious dialogue, Illman (2011) looks at the works of six artists from the fields of music, literature, visual, and multimedia arts who were motivated to engage in dialogue in order to address interreligious issues in creative, non-traditional ways. All the artists who featured in Illman's study had their roots in Abrahamic faith but their approach to religiosity was different. Some considered themselves to be religious in a traditional sense and spoke confidently within the theological and institutional frames of their religion. Others described themselves as distanced from institutionalised religion, as atheists, or as not in the need for committing to religion while believing in God. Some had renounced formal belonging to a religious community and adopted an individualised stance on spirituality. Some had synthesised different spiritual, religious and mystical traditions and created a personalised version of faith. Thus, the artists exhibited a metamorphosis of values and attitudes with regard to religion. Illman's sample selection for her study of interreligious dialogue in the context of art shows that 'interreligious' is not merely renegotiating the lines of separation

between religious institutions but also challenging the boundaries between traditional communities. Thus, genuine interreligious dialogue is a search for interpersonal relatedness between persons of different religious backgrounds as well as between persons who represent different ways of being religious within the same tradition.

> Dialogue needs to be assessed as a complex interpersonal relationship and difference as a necessary condition for dialogue: a source of creative complexity, to be carefully preserved. Instead of rendering religious difference harmless by means of dialogue, hence, difference can be acknowledged and explored. … [T]he religious other is a person worthy of being taken seriously and feeling responsibility towards (Illman 2011: 70).

The goal of interreligious dialogue is usually considered to be promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance, appreciation of religious diversity, and search for shared humanity. In the context of reconciliation in the aftermath of mass-scale violence, however, the goal of interreligious dialogue needs to be conceptualised somewhat different. Some scholars argue that there is a direct relation between violence and identity construction, therefore, there should be a relation between peace promotion and identity reconstruction. Wilke (2011) explains that collective identities do not emerge in isolation — but in dialogue — with others inside and outside one's relevant identity groups. The action and will of group members as well outsiders, who perceive, label, recognise or stigmatise the group members, are responsible for the construction of collective identities. This means that collective identities are not individual choices but outcome of inter-subjective recognition and misrepresentation. Violence also shapes collective identities: it emphasises and solidifies certain identities by making alternative identity constructions unavailable or unviable. Many groups who make identity claims have been subject to state repression, societal misrepresentation and stigmatisation. Some groups live with identities which were imposed upon them, in the sense that, these identities were developed on the basis of, or as a response to, classification, repression or violence by the state. Since violence is responsible for creating a rigid mesh of identities, for building peace, the identities that were reshaped due to violence have to be questioned, unsettled and addressed. Hicks (2001) also accepts that for promoting reconciliation, attention must be paid to the process of identity construction. Development of identity is a process that happens through social interaction — engaging in relations with others. When violence occurs, as a way of self-preservation, individuals and groups distance themselves from each other. Subsequently, social interactions get suspended,

leading ultimately to a break in the process of identity construction. To reconcile members of antagonised identity groups, the process of identity construction must be resumed. Since identity construction takes place through social interaction, for resuming the process of identity construction, social interaction — engaging in relations — has to be revived. According to the framework of interreligious dialogue outlined in this research, dialogue is a way form of social interaction, a way of engaging the self with other or forging a relationship between the self and the other. From this perspective, then, dialogue can be a process for identity reconstruction, whereby dialogue can contribute to reconciliation. Another set of scholars who discern the connection between social engagement and improvement in intergroup relations are Kosic and Senehi (2009). Based on the study on cross community work in the cities of Belfast (Northern Ireland) and Vukovar (Croatia), they argue that if there is interpersonal contact between members of hostile groups in an atmosphere that allows them to mingle in a friendly and sustained manner to work together towards common goals, then relations between the two groups can improve over the time. Interpersonal contact changes the way social categorisation takes place. Similar to Wilke's proposal of addressing identities created by violence in order to deal with the social harm caused by violence and Hick's postulation of resuming identity construction in order to promote reconciliation, Kosic and Senehi argue that for reducing intergroup conflict and improving intergroup relations, the existing manner of social categorisation has to be changed. To change the existing manner of social categorisation, the traditional emphasis on existing interpretative categories, such as ethnic and religious identity, has to be reduced through mechanisms, such as de-categorisation, re-categorisation and cross categorisation De-categorisation involves giving less importance to group identity and more to individual identity. For example, activities in the field of arts and popular culture, such as music concerts, orchestras, theatre, film production, dancing, creative writing, storytelling and exhibitions, can help in de-categorisation because they attach importance to the talent of the individual rather than his/her identity. Re-categorisation involves minimising the use of labels like 'us' and 'them' in favour of more inclusive ones like 'we' because the latter cut across ethnic, religious and cultural identities giving a wider sense of belonging to individuals. Cross community economic activities can be helpful in re-categorisation by people's attention away from politicised categories and sectarian issues. Cross categorisation involves creating groups

whose identity would cut across the existing identity groups such that those who are outsiders in one way of categorising are insiders in another. In this regard, sports, especially those played in teams, and other group activities, can help in challenging stereotypes of social identity if they are played in mixed teams. Mixed teams necessitate intergroup mingling reducing intergroup competition. Based on Kosic and Senehi's description of the three mechanisms for changing existing social categorisation — de-categorisation, re-categorisation and cross categorisation — it is possible to argue that interreligious dialogue can also facilitate shift in existing social categorisation and thereby contribute to improving intergroup relations. Dialogue activities give prominence to individual religiosity rather than group identity (de-categorisation); they stress on building interpersonal relation notwithstanding the loyalty each may have for his/her respective identity group (re-categorisation); they inspire creative thinking and active communication for renegotiating the lines of separation between similarity and differences (cross categorisation). To summarise, interreligious dialogue, through its potential to transform perspectives on personal identity, group solidarity and interpersonal relationship, can contribute to reconciliation in societies divided by occurrence of mass scale violence between different religious communities.

The conceptual frameworks of reconciliation and interreligious dialogue developed in this chapter are applied in the next two chapters to analyse the reconciliation process and interreligious dialogue initiatives in Bosnia and Nigeria. Bosnia and Niger are both multireligious societies in which Christians and Muslims are the most prominent communities numerically and socio-politically. Both societies suffered mass-scale violence in the recent past which degenerated relations between members of the Christian and Muslim communities. Subsequently, they experienced attempts by the civil society at rebuilding interreligious relations. This makes Bosnia and Nigeria suitable contexts for understanding the process of reconciliation focusing on the importance of each of its components, namely truth-seeking, justice-seeking, collective remembrance and forgiveness, and for examining the mechanism of interreligious dialogue work and its significance in the reconciliation process.

CHAPTER IV

The Search for Shared Identities in Bosnia
and the (Im)Possibility of Reconciliation

The year 2015 marked the twentieth anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, a town in the Serb entity of Republika Srpska in present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosnia), where the single largest incident of massacre of the 1990s war took place. On July 11, 1995, Bosnian Serb paramilitaries took control of the enclave of Srebrenica, a United Nations designated 'safe haven' protected by Dutch peacekeeping forces. Under the command of Ratko Mladić,[7] Bosnian Serb forces separated the male and female populations of the town, sending off the women in buses to the nearest Muslim-controlled areas and shooting down the remaining men and boys in fields and forests in the course of the next few days. Over 8000 Muslim men and boys were killed in the massacre, whose bodies were disposed in pits or buried in mass graves all around Srebrenica. 8372 bodies of victims have been recovered and identified so far. They lie in a large cemetery at Potočari in Srebrenica where an annual event takes place to remember the victims and remind the world of this horrible crime.

There is no denying that the massacre in Srebrenica had international acquiescence. The Bosnian Serb forces carried out their plan of cleansing the Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) population of Srebrenica while the United Nations peacekeepers were deployed in the town. New findings provide more evidence that superpowers such as Britain, France, the United States and the United Nations were aware of Ratko Mladić's intention to massacre the Muslim population of the town, only the scale of the massacre remained to be seen. In 2015, twenty years after the Srebrenica killings, Britain drafted a United Nations Security Council resolution to recognise the incident as a genocide as per the United Nations definition of the term. The resolution offended Serbia which turned to Russia, its close ally, to veto the resolution which Russia did. The politics around the recognition of the Srebrenica massacre even twenty years after its occurrence bespeaks of the enormous difficulties in seeking justice

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[7] Ratko Mladić is a former Bosnian Serb military leader accused of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). He lived as a fugitive in a village in Northern Serbia for the next 16 years. He was arrested in 2011 and extradited to The Hague, where he was processed at the detention center that holds suspects for the ICTY.[3] His trial formally began in The Hague on 2012 and is ongoing.

and reconciliation in post-war Bosnia. The current situation in Bosnia is a complex one, and far from normalised — progress towards a democratic political culture is impeded by issues inherited from the Dayton peace accord of 1995, economic situation is not promising especially as the impact of the international economic instability is increasingly being felt, and post-conflict reconstruction and the process of social reconciliation are extremely slow as many structural causes of the war still prevail and in some cases have even become reinforced.

Picture 1: Plaque installed at Potočari Genocide Memorial in Srebrenica, Republika Srpska, inscribed with prayer from the *Reis-ul-ulema* (Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Fieldwork, 26 April 2015, photo courtesy: Aparajita Goswami.

One of the structural arrangements that catalysed the Yugoslav crisis was the compliance of religion with nationalistic politics. With the death of communist dictator Tito in 1980, the

political environment started degenerating in Yugoslavia. Ethnic rhetoric became common in politics and since historically particular ethnicities coincided with specific religions — Serbs being predominantly Orthodox, Croats predominantly Catholic and Bosniaks predominantly Muslim — ethno-politics approximated ethno-religious politics. The Orthodox church in Serbia, for instance, was unreserved in its support for Serb nationalists and considered Serbia's ethno-territorial claims on the neighbouring republics as being in line with the Orthodox Church's goal of having all Serbs in one state. But while Serbia and Croatia had majority Serbs and Croats respectively, Bosnia had a mixed population of Bosniaks (43%), Serbs (32%) and Croats (18%). In the early 1990s, when Serb nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević set about to rescue 2.5 million Serbs living in other republics from their 'enemies' by engulfing the places they lived in within a Greater Serbia, the first to bid for secession were Slovenia and Croatia having significantly large national majorities. Milošević turned the Yugoslav National Army against the non-Serb populations living in the Serb-inhabited areas of these republics. The duration and the intensity of the ensuing wars was limited because the European Union was quick to recognise the independence of the two republics.[8] When the turn came for Bosnia to exit the federation, a bloody conflict broke out as both truncated Yugoslavia led by Serbia and independent Croatia urged their ethnic kinsmen and co-religionists in Bosnia to secede from the newly proclaimed Bosnian state and join the parent countries. The conflict in Bosnia was initially fought on two fronts: in northern and western parts between Serbs and non-Serbs and in eastern and southern parts fighting occurred between Croats and non-Croats. On both fronts, the Bosniak population were among the defenders. At the time, an international arms embargo was levied on Yugoslavia to curtail its militarisation.[9] However, since the Yugoslav National Army and the Serb and Croat paramilitaries deployed in Bosnia were already heavily equipped, the embargo served only to prevent the flow of much needed weapons to the Bosnians defending against their aggression. Thus, territorial concerns precipitated the conflict, but the infusion of ethnicity and religion

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[8] Slovenia and Croatia both declared independence on 25 June 1991. Slovenia was officially recognised by the members of the European Union on 26 December 1991 while Croatia was recognised on 15 January 1992.

[9] UN Security Council passed Resolution 713 in September 1991 as a reaction to the start of war in Yugoslavia that was steadily claiming lives and destroying property. The Resolution banned all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Yugoslavia. The Resolution lasted for the next four years. It was suspended in November 1995 when the talks leading to the Dayton Accords began. The Resolution was lifted finally in October 1996 to allow the implementation of the terms of the peace agreement.

with nationalism provided the zealotry that ensured cleansing of the ethnoreligious other happened on an unprecedented scale.[10]

News of everyday events and the work of researchers show that politics and religion mix in contemporary Bosnia. Much of the tension in Bosnian society is brought about by the lack of clarity over the limits of each of the two domains. Those who benefit from this ambiguity seek to preserve it. Many of those who find themselves at the receiving end of policies and actions arising from this amalgamation, berate it and desire social and institutional reforms that would reduce tensions in the society arising from these corners. Some believe that the institutional arrangement of Bosnia is where the problem lies. Created in Dayton, Bosnia's two-entity political structure, subdivided into municipalities and cantons ensures bureaucratic ineffectiveness, prevents the growth of democratic values and incentivises divisions in an already fragile society. Some local voices point to the self-interested behaviour of political and religious elites as the cause of constant give and take between religion and politics. At any rate, reconciliation, understood as a more genuine civic integration, is prevented by the constant presence of religious overtones in politics. For the same reason, reconciliation between communities has also not made much progress. Wartime atrocities are not addressed adequately, victims of the war are still looking for justice and there is almost no acknowledgement of crimes on the part of perpetrators because all three require criticising the ethnic orientation of contemporary Bosnian politics.

This chapter provides an insight into five aspects: background to the war in Bosnia; the influence of ethnicity and religion on Bosnia's democracy; relation between religion and Bosnian society; interreligious dialogue initiatives in Bosnia; the post-conflict reconciliation process; and challenges to dialogue and reconciliation. Section 1 discusses developments in the Balkans during the 20th century: creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1919-1941); emergence of ethnic identities in the Balkans; dissolution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; creation of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1989); and breakup of Federal

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[10] Following twelve years of demographic research, the ICTY's Office of the Prosecution produced a report on the total number of individuals who died or disappeared in Bosnia in the period of 1991-95 due to the war. The minimum number of war-related deaths and disappearances came to 89,186 persons of which 57,992 were Muslims (Bosniaks), 19,398 Serbs, 7543 Croats, and 4253 Others (Zwierzchowski and Tabeau 2010: 15). There were casualties on all sides, however, Muslims constituted 65% of the total casualties making them the groups with the highest loss.

Yugoslavia. Section 2 explores three inter-related issues on the Bosnian State: institutionalisation of ethnic differences as a result of the political structures bequeathed by the Dayton Accord (1995); lack of democratic values in politics due to power-sharing on ethnic lines and lack of consciousness and experience among people about democracy; and ambiguity over the relation of religion with the state resulting in loss of constitutional secularism. Section 3 looks at developments in Bosnian society with regard to religions: religions in medieval Bosnia; religious communities during Ottoman rule; nationalisation of religions in the 19th century; religions under communist rule; role of Croatian Catholic Church and Serbian Orthodox Church during the Yugoslav crisis; and religious communities in post-war Bosnia. Section 4 enumerates two cases of interreligious dialogue initiatives in Bosnia: Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina, an effort by top-level religious leaders to enhance relations between religious communities through cooperation at different levels and in different areas; and Interreligious Choir Pontanima, an effort by a Franciscan Catholic Father to bring personal healing through music. Section 5 deals with the main components of the reconciliation process in post-conflict Bosnia: the component of dealing with the past describes why it is important to revisit past atrocities and what are the ways to do so; the components of truth, justice and forgiveness analyse the importance of investigating crimes, identifying, naming and shaming perpetrators, condemning crimes publicly, and eliciting public acknowledgement of crimes.

1. Background to the Bosnian War

The last decade of the twentieth century saw the outbreak of spiralling conflict in the Balkans that ripped apart the multiethnic federal state of Yugoslavia, and created from its wreckage, six new nations. Born in 1945 on the eve of the end of the Second World War, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was an ambitious venture at creating a multiethnic federal state, stranded between the communist East and the capitalist West. Under the heavy-handed rule of Marshall Tito, the centrifugal forces of Yugoslav ethnicity were held in check. But the power vacuum left by his death, allowed republican leaders to play the politics of ethnicity openly, coercing their respective ethnic nationalities to secede from the federal state and establish independent nations. In the backdrop of acute economic crisis that precipitated over four

decades of draconian socialist laws, once ethno-nationalist sentiments of an extraordinarily heterogeneous population were stirred, there was nowhere for the country to go, but to go to war. Initially in Slovenia, but then principally and sequentially in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the ensuing conflict brought about the death of multinational Yugoslavia and lay bare the failure of communist political economy and the illusion of modernity as an achievable end in socio-cultural development.

There was always a degree of recognition among social scientists of the centrifugal possibilities of Yugoslav ethnicity. But few anticipated the extent and the intensity of the fragmentation pressures exerted on the Yugoslav state by the rapid demise of communism in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. None, however, were even faintly able to predict the dimensions of the ensuing disaster in the region, until death figures and stories of war crimes started pouring out from the war zone after the initial chaos was over. Popular recollection describes the horror of the Yugoslav War in no other way than as a bloodbath – civilian slaughter, sexual crime against women, and genocide, on an unprecedented scale. Voluminous work has been done to understand why historic neighbours went to war, why such blood was spilt, who the perpetrators were and who were the victims. Need remains to evaluate what was destroyed by the violence – economically, socio-culturally and psychologically. Need also remains to understand how identities were created, preserved, and altered with violent outcomes. Most importantly, need remains to understand how peace is to be sought in societies torn by war.

1.1. *Creation of The Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918)*

Yugoslavia was created as an independent state at Versailles after the First World War, by merging two small independent kingdoms, Serbia and Montenegro, with the South Slav provinces of the Austrian Empire. The extraordinarily multiethnic Austrian Empire had been transformed into a joint state of its two dominant national groups under the name Austria-Hungary in 1866. Although it was a modern, bureaucratic, legal state that granted considerable autonomy to its subjects, Austria-Hungary treated most of its Slav subjects as backward provincials. The South Slav provinces had thus long struggled against the empire. Likewise Serbia and Montenegro had fought long and bloody wars of liberation against the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled repressively over its non-Muslim subjects for four

centuries. Thus the conception of Yugoslav state emerged as a result of long nationalist struggles for liberation against two multinational empires.

The unification of South Slavs into a new state was possible only as a result of the defeat and disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. Peace proposals by the United States, known as President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, emphasised that self-determination and ethnic criteria be used to delineate new frontiers. Pressure was great for the temporary states of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, representing the Austro-Hungarian South Slavs, to merge quickly and without too much negotiating, with Serbia and Montenegro, which were among the victorious powers and were in a position to offer some protection against Italian nationalist rapacity. The South Slav provinces of Austria-Hungary, which had never been united before, thus merged with Montenegro and Serbia to create the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918. The new state was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929.

The idea of 'Yugoslavia,' a state composed of the various southern Slavic groups (*yugo* means southern in the Slavic languages), originated at the end of the eighteenth century with the emergence of linguistic nationalism in Serbia and Croatia. The foundation of a Yugoslavia that would include Slavic speakers from the Alps to Bulgaria was laid by a linguistic compromise between Serbian and Croatian scholars that established a single literary standard for Serbo-Croatian, and its implementation was effected in 1919 at Versailles.

The idea that ethnic identity as defined by language and culture could be a foundation for state formation was borrowed from German romanticism. The southern Slavs adopted the German definition of themselves as "different," as "not-German," inverted it, and turned it into a medium of political expression rather than of political anonymity. The local identity of not being Austrian or Hungarian became a common identity of being Slav. The growing consciousness of being southern Slavic was specific to particular regions, but the various groups that came to identify themselves this way had one thing in common, they were neither Austrian nor Hungarian nor Turkish, which means, they were the relatively powerless members of the polity in which they found themselves.

The definition of Yugoslavia was an ethnic one ("being southern Slavic"), but the territory of the southern Slavs was ethnically heterogeneous. It contained a number of southern Slavic groups and also non-Slavic groups such as the Albanians. The logic of defining a state ethnically does not by itself lead to viable heterogeneous states, unless ethnicity is abandoned as the criterion of membership. Since Yugoslavia was an ethnic state of non-Germans, what was lacking in the new establishment was any decisive policy for the inclusion of ethnic minorities in an ethnic state. What was absent, therefore, was the idea of citizen as different from subject.

1.2. *Understanding Ethnicity in Yugoslavia*

The primary distinguishing characteristics of ethnicity in Yugoslavia was religion and language. Religion was not always congruent with ethnicity. For example, Albanians could be Orthodox, or Catholic, or Muslim, but they are never deemed ethnic kinsmen by Serbs, or Croats, or Bosnian Muslims respectively. Albanians in Yugoslavia were always treated as separate ethnic bracket whose co-ethnics were to be found in the new state of Albania. Serbs were usually Orthodox, but there were Muslim and Catholic Serbs as well, yet all of these recognised a common ethnicity despite religious differences. There were also degrees of memberships and modifications to the discrete quality of ethnic identification. One is that the perceived distance between Muslims and either Orthodox or Catholics was seen to be greater on purely religious grounds than that between Orthodox and Catholics. On cultural grounds though Orthodox Serbs and Muslims resembled each other more than either resembled Croats because they shared cultural traits that were ultimately Byzantine, Arabic, and Turkish in origin. Some circumstances brought Muslims and Catholics into one political bloc, but that was usually on terms of mutual benefit. Another anomaly is that some persons who denied religious affiliations, such as communists, could still classify themselves ethnically. They could do so on grounds of earlier familial ethnic or religious affiliation, or on grounds of language. Linguistic similarities were more regional than ethnic. Distinguishing Serbs from Croats from Muslim Slavs by their speech was virtually impossible, if they hailed from the same village or neighbourhood, unless they gestured to their ethnicity by stressing particular

linguistic features.[11] Linguistic and religious definitions of ethnicity had an important overlap, in that those groups which were Catholic used the Latin alphabet, while those which were Orthodox used the Cyrillic.

Ethnic identification could sometimes be entirely unconnected with religious and linguistic features and be purely political. 'Yugoslav' was an admissible category for self-declared ethnicity in Yugoslav consensus. It was used by three categories of persons: those who were committed Yugoslavists; those who were members of the Communist Party and wished to eschew ethnicity; and those who were Muslims and wished to avoid that identification in the same way that Jews often did in the West. Ethnic identification was thus essentially fluid, could be manipulated, and always had political implications.

From social science perspective, an important observation is that ethnic classification in the Balkans was not strictly endogenous but either exogenously imposed or endogenously shaped in response to exogenous pressures. There was continuing political attempts to define the roots of emerging modern states as lying in the territory of others, on the grounds of ancient ethnic identities. Serbs insisted on having all Serbs in a single political entity on the regions occupied by Serbs since the 12th century. Croats drew their southern true frontier deep in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the pretext of a medieval presence in the region on religious and etymological grounds. Both Serbs and Croats made the politically convenient historical error of extrapolating the idea of the ethnic nation-state back into the Middle Ages, when feudal status was the defining social criterion, or into the once Ottoman-held lands, where religion, especially the distinction between the Muslims and non-Muslims, was critical.

1.3. *Ethno-politics and Dissolution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1939-1941)*

The flaws that brought about Yugoslavia's dissolution were grafted at the very moment of conceiving the new state, because these arrangements served the political purposes of the victors of the First World War. Through the Treaty of Versailles, Allied powers intended to obliterate the Prussian and Hapsburg empires from the map of Europe. But destruction of these Germanic empires required the creation or re-establishment of independent buffer

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[11]   Family names and first names are the clearest clues to ethnicity. Many baptismal names are particular to Serbs or Croats, and since many Slavic family names are patronymics, so are many last names. Muslims often have distinct first and last names.

states, specifically Slavic states. Yugoslavia was tailored to this end. Ethnicity and language were made the two strict criteria for nationhood. Having a Slav ethnic origin and speaking a Slavonic language were the critical defining features of the Yugoslav population. The capital of the country was located in Belgrade, the centre of Serbia, since Serbs were the largest ethnic group in the region, and Serbia had already been an independent political entity throughout the First World War.

The conditions dictated by the Allies at Versailles, and the arbitrary drawing of national borders, started Yugoslavia on the road to ruin from its very birth. President Woodrow Wilson's Plan that was intended to exemplify ethno-nationalism brought together, in the Yugoslav case, groups that had throughout history been socio-culturally and politically, highly disparate. There were the Catholic Croats and Slovenes in the north. In the south, there were the Muslim Albanians in Serbia adjoining the new Albanian state. In the centre were Muslim Slavs in Bosnia, and the most numerous Orthodox Serbs.

The consequence of locating the capital in Belgrade was that the centre's natural direction was to establish Serbian hegemony and initiate the process of language standardisation. Serbs were more dispersed throughout Yugoslavia than any other ethnic group, having been displaced farther and longer by the Ottoman invasion. Before the Ottomans, Serbs had been subject to intense Austrian pressure to renounce Orthodoxy and espouse Catholicism, to abandon Cyrillic and adopt the Latin script, and even give up Serbian and use German as their language. The gathering Serbian hegemony after 1918 was deliverance from oppression for Serbs. They could easily identify with Belgrade, no matter how long they had resided in other regions.

Croats, on the other hand, had a complex history of foreign domination. They felt the heavy hand of foreign occupation and centralist autocracy descend again. Though the foreign power was their co-ethnic Slavs, it was no less malignant than Austrians, Hungarians, or Venetians. With the growth of Serbian hegemony, Croats felt stranded between Germans and Serbians, just as for centuries they had been stifled between Austro-Hungarians and Ottomans. As Serbs and Montenegrins increasingly ceased power positions in the national institutions, especially the police and the armed forces, Croats, Slovenes and Muslims came to equate centralisation with Serbianisation.

Some social scientists ask the self-evident question whether the Yugoslav state, crafted from the defeated multinational Hapsburg and Ottoman empires with a Serbian monarchical core, ever had a future. Their question raises concerns on the impracticality of assembling new states from the rubbles of old empires after the First World War. Others question the viability of fashioning states from outside by the external force of European powers and America. Their question points to the failure of Western powers to comprehend the complexity of the Balkan question.[12]

1.4. Creation of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945)

The Second World War spread to Yugoslavia in 1941, when German invasion ended the monarchy and partitioned the country. Struggle to oust Germans set off right away, but a civil war ensued in parallel between the multinational communists, the fascist Croatian state, and the royalist Serb Chetniks. Marshall Tito's[13] communists wrested power from the other factions and proclaimed the federal state of Yugoslavia comprising of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. The state enshrined the multinational ethic of the new federation in the slogan 'brotherhood and unity' and conveyed it to the people as part of the communist doctrine. Since it was the communists who celebrated and endorsed the multinational character of the country, multinationalism came to be essentially linked to communism. Communism was mostly successful in channelling the national-chauvinistic energy into the building of a totalitarian communist state. In that process the communists made use of very powerful revolutionary motivation felt by the deprived masses. Moreover, 'brotherhood and unity' was forcibly levied on the citizens. The Yugoslav people were never afforded the ways to arrive at this concept freely or develop ways to honour it. Multinationalism, therefore, was no more than a statist notion, and hardly had the novelty and unifying strength of national sentiment.

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[12] The Balkan Question in Western Europe referred to the problem of sorting out Eastern Europe. It essentially meant the question of how to deal with mixed population living on the periphery of Central Europe – the Balkan people – who were largely backward, partly Oriental, and faintly European.

[13] Tito was ethnically half Croat and half Slovene.

Tito rid Yugoslavia from the fetters of the Communist bloc in 1948, and took a socialist path to national development and economic reform.[14] Tito's version of socialism heralded well for Yugoslavia and the first two decades saw Yugoslavia stand firm between the grinding forces of the communist east and the capitalist west. Indeed, Yugoslavia became the first European nation to join the Non-alignment Movement. But prosperity was more an allusion than a fact. Social order was maintained by a virulent club of money-fed bureaucrats and any dissidents to Tito's despotism were unscrupulously weeded out. State-authorised slaughter became the acceptable policy and in the end was never accounted for.

1.5. Collapse of Federal Yugoslavia and the War for Ethnic States (1989-1995)

The 1970s and 1980s saw an economic downturn, causes of which were rather varied but mostly attributed to the failure of economic reforms to take root uniformly in the country. Burden of national debts and waning opportunities for working in Western Europe were also prominent factors. Though the economic crisis had struck nation-wide, the acute sufferers of it were Slovenes and Croats, because their productivity was diverted to the underdeveloped south and east where Serbs resided mainly. Living through an imploding economy and watching the Soviet Union breathe its last, Yugoslavs foresaw the fate of communism in Eastern Europe. Slovenes and Croats seemed psychologically unable to extricate federalism from communism and communism from Serbian hegemony.

Tito, the last standing pillar of federal Yugoslavia, died in 1980. Until then Yugoslavia had only borne signs of fracturing, but Tito's death sealed the fate of the country beyond doubt. In the absence of its iconic leader, the state body began falling apart turbulently. A struggle for power ensued between republican leaders. For the sake of economic efficiency, administrative centralisation was encouraged, but this took on authoritarian dimensions. After 1985, events occurred in such succession that hardly anybody realised that beyond heading towards the death of the federal state, Yugoslavia was heading towards war. Tito's Yugoslavia came to an in 1989, with adoption of amendments to the Serbian Constitution that essentially stripped the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina of their autonomy.

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[14] Yugoslavia split from the Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Party), the official forum of the international communist movement in 1948 after Stalin accused Tito of being nationalist.

Slovenes and Croats were the first to raise alarm of Serb ambitions of territorial aggrandisement. Other republics wasted no time in taking their precedence, realising the danger to be imminent. Secessionist demands were an open defiance of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav government and its national army. It was no coincidence that by this time, most of the national army composed of Serbs and Montenegrins, and they thrived on three-quarters of the national budget. Their livelihood would be ensured only if they preserved the crumbling state. The Serbs within the army went ahead to arm Serb guerrillas, who soon overstepped the army's command. The command structure collapsed. Non-Serbs were purged out of the army by radical pro-Serbs, turning the Yugoslav army into a de facto Serbian army, leaving aside heavily armed paramilitaries under control of Serb bandit warlords.

Serbs wanted a Serb controlled Yugoslavia disguised as a federal communist state. But Serb republican leader, Slobodan Milosevic[15], shunned the idea of sharing power with other republican leaders, and spoke of a Greater Serbia comprising all Serb inhabited territories of Yugoslavia. The minimal aim of the Serbs was articulated in the slogan: 'All Serbs in one country'. The Yugoslav national army and Serb paramilitaries had been armed and lay in wait to fulfil that dream. All fears took shape in the autumn of 1989 when communism collapsed in Eastern Europe. In the wake of this historic development, four wars took place in the former Yugoslavia: the repression of Albanians in Kosovo that begun in 1981 to the armed conflict in 1998; the brief fighting in Slovenia in 1991; the war against Croatia in 1991-92; and longest lasting and ethnically most diverse war in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992-96. During all these years Belgrade was never attacked by the citizens of former Yugoslavia, while it was from Belgrade that the political and military elite master-minded the wars.

1.6. *Reflections on the Yugoslav War*

It was said and written right from the beginning that "age-old ethnic hatreds" caused Yugoslavia's breakup and its bloody war. History however shows that there was little fighting among these peoples in the preceding centuries. Wars before the 19th century were generally fought by noble warriors and mercenaries. Byzantine Greeks and the Hungarians were the

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[15] As earlier for Tito, Milosevic's picture became an icon in Serbia. Though enormously popular among Serbs, others in the Yugoslav Federation began to fear and hate him.

foes of the medieval states in the Balkans. These were followed by the Ottoman Turks, who after their conquests in the Balkans between the mid-1300s and mid-1400s, established relative peace in the region. The wars of the 1600s and the 1700s were between the Hapsburgs and the Ottomans, also fought by noble armies and hired soldiers.

The ethnic sub-divisions within the southern Slavs were not established until modern times. The South Slavs, including the Slavic Muslims of Bosnia, all belonged to the same ethnic group; their ancestors had all settled in the Balkans in the 6th and 7th centuries. They did not even begin consciously to sort themselves into branches of the southern Slavic family until the late 1700s and the early 1800s, and then it was largely through the intellectuals — who wrote about linguistic, cultural and historic differences — that they understood how Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and perhaps others might be distinct from one another. The people began to discover and cultivate their ethnic or national differences only in the late 19th century. The spread of education and the growth of media played a major role in sharpening the ethnic or national awareness of the Slavic sub-groups.

Many analysts contend that collapse of federal Yugoslavia was not brought about by age-old antagonisms born from belonging to different ethnicities or nationalities. The first Yugoslavia was characterised by similar ethno-national composition, but its fragmentation was not caused because of that heterogeneity. Rather, it was the egregious mistakes made at Versailles while designing Yugoslavia that entombed the royal state. In the roughly two decades of its life, the first Yugoslavia illustrated that coexistence between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – if not always peaceful – was to a fair measure possible, in spite of the prominence of the Serbs.

The problem of how to implement democracy in a federal state, constituted of nation-states, republics, seemed to be unsolvable. The basic problem was to define the political position of the individual republics within the Federation. Further, what of the status of the individual? How was it possible to combine a plural political system with the sovereignty of national components vested in republics? No structuring of political geography could help. There were only two polar possibilities: to eliminate republics or eliminate the federal state. Former Yugoslavia had become hostage to Serbia and, after 1989, was at a dead end.

2. Post-conflict Bosnian State

The Dayton negotiations that led to the creation of post-war Bosnia were intended to strike a 'rapid' and 'good-looking' peace deal that would address the most pressing issues of creating a multi-ethnic Bosnia through demarcation of territory, holding free and fair elections and guaranteeing the return of refugees to their prewar homes (Oberschall 2007: 116). The Dayton contained a military, an institutional and a civil society component. The military component was meant to stop belligerent activities on all warring sides, draw the boundaries of the newly created Bosnia-Herzegovina and establish regional stability and peace by deploying a multinational peacekeeping force under the command of NATO. The institutional component was meant to design a political framework for governing Bosnia. Bosnia was to comprise of two political 'entities,' approximately equal in area, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation) and the Republika Srpska, each entity enjoying a significant degree of autonomy in its political affairs. There was also a third autonomous unit, joining the two halves of Republika Srpska, called Brcko District, established as a region under international arbitration as its definitive status could not be agreed upon during the peace negotiations. The Federation was a Bosniak majority area with a large minority of Bosnian Croats and Republika Srpska was predominantly Bosnian Serb. The presidency was to be constituted of three members, each representing one of three main constituent ethno-national groups of Bosnia — Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Croats and Serbs. The presidency would rotate every eight months among the three members with each member also exercising a veto. Thus, Bosnia was to be a federal state comprising of two autonomous ethnically defined entities with the central presidency, parliament, ministries, high courts and public authorities organised on principles of consociationalism. The civil society component of Dayton was meant to develop a culture of tolerance and interethnic cooperation among the different ethno-national groups of the country. Large amounts of financial support was given to indigenous grassroots civil society organisations by international NGOs and IGOs (McMahon 2004).

Figure 2: Administrative map of Bosnia-Herzegovina showing the two entities,
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska (taken from Hvidemose 2010: 4).

However as the years unfolded after the war, neither political institutions nor civil society developed in the way anticipated by Dayton. The decision to have a consociational-style governance assumed that ethnic elites would cooperate with each other. But since memories of war were fresh in everybody's minds at the time, interethnic cooperation turned out to be too idealistic an expectation in the beginning. Holding free and fair elections too did little in bringing about democratic transition as it was realised that democracy required more than free and fair elections. Since the first elections after the war took place immediately without allowing time for new multiethnic parties to contest in opposition to the wartime nationalist parties, the latter returned to power with full democratic legitimacy and consent of the international community (Oberschall 2007: 127). Even twenty years after Dayton, ethnic positions in politics mostly resemble wartime positions and ethnic identity is firmly rooted in both state and society. With ethno-nationalist parties dominating the political scene, a genuine democratic culture has also been elusive thus far. Three major developments have come about in last twenty years as a result of Dayton's political and social engineering: (1) the formalisation of ethnic differences; (2) the absence of democratic values from governance;

and (3) the loss of secularism from politics. These developments have generated a lot of criticism in policymaking, academic and laymen's circles. The following sub-sections captures some local perspectives gathered through personal interviews during fieldwork in Bosnia on these developments and pitches them against the more systematic debate on Dayton in academic literature.

2.1. *Institutionalisation of Ethnicity*

In Bosnia's, power is shared between the three officially recognised ethno-national groups of the country i.e. Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. This arrangement has confused many over how to legally classify Bosnia's power-sharing system. Touquet and Vermeersch (2008) write that there are two ideal-type power-sharing systems: consociationalism and integration. Consociationalism recognises ethnicity as the organising principle for state institutions. Ethnic groups enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and have a proportional representation in decision-making procedures of the state through either a grand coalition in the parliament or a shared presidency. To ensure that decisions on vital issues do not favour the interest of any particular group, a system of ethnic veto is also granted (Sisk 1996). Integration subdues ethno-nationalism in political affairs. State institutions work towards building inter-ethnic cooperation while encouraging intra-ethnic competition. Inter-ethnic cooperation reduces out-group hostility and intra-ethnic competition keeps excessive in-group affinity in check. Ethnic parties are refrained from adopting nationalistic positions and voting is encouraged across ethnic spectrum. Both Consociationalism and integration see inter-ethnic cooperation as essential to the development of democracy, but while integration rejects ethnic differentiation at the official level, consociationalism formalises ethnic differences by incorporating ethnicity in the institutions of the state. Bosnia's power-sharing cannot be clearly classified as either consociational and integrative because several of its clauses such as return of refugees for the facilitating the creation of a multiethnic society point to an integrative system, but where governance is concerned, consociationalism is the law.

Consociational power-sharing in Bosnia has led in excessive devolution of powers from the state to the entity level, making the two autonomous entities, the Federation and Republika

Srpska, stronger than the central government. Entities have the right to maintain armed forces and conduct foreign relations with neighbouring states. These two rights, of having army and foreign relations, are the key attributes of sovereignty in the international system (McMahon 2004). Additionally, all powers that Dayton could not explicitly assign to the central government were devolved to the levels that exhibited maximum ethnic homogeneity, which was the level of the entity in Republika Srpska and the level of cantons and municipalities in the Federation, because it was believed that chances of conflict would be least at these levels (Touquet and Vermeersch 2008). Granting sovereign rights to autonomous entities and delegating innumerable powers to entity, municipality and canton levels has left the central government with no say in the internal politics and foreign policy of the entities. The size of the bureaucracy is also massive and its maintenance comes at an enormous expense. A large bureaucracy and a complex hierarchy of power-sharing makes decision-making awfully slow.

The presidency of Bosnia comprises of three members, one representing each of the three constituent ethno-national groups, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. This arrangement conveniently rules out all citizens, who are ethnic minorities in the country or who do not identify with any of the three constituent ethno-national groups, from running for presidency. If a citizen is not a Bosniak, Serb or Croat, s/he cannot be in the Bosnian president. The selection of the three members for the presidency follows another clause which is that the Croat and the Bosniak members must be elected from the Federation while the Serb member must be elected from Republika Srpska. This leads to the exclusion of Serbs in the Federation and Bosniaks and Croats in Republika Srpska from running for the office of presidency. Edvin Kanka Ćudić, founder of the local NGO Association for Social Research and Communications, explained how the closed structure of the presidency translates to ethno-nationalist politics.

> Bosnian constitution mentions that we have three constituent ethnonationalities — Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. This is as if we don't have minorities in the country. We have Jews, Romas, Czechs, Macedonians, Albanians, Turks and many others. But they don't have any rights in the country. During general elections the Croat member of the presidency said on media, 'This is *our* country.' When Serbs watch this, politically it means for them, 'This is *Croat* country.' I would understand if the president had said, 'This is *also* our country' but he said, 'This is *our* country,' meaning Croat country. The Serb member of the presidency — the president of Republika Srpska recently commented, 'All houses in Republika Srpska are *Serb* houses.' But we know that Republika Srpska is not 100% Serb, it has Muslims, Croats, Jews and others who do not wish to be identified in any of these categories, then how can the president say, 'All houses are *Serb* houses' (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

The presence of the ethnic criterion in the structure of the presidency ensures that voters cast their votes exclusively for their own ethnic kin (Bochsler 2012). Bosniaks elect only Bosniak, and likewise Croats and Serbs elect members only from their own ethno-national groups. Ifet Mustafić, Interreligious Officer of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, described that when voters are guided by the ethnic criterion, the entire process of election is rendered undemocratic. Not only that, from the point of reconciliation, ethnic voting shows a lack of inter-ethnic relations and a tendency of each ethnic group to stick to nationalist stances.

> In a democratic country, there has to be democratic elections, which means I have the right to vote and to vote for anybody I want, and everybody has the right to run for positions and get elected. But what we do in Bosnia is that we have to vote for candidate from only one ethnic background, we cannot vote for a president from any ethnic background. Serbs say: We don't want Bosniaks to elect Serbs because we want Serbs to elect Serb. Bosniaks say: We don't want Serbs and Croats to elect Bosniaks because we want to elect Bosniaks. This is not democratic.

> It should be the opposite. If I as a Bosniak elect Serb it means I trust him and that shows connection between ethnicities. But nobody is trying to change this and that is good for nationalistic leaders and nationalistic politics (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Dr. Mato Zovkić[16], a Catholic Croat priest and theology professor reiterated the above point that casting votes exclusively on ethnic considerations basically reflects fear on the part of ethno-national groups. Groups are afraid that an elected member of another ethno-national group would not look after their well-being or guarantee their protection. Also, people do not use the electoral process as a chance to exercise individual choice, they simply subscribe to the voting norm of the group which is to vote for ethnic kins.

> We tend to think that if I as a Croat do not elect an ethnic Croat, who else can protect me! So we keep electing our own people on the basis of *ethnic fear,* not on the basis of their decency, education and capability to care for the common good. Maybe after we have lived a few more decades as an independent state, we will take more care of common or shared needs than of ethnic needs. But as of now, we are entitled to choose only our ethnic kinsmen as representatives at the level of municipality, canton, federation and state (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

Another noteworthy remark in this regard was made by Mustafić (2015). He explained that ethnic nomenclature supersedes legal terminology in Bosnian politics such that members of the Bosnian parliament are called Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats instead of being called

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[16] Monsignor Mato Zovkic is a New Testament scholar and professor at Sarajevo Theological Seminary. He also serves as vicar general of Sarajevo Archdiocese, holding responsibility for relations with other faith communities. He is a member of the Inter-religious Council in Sarajevo (MRV) and is actively involved in interfaith dialogue initiatives (taken from Berkley Centre for Religion Peace and World Affairs, [Online], URL: https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/people/mato-zovkic, Accessed 19 July 2017)..

Bosnians. These ethnic names are out of place in Bosnia because the mention of the words 'Serb' and 'Croat' bring to mind citizens of neighbouring Serbia and Croatia. He put a rhetorical question:

> How its possible that citizens of one state can be members of the parliament of another state! There is no such case in history or anywhere in the world today except in Bosnia. We have Croats and Serbs in Bosnian parliament equal to the Bosnian parliamentarians. Of course they are Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs but it doesn't make any difference because they even have special relations with Croatia and Serbia.
>
> That is the main problem: We do not have *Bosnians* as the constituent entity of Bosnia, instead we have three ethno-national groups, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. Only when we have Bosnians as the citizens of Bosnia then we will have one nation, one president (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

The point in the above statements is that although most states of the world constitute of numerous nations or ethno-national people, still they function as integrated state because citizenship outweighs ethnicity as a marker of identification in the public space. Countries as large as the United States or Australia hosting people of hundreds of ethnicities and nationalities remain unified because their constituent entities are the citizens of the state — Americans and Australians respectively. In Bosnia, however, people are identified by ethnicity. Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat citizens choose to call themselves Serbs and Croats instead of calling themselves Bosnians. Some Bosnian politicians have gone so far as to establish independent relations with neighbouring countries hosting ethnic kinsmen. The Croat member of the Bosnian presidency[17] cast vote in the recent elections in neighbouring Croatia because as an ethnic Croat, he processes a Croatian passport in addition to his Bosnian passport making him a citizen of both Croatia and Bosnia. The president is also a member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, a highly coveted honour among Croatian intellectuals — or rather intellectuals of Croatian citizenship! If citizens of Bosnia do not regard themselves as Bosnians, the idea of a united Bosnia would be hard to conceive. As long as ethnic identification is audible, it will also be visible and Bosnia will continue to function as a state of three distinct ethno-nationalities rather than a single unified state.

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[17] The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a three-member body which collectively serves as head of state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of one Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and one Croat (Bosnian Croat) elected from the Federation and one Serb (Bosnian Serb) elected from the Republika Srpska. Together, they serve a four-year term.

The first general elections in Bosnia after the war was conducted shortly after the signing of Dayton. Enough time was not allowed for new multiethnic parties to appear on the scene. The nationalistic parties which were present during the war, which in fact drove Bosnia to war, contested the elections and were swept into power once again, only this time with democratic legitimacy. The new state started its journey with nationalistic mono-ethnic parties. Today leaders constantly exploit ethnic tensions and focus on ethno-national issues over socio-economic problems like employment and corruption because this rallies popular support towards them. Voters on their part tend to be swayed by ethno-national rhetoric and, as mentioned earlier, prefer candidates from their own ethnic groups. The public space is arranged in a way that citizens are prevented from holding leaders accountable while leaders are not pressurised to deliver their promises. The statements of Milorad Dodik, President of Republika Srpska, are a good example of ethnic chauvinism in politics. In spite of being accused of supporting war criminals such as Radovan Karadžić, on trail for Srebrenica genocide, and criminal activities is Banja Luka, capital of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik has repeatedly issued threats in the media of holding a referendum to separate Republika Srpska from Bosnia. A leading Serbian internet site quoted him: "If you force us out, we are taking our republic with us" (Dodik 2015). The Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina is also known to have repeatedly emphasised on the need for Bosniaks to protect their territory. Ćudić (2015) noted that such statements by Milorad Dodik or the Grand Mufti are nothing new in Bosnia — "need for territory" or "need for protecting territory" is a phrase recited by almost all politicians whichever ethno-national party they belong to (Ćudić 2015, personal interview). What is surprising is that people do not protest against such statements, which indicates that ethno-nationalism finds favour with the people. Further, Ćudić described humorously how the question of territory is dealt by the three ethno-national groups.

President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, thinks like this: 'The international community will talk-talk-talk, get tired of speaking after twenty years and then Republika Srpska will have independence.' Even if people are poor in that country, Milorad Dodik would say to them, 'It's okay, you have independence so you don't need anything else.' When he says such things on media, nobody in Republika Srpska says anything against him. Instead people say, 'Yes! This is Milorad Dodik.'

Croats make lobbies all over the world, from US and Canada to the Vatican, just to make a third entity in Bosnia — a *Croat* entity. Right now they have everything but just that they don't have a border in the country. They feel that if they have a border, they would have made something good for their people. They would say to their people, 'We made an entity for you!'

Bosniaks think like this: 'We don't need any borders. The division into cantons is not important. We are one country because international community says we are one country.' However, for everything they first call Turkey or some country in the Islamic world (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

What this observation means is that the leaders of the three ethno-national groups are least bothered with the well-being of their people — apparent from the fact that they are preoccupied with the issue of territory. At a time when neither the Federation nor Republika Srpska is faring well economically, politicians focus not on economic issues but territory, which has not much to do with economic growth. Milorad Dodik is on a rampage to make a sovereign state of Republika Srpska. Croats leaders in Bosnia are uncomfortable with their position in the Federation because they have to share their territory with Bosniaks. Bosniaks, not having to escape from the Federation, turn to other Islamic countries, Turkey especially because its historical and religious association with Bosnian people — for various kinds of assistance. The result is that people's social and economic well-being is low on political agendas.

2.2. Imperfect Democracy

With ethnicity becoming the key determinant of power, the possibilities of creating genuine democracy in Bosnia are thrown into question. It is known that Bosnia's constitution was not drawn up according to the will of the Bosnians but the will of the international community who saw it as a means to end the immediate crisis of bloodshed. The signing of the Dayton stopped the killings but the country has not evolved into a democratic state. Four personal interviews in Sarajevo offered detailed perspectives with regard to the undemocratic nature of the state. These perspectives were not only very interesting but also quite distinct. Mustafić (2015), Interreligious Officer of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina directed his criticism at the constitution of Bosnia, which he saw as the mother of all problems in Bosnia. Ćudić (2015), founder of Association for Social Research and Communications and Marković (2015), founder of Pontanima Interreligious Choir, both civil society organisations, criticised the people of Bosnia as lacking democratic consciousness and awareness of their history and surrounding. Zovkić (2015), a member of the Roman Catholic Archbishopric, cited the poor record of democracy in the Balkans as one of the major reasons for the excessive difficulties being faced in democratising Bosnia.

Mustafić (2015) explained that Bosnia's political structures are undemocratic because the constitution of Bosnia is discriminatory. He gave a threefold rationale for why he thought the constitution was discriminatory, and especially unfair to the Bosniaks. First, the constitution was imposed on the people of Bosnia by the international community through the Dayton Peace Accord, which in principle was only a ceasefire agreement. Dayton's mandate should have been only to stop belligerent activities, but Dayton architects made a clever move of including a constitution for post-war Bosnia as Annexe 4 of the accord to convey to Bosniaks, who were defending Bosnia, that if they sought an end to the war, they had to accept the constitution offered to them. If they declined the constitution, the international community would not guarantee an end to the war in Bosnia.

> A Constitution is one thing and agreement to end war is another thing. If you [international community] put the constitution in the peace agreement, it means that you are telling us if we want peace, we have to accept the constitution. But what if we don't want the constitution, does it mean you will continue war? (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Considering that Bosnia had declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992 itself, the international community was not entitled to frame a constitution for Bosnia, as it was a sovereign state already. Yet it did because through the constitution, the international community could enforce its will in Bosnia. From this follows the second reason for discrediting the constitution as discriminatory — terms and conditions of the constitution were drawn not according to legal obligations but political will of the international community. Had the architects of the Dayton been guided by concerns for feasibility in implementing the constitution, there would have been one government, one parliament, and provisions for protecting minorities, human rights and religious rights as it is in every other constitution.

> 3 constitutional people and 2 entities is even terminologically illogical. If the Dayton said, 'Okay war ends, lets make a state that will respect the rights of everyone but that will be one united integrated state with one president, one government, one parliament,' that would have been sensible. If it said that 3 peoples, 3 entities, that would also at least be logical though not acceptable or functional. Today we have 3 presidents, 15 parliaments, 15 governments and hundreds of ministers because of which the state is not functional (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

The constitution suffers from some glaring contradictions. For one, it states that every citizen in Bosnia is equal while also stating that one of the two entities of Bosnia is Republika Srpska — a Serb entity. If Republika Srpska is officially for ethnic Serbs of Bosnia, it

automatically means that non-Serbs are not equal to ethnic Serbs in the entity, which in turn means that in half of the country all citizens are not equal. This is indeed true. Several other interviewees brought up the issue of severe marginalisation of non-Serbs in the entity. Milorad Dodik's statements quoted earlier about Republika Srpska being exclusively for Serbs and his intention to create an independent homogenous Bosnian Serb state are also evidence that non-Serbs are inconsequential in Republika Srpska. The interviewee analysed that granting Republika Srpska the right to be a so-called a Serb entity lends approval to the ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbs in territories under their occupation during the war, most of which constitutes Republika Srpska today. In north Bosnia, for instance, no fighting took place because these were already Serb-dominated from pre-war times. Still Serb armies detained, killed and expelled non-Serb populations of these regions. Mass graves were discovered after the war ended in 1995 proving that ethnic cleansing had actually taken place. Yet, Serb forces were not held accountable for ethnic cleansing as the 'cleansed' areas were proclaimed as a part of Republika Srpska — the Serb-dominated entity of the two-entity federation of Bosnia. In this way, all acts of ethnic cleansing in the wartime Serb-occupied territories became legitimate acts of homogenisation and consolidation of Serb territories. The interviewee remarked that the international community could see well that their constitution worked in favour of the Serbs and did injustice to the victims of ethnic cleansing, still they enforced the constitution — probably at the insistence of Russia in the Dayton negotiations.

> The international community, specially the six countries that were included in the Dayton agreement, and those who were supposed to *babysit* the agreement and its implementation, did nothing about that discrimination. Instead the Serbian and Russian lobby saw to it that Dayton included a constitution for Bosnia — a constitution which would work only for those who did not want Bosnia to be a normal state and they got that kind of constitution (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Finally, Mustafić (2015) reasoned that since the constitution has never been ratified by the Bosnian parliament ever since it came into force in 1995, the constitution is practically "illegitimate".

Ćudić (2015) believed that Bosnians in general lack democratic consciousness — it's the chief reason why Bosnia is not democratic. There are three perspectives to be found among ordinary Bosnians. First is a nostalgia for Yugoslavia's communist past. Many people of the

older generations, who lived through the communist era, remember it as a time of economic prosperity and international renown. Many of the younger generations, who have learnt about that era from elders and textbooks, also think that it was the golden era for their country — they were strong both politically and economically. Second is a condemnation of the communist past as repressive. Many of the right-minded people believe that communism in Yugoslavia was characterised by an onslaught on individual freedom and human rights. As evidenced by the outbreak of ethno-nationalism in the 1990s, communist repression of religious expression was a wrong way of ruling, since it eventually turned out to be dangerous for the country. Third is a condemnation of the suppression of past crimes. During the Second World War and the subsequent communist rule, widespread atrocities happened in the Balkans but the state made sure that the memory of these mass murders was not preserved in Balkan history. The Croatian Ustaše militias committed genocide of Romas, Jews, Serbs and LGBT community. The Serb Chetniks militias also committed widespread crimes. But for the last 70 years, it was forbidden to speak about these crimes. Some people, usually the activists, believe that this tendency has lingered in independent Bosnia. Freedom of expression on matters related to the recent war such as genocide, rape or victimhood is severely limited. Media often omits people and organisations who are critical of political parties because many of the media houses are allied to political parties. Despite this, most of the politicians, religious leaders, academicians and civil society members talk of the need for promoting democratic values and reconciliation without doing concrete in that direction. At the end of the day, nobody wants Bosnian to transition from ethnonationalism in favour of civic integration.

> Actually in Bosnia nobody believes in democracy. If you ask the people on the street they would say, 'Tito was the best because whoever made scandal would be in prison.' A lot of people in Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia would say, 'In Tito's time we had money, now we have only mosques and churches.' Right activists, political party activists and religious activists would say, 'Tito was bad, Alija Izetbegović was good. Tito was bad because he put Alija in prison. We need a man like Alija.' But at the end all of them, political leader, religious leaders, NGOs, academicians would say, 'We are promoting peace and democracy, but please make border. That is for my child, the best'(Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

Marković (2015) made a similar point that, "democracy is based on consciousness" and for Bosnia to democratise, society needs to evolve more. "Good politics is that which has results for society," but in Bosnia, politics is only about "ideologies" and "plundering" as a result of

which the government is doing nothing good for society (Marković 2015, personal interview).

Zovkić (2015) argued that Balkans has had no experience of democracy in the past. Throughout the medieval period, the region was under the Ottoman Sultans. In the early modern period, Balkans passed from Ottoman to Austro-Hungarian suzerainty. At the end of the First World War, a local Orthodox Serb family declared an independent Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the Balkans. Following the demise of the empire in the Second World War, Tito and his partisans declared an independent Federal Yugoslavia comprising of six republics ruled by communist ideology. Although personally Tito was a "dynamic" leader, his regime was characterised by repression in every sphere of life. The end of communism in Yugoslavia gave way to nationalistic parties that plunged the country into a bloody ethnic war. Bosnia emerged from this history and therefore it is no surprise that democratic values are missing in Bosnia even twenty years after the Dayton (Zovkić 2015, personal interview). Further the interviewee stated that Bosnia's constitution was not made in the parliament but in Dayton military headquarters dictated by Americans who saw it as a way to end the immediate crisis of shooting at each other. A similar statement was made by the member of the Islamic Community about the constitution being forced upon the people of Bosnia. The interviewee believed that the three member presidency was a transitional solution fresh after the conflict — "a solution in need" — in order that the three so-called constituent ethnonational groups feel represented and protected. Today, the three member presidency is a weak institution: "they mean nothing." Bosnia needs to gradually pass to the one-man presidency where the person would be elected on the basis of personal qualities and not ethnic and religious identity. At present, there is a large gap between proclaimed democracy and practiced democracy. Those who claim to support democracy in reality want to simply dominate.

What we need is a democratic mentality. We need to educate ourselves to get adjusted to a democratic system. This is gradually taking place but it will take years (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

Zovkić (2015) proceeded to argue that there is need for new political leaders in Bosnia who would genuinely pursue democracy. According to him, a candidate who assumes political office is entrusted with authority, and that authority should be used for the common good. Bosnia needs leaders who would care for all citizens in a pluralistic society and not their own

ethno-national groups only. The leaders in Bosnia at present are mostly people who finished high school or university during the communist rule under a "one-minded ideology." They are people from the general public who have not studied subjects relevant to their profession. They manage to get elected to political offices because of the ethnic criterion of voting and thereafter feel obliged towards their group because it would re-elect them in the next elections. Bosnia needs to look for something new and different. For example, the *École nationale d'administration* (National School of Administration) in France entrusted with the selection and initial training of senior French officials. He believes that Bosnia needs similar institutions that would give birth to a new generation of politicians who would have real understanding of politics as well as of the country (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

Based on the perspectives from the four interviews, some major observations can be made. First, the constitution of Bosnia is a product of high-level power politics — not reflecting the will of the people of Bosnia. This has discredited the constitution in the eyes of many Bosnians. Some even call it "Frankenstein's monster" which can destabilise Bosnia in the future. Second, the territorial division of the country in two halves and consociational form of presidency have prevented civic integration as well as democratic transition. The two entities do not cooperate but compete with each other in the state, as do the three presidents because any compromise on their part is seen by their ethno-national group as treachery. Finally, need remains for raising general consciousness about the undemocratic practices of the state. People also need to learn about their history, and critically evaluate events and people from the past. This can be very difficult as it would involve talking and hearing about the past, accepting some grim facts and taking accountability of them.

2.3. *Losing Sight of Secularism*

Following the discussion on the institutionalisation of ethnicity and the missing democracy in Bosnia, it is natural to question next the orientation of the state with regard to religion. Considering that state structures operate on institutionalisation of ethnicity, how far does religion get implicated in politics? There are two problematic aspects with regard to religion in Bosnia which together have a bearing on its contemporary relation with the state. The first

is that historically, ethnicity has derived from religion in the Balkans due to its peculiar nation-building in the 19th century. The second is that in post-Dayton Bosnia, the legal relationship between the state and religious communities is ambiguous.

Towards the end of the 19th century, nationalism awakened in the Balkans starting a movement of Pan-Slavic unification by extricating from the yoke of the decaying Austro-Hungarian empire in the West and the Ottomans in the East. The model towards which nation-builders of the Balkans were attracted was the German ethnic nation-state. Unlike the French model in which ethnicity plays no role, the German model identifies territory with culture. In other areas of Europe where the German model had been adopted namely Western and Central European nation-states, cultural identification was based of language, but in the Balkans it was based on ethnic kinship and linguistic closeness. Since ethnic identity derived from religion — Bosniaks being Muslims, Croats being Catholic and Serbs being Orthodox — ethno-nationalism in the Balkan approximated ethno-religious nationalism. Throughout the socialist period in Yugoslavia, religious communities were marginalised and political pluralism was curbed. When socialism collapsed and the public space opened up for both religious communities and political pluralism, ethnic political parties appeared as the only viable alternative in the political scene with religious communities being their natural allies. Finally, the war of the 1990s, although not a religious war, cemented the alliance between territory, ethno-nation and religion, while the structures created under Dayton constitutionally consecrated it. The result is a close connection between religion and politics in contemporary Bosnia (Marko 2012: 27-44).

The second problematic aspect with regard to religion is that although Bosnia is a secular state with a pluralistic society, the principle of secularism is not enshrined in the constitution. This leads to a confused interpretation of secularism. There is no constitutional provision that explicitly mentions the separation of church and state in the spirit of the Westphalian nation-state.[18] Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia, the supreme interpreter and guardian of the constitution, obliges public authorities to ensure conditions for 'religious

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[18] Decision of the Constitutional Court of BiH No. U 5/98-IV, 18 August 2000, paragraph 39.

peace' and pluralism as this is in accordance with the multi-religious context of Bosnia. The Court also rules out the possibility of recognising any religion as state religion because religious communities and the state are separate.[19] In this way, though secularism is not constitutionally guaranteed, it is established as a normative framework for the state. The republican system in Bosnia reinforces secularism. Though the principle of republic is also not legally stated in the constitution, many provisions regulating the substantive aspects of law imply that the state is a republic. A republican form of government would mean state and religious communities are separate and the state is religiously neutral. In Bosnia, the former clause establishes the position of religion in the constitution and the latter establishes secularism as a principle of the state. However, the relationship between the state and religious communities in Bosnia is not an ideal-type standardisation because many issues such as education or ownership rights require different relations between the state and religious communities (Woelk and Ademovic 2012).

The real dynamics between political parties and religious communities in Bosnia however is far more interesting. Most of the religious elites desire their ethno-national parties to seek their advice and accommodate the needs of the religious community in the political agenda. Zovkić (2015) explained that religious and political elites did not give directives to each other on how to think or act because both were aware of their functions; but if a political leader asked for advice from religious leaders, then "we [religious leaders] have a chance of whispering what would be useful for our community, and we do it" (Zovkić 2015, personal interview). The priest believed that for those who are "seriously" religious, it would not harm to consult religious leaders on proposals for new policies to be able to evaluate how far they would do good to citizens. In Brussels, for example, there are religious/spiritual guides counselling political representatives who would ask for such counselling. A certain Jewish rabbi who works in Brussels as counsellor to Jewish delegates was personally known to the interviewee. But there are other political leaders who are agnostics, explained the interviewee, and who associate with religious leaders only to rise in their political careers: "They like to be pictured in churches, in mosques on feast days" (Zovkić 2015, personal

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[19] Article 14, paragraph 1 of the Law on the Freedom of Religion and Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in BiH (the Official Gazette of BiH No. 5/04).

interview). This gains them some favour in the eyes of the public which is helpful to them in the next elections. In addition to advising political leaders, religious leaders have an influence on people over whom to elect. The Catholic church had explicit guidelines for priests to not instruct people on voting. However, since religious leaders hold themselves responsible for the good of their community, they consider it a part of their religious persuasion to influence people's choices either by conditioning them morally and spiritually or by sensitising them about the needs and aspirations of their community.

> We do not recommend from the altar in the church. We generally say what we need and people have to determine which candidate would be best to deliver those needs. I would say it is similar in the Muslim community and the Orthodox community.
>
> I am glad we religious leaders are not in-charge of the political future. It is up to the civil society to elect political leaders and shape the political future. From history we know that whenever theologians tried to rule, it went wrong (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

According to Haynes (2010), building links with the political parties of the state, mobilising their followers to lobby, sensitising public opinion on social and political issues via mass media and forming alliances with like-minded secular and religious groups are strategies which religious leaders use to reduce the ability of the state to sideline them. Religious leaders also resist privatisation of religion by articulating viewpoints on a variety of political and social issues such as education, social services, public regulation of religion and so on. Haynes claims that almost everywhere in the world, regardless of the nature of the government or level of economic development, states seek to control and reduce the influence of religious institutions in political affairs while religious institutions seek to resist this marginalisation. Haynes raises the question: "why *should* religious organisations seek to become actors with political goals?" The answer he believes is that religious institutions acquire political goals when they feel the need for change but see that the state is not capable of bringing about that change because the solutions the state seeks are secular ones and would not give enough leeway to religious institutions.

Haynes' argument that states seek to control and reduce the influence of religious institutions in political affairs while religious institutions seek to resist this marginalisation is only partially true for Bosnia. Religious leaders in Bosnia use various means to avoid marginalisation including expressing overt support for certain candidates, even though their political counterparts have not only not tried to sideline them but invariably sought their

blessings in all political activities. Ćudić (2015) who avidly follows the utterances and actions of political leaders cited three amusing incidences showing of the bond between religion and politics. Dragan Čović, the Croat presidential member of three-member rotating collegial presidency of Bosnia and president of the largest political party of Bosnian Croats, HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina), made an official visit to the Vatican on 11 November 2015 to lobby with the Pope Francis. "How the president of one political party or president of one country go to the Vatican!" (Ćudić 2015, personal interview). On religious festivals, political leaders are always seen together with religious leaders of their ethnic community: "In *Bajram,*[20] the Bosniak president and the Grand Mufti must be together in the mosque. In Christmas, the Croat president must be in church with Catholic priests because that is family" (Ćudić 2015, personal interview). In neighbouring Croatia, the new president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović invited Fr Jozo Zovko OFM, former parish priest of Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on her first working day as the new president of Croatia to bless the Presidential Office. All NGOs and Human Rights groups in Croatia expressed outrage claiming Croatia was a secular country and the Presidential Office was the office of all people in the country. In response to all the criticism, Kitarović simply wrote on her Facebook page: I wanted the house to be blessed (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

The question that needs to be raised is why should political actors seek the favour of religious institutions? Schmid (2012) argues that in Bosnia, secularisation followed the path of one of the traditional secularisation theses described by Casanova (1994), where religions were forced to develop their own sphere of operation which were independent from other public spheres of the state such as education, economy and science. The requirement of religions to have their independence organisational structures, such as those which were first developed by churches in the modern era, led the three dominant constituent religious communities of Bosnia to organise themselves in a political framework. Today these are the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Catholic Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Secularisation of the public sphere

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[20] *Bajram* is the Turkic word for a nationally celebrated festival or holiday, applicable to both national and religious celebrations. Locally observed holy days include Orthodox Easter and Christmas in the Republika Sspska, Catholic Easter and Christmas in Herzegovina, and Ramadan Bajram (Eid al-Fitr) and Kurban Bajram (Eid al-Adha) in Sarajevo and central Bosnia.

therefore led to the institutionalisation of religion. Fetahagic (2015) writes that despite the institutionalisation of religion, Bosnia has had a secular political orientation throughout its modern history and especially since 1945. Urban centres and towns still reflect a secular lifestyle. Nevertheless, religion plays a role in people's lives usually as a means of communal association or marker of ethnic identity. However, religious communities claim that religious observance is on the rise in Bosnia with people of the younger generation who have grown up after the war experiencing greater religious freedom. As a result, many communities in the country have seen a degree of religious revitalisation. Higher religious mobilisation among the youth is often explained by Berger's (1999) theorisation of desecularisation of former socialist societies after 1989. While some empirical studies uphold the thesis of religious mobilisation of the youth in Bosnia,[21] other show a negative trend in individual religiosity following the global trend of decreasing religious attachment.[22] At any rate, the result of growing importance of religious institutions is that political leaders have continuously seized on interreligious tensions and grievances for rallying votes. Religious leaders, on the other hand, have openly pursued political goals. Fetahagic (2015) writes both religious and political actors cling to the narrative and practice of protecting their "own" people. They often work in close partnership, such as during the politicisation of the 2013 Population Census, the first census in Bosnia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia where clerics of all three major constituent ethnoreligious communities — Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Catholic Church, and Serbian Orthodox Church —politicised the questions of religious and ethnic identities along the lines of political leaders in their effort to come up with a 'final political solution' to the 'national question' in Bosnia. Cooperation between religious and political leaders has also been for material gains, like the reconstruction of the religious sites of worship. There is also mutual criticism between religious and political actors within an ethnic community. Clerics criticise politicians for misusing religion, for example through use of religious symbols on public buildings, while politicians criticise clerics for meddling with politics.

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[21] Hacic-Vlahovic (2008) claims that religiosity has increased in post-war BiH, from 69.8% in 1998 to 74.3% in 2001.

[22] The WIN Gallup International "Global Index of Religiousity and Atheism 2012," shows that the percentage of the people in Bosnia who self-identified as religious actually decreased from 74% in 2005 to 67% in 2012.

3. Religion in Bosnian Society

Throughout its history, Bosnia has stood at the junction between great religious and cultural areas. From the 11th century to the 14th century, Bosnia served as the demarcation line between Eastern and Western Christendom; from the 14th to the late 19th century between Christian Europe and the Muslim Ottomans; and from the 19th century onwards between the Catholic Hapsburg Empire and the aspiring Orthodox Slavic states in the southern Balkans. Bosnia was also the clashing point of Serbian and Croatian nationalisms for the creation of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia respectively by usurping the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and converting to Christianity the Muslim Slavs. Though these two neighbours of Bosnia occupied parts of the country briefly during the recent war, historically Bosnia has enjoyed greater territorial stability and recognition than either Serbia or Croatia, and the identification of Bosnian Orthodox and Bosnian Catholic populations with Serbian and Croatian nationalisms respectively also came about only in the 19th century indicating that Bosnian Serbs are not identical to Serbs of Serbia or Bosnian Croats to Croats of Croatia. Bosnia's intermediacy between empires and cultures, therefore, played an enormous role in shaping the identities and perceptions of its three main religious communities — Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim. These religious communities developed in close association with one another during certain periods of history, while remained aloof and even hostile to each other at other times. It is important to note that in spite of swaying between co-existence and division, Bosnian society remained pluralistic throughout its history. "Universal heterogeneity" was always a hallmark of Bosnia, one that distinguished it from its overwhelmingly homogeneous neighbours, Serbia and Croatia (Velikonja 2003). Bosnian society remains a multi-religious mosaic with a central role for individual religious institutions, albeit with much more complicated relations between religious communities.

Religious communities began to solidify in the Balkans in the medieval period. In the following centuries, the identities and functions of the communities was constantly shaped by the political, social and economic conditions of the time. In the 19th and 20th centuries, a peculiar development took place in which the concept of nation came to be merged with that of religion. In present-day Balkans, national identity corresponds closely with ethnic

differentiation, and ethnic differentiation is closely connected with religious affiliation. Religious affiliation for Balkan peoples is thus linked to national identity. This phenomenon, which Velikonja (2003) terms as 'nationalisation of religions,' is important to examine for understanding religious communities in contemporary Bosnia. The following subsections examine the position of religions and religious communities in the Balkans through four historical periods — Medieval (12th and 13th century), Ottoman (14th to late 19th century), Austro-Hungarian (late 19th to early 20th century), and Communist (mid to end of 20th century) — to understand how national identity came to approximate religious identity. The final subsection looks at the role of religious communities in post-war Bosnia in the context of the larger goal of civic integration.

3.1. Religions in Medieval Bosnia

In the medieval era (12th-13th century), Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism were the two most prominent religious creeds in the Balkans. Orthodox churches were formed in opposition to the absolutist claims of the papacy in Rome. As a result, Orthodox churches were always autocephalous in which they linked religious unity to political unity. They emphasised on congruity between the church, the state and the people. The church played a major role in preserving and expanding the language, culture, and political traditions of the people and the Orthodox faith. The clergy was highly patriotic. In Serbia, the Serbian Orthodox Church was "a cultural and quasi-political institution, which embodied and expressed the ethos of the Serbian people to such a degree that nationality and religion fused into a distinct 'Serbian faith,'" writes Petrovich (1976: 10). In this role, the Serbian Orthodox Church had little to do with religion either as theology or as a set of personal beliefs and convictions. For the Serbian Orthodox Church, the national question of the Serbian people was not a separate political problem but a central element of the religion because the Church functioned as a religious as well as a national institution. According to Roman Catholicism, it was incumbent upon the local church and the local form of Catholicism to undertake the creation and continuance of the nation and emphasise its dissimilarity to other religious communities. In Croatia, the Roman Catholic Church played a significant role in awakening and augmenting national consciousness of the Croatian people.

In 12th century Bosnia, distinct from Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, arose the Bosnian Church (*Crkva Bosanska*) or the national church of the Bosnian people which professed Roman Catholic theology but rejected the primacy of the Vatican. It was also called the *Bogomil* Church and its followers were called *Bogomils*. As a consequence of its rejection of the pope's dominance, the Bogomil Church was deemed heretical by Rome and Bogomils were persecuted by Catholics. The Church however was not heretical, it was a Roman monastic order because it followed Roman Catholic liturgies, only it sought to maintain its autonomy within Western Christendom. Nevertheless, the Catholics managed to delegitimise the Church in the next two centuries leaving its followers, the Bosnian Christians, in a state of religious seclusion from the Orthodox and Roman Catholic neighbours.

There are three significant characteristics of the religious history of medieval Bosnia. First, religion itself was not a dominating factor in the internal history of the region during the 12th and the 13th centuries. If ever it was, then too it was only due to external interventions. The presence of different churches, which were often mutually exclusive in matters of doctrine and organisation, did not upset the relative harmony of Bosnian society. There were isolated incidents of religious friction but the seeds of tolerance and religious heterodoxy — two factors which were to become an important and persisting part of Bosnia's religious history — were planted during this period. Second, for all the religious communities, the practical and organisational aspects of religion were more important than the theological or doctrinal aspects. Finally, during the medieval period, a certain 'Bosnian' identity emerged owing to the specific alphabet, customs and judicial system prevalent in Bosnia. A conscious sense of belonging emerged among the majority of the population of Bosnia characterised by their religious, cultural and political identity, dissimilar from their Serbian and Croatian neighbours. The people identified themselves as 'Bosnians' in a geographic rather than an ethnic or religious sense (Velikonja 2003).

3.2. Religious Communities during Ottoman Rule

A cornerstone in the development of identity in the Balkans was the arrival of Islam in the region in the 14th and 15th centuries. Although Islam made its way to the Balkans even earlier through the presence of Sufi dervishes, the official year of the coming of Islam in the Balkans is considered to be 1463, the year Ottomans entered Bosnia. Bosnia remained a *vilayet* (province) of the Ottoman empire from 1463 to 1878. The administration of the populations under Ottoman rule was based on the principle 'your religion is yours, my religion is mine.' The institution which provided for realising this principle was the millet system (Arabic *milla,* Turkish *millet*, meaning religion). According to the millet system, the subjects in the Ottoman empire were organised on the basis of religious affiliation. Through the millets, the members of individual religions associated into relatively autonomous administrative units which had an organised internal hierarchy and was subordinated to the Ottoman emperor. The heads of millets were the religious leaders who were responsible for the welfare of members of the community and ensuring the community's obedience to Ottoman authorities. In time, religious leaders became the chief protectors of their community and religious communities started approximating nations.

The millet system was devised by the Ottomans to cater to the organisational and cultural requirements of the vastly different religious communities and ethnic groups under their suzerainty. Millets basically separated members of different religious communities. At first there were four recognised religious communities: Muslim, Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish. The most privileged community was the Muslim millet (*millet-i islamiyye*) whose religious and political head was the Ottoman Sultan called *Sheikh al-Islam* (*Şeyhülislam*). Second in size and privilege was the Orthodox millet (*Rum milleti,* meaning Roman people) whose head was the patriarch of Constantinople — the ecumenical patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Ottomans favoured the Orthodox millet because its entire clergy lived within the empire where they could be easily controlled and the election of the patriarch of Constantinople was subject to approval by the Sultan.

The millet system produced a fourfold effect in Ottoman society. First, segregation of different religious groups reduced the interaction between them; this minimised the possibility of inter-community conflict. Second, emphasis on distinguishing between individual religious communities ensured the religious, cultural and ethnic survival of each community and gave ample opportunity for communities to even expand. Third, division of the population into millets facilitated the participation of the different communities in the Ottoman political and economic apparatus. Finally, guaranteeing the survival and protection of the various millets prevented mass conversion of populations to Islam and checked the rise of specific national identities. The millet system was efficient in so far that it prevented interreligious conflict, but quarantining different religious communities created a society where communities lived side-by-side but with little knowledge of each other. This produced mutual suspicion and repulsion between communities. Ottoman society thus exhibited religious tolerance but there was latent hatred (Velikonja 2003).

The process of conversion to Islam under the Ottomans was gradual at the beginning, but later became widespread. In Bosnia, the first conversions took place in the 14th century, soon after its conquest by the Ottomans, but by the 15th century, one-fifth of its total population had already converted to Islam. With the exception of Albania and parts of Bulgaria and Macedonia, the scale of conversion was not as high elsewhere in the Balkans as it was in Bosnia. There were some factors peculiar to Bosnia which were responsible for the high percentage of conversions. (1) The Bosnian Church had ceased to exist even before the arrival of the Ottomans and in its absence no other church had been able to establish an efficient territorially based organisation that could bind believers to the church through faith or a sense of community. Consequently, Bosnian Christians were not in contact with any church; nor were they deeply attached to any religious community like their Serbian and Croatian neighbours who were loyal to the Serbian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches respectively. (2) The sect of Christianity which most Bosnians practiced was *Bogomilism* — a form of folk Christianity containing pre-Christian traditions and forms of mysticism. It was a loose faith in regard to the other established Christian creeds. Lack of understanding of the principal Christian dogmas prompted the conversion of Bosnian Christians to Islam, which was a firmly institutionalised religion. (3) Since Bogomilism was

declared heretical by the Roman Catholic Church, Bogomils were relentlessly persecuted by Catholics. Bogomils converted to Islam as a way of rescuing themselves from the persecution they had been enduring. Becoming Muslims warranted them a secured position in the new empire. (4) Many converted to Islam in order to rise in the political, military and religious hierarchy of the Ottoman system. (5) Some converted to Islam to escape *devşirme* — the system by which Christian boys were taken by Ottoman authorities to convert to Islam and train and serve in elite military troops (jannisaries). (6) Most of the nobility converted to Islam to retain their property and position. (7) Peasants converted to Islam to escape taxes that were imposed on Christians. (8) Merchants converted to Islam because greater protection and freedom of movement was accorded to Muslims. (9) Prisoners converted to Islam to get exempted from slavery. (10) Ottoman victories over Christian armies also encouraged conversions to Islam. The repeated victories of the Ottomans was seen as a sign of divine providence. Many were attracted to Islam seeing the dynamism and zeal of their Muslim rulers. (11) Dervish orders played an important role in conversions to Islam. Sarajevo housed many dervish orders and became a centre of Islamic mysticism. The most influential was the *Mevlevi* dervish order. Dervish lodges (*tekije*) became the centres of religious and cultural gatherings for local Muslims. (12) Mass conversion to Islam meant urbanisation of that territory (Velikonja 2003).

The nature of Islamicization in Bosnia is a debated subject. Some historians argue that Turkish rule was characterised by oppression of Christians and forced conversions to Islam. Indeed the Christian populations of the Balkans considered Turkish rule a kind of religious occupation of their lands, but there is extensive material attesting to the social, ethnic and religious tolerance of Balkan Islam. Brajovic (2008) claims that proselytism was clearly not an element of Ottoman rule. Conversion to Islam was welcome but not generally demanded; social promotion though was exclusively reserved from Muslims. Ottoman authorities did not try to integrate culturally and religiously different people under their rule. Forced conversions were rare and were required by only a few religiously fanatical local Ottoman rulers. Balkan Christians were never subjected to systematic and sustained proselytism; the heavy presence of Christians in the Balkans is statistical evidence to that, according to Karčić (2010). The overall religious and ethnic differentiation of the population was maintained and even

increased through the millet system. Velikonja (2003) also believes that Ottomans showed a considerable degree of religious and ethnic tolerance which allowed Christian communities in Bosnia to grow freely regardless of their religious and ethnic difference with the Muslim Slavs. Ottomans adopted a tolerant attitude because they wanted to secure their power in Bosnia and strengthen their hegemony over its Christian populations. Tolerance was shown not only towards Christians but also Jews. Thousands of Jews fleeing persecution in Spain and Portugal following the Christian *reconquista* in the 15th century were granted shelter in Bosnia. The relative tolerance towards Christians and Jews and religious and ethnic pluralism was present not only in Bosnia but in other parts of the Ottoman empire as well. Moreover, the Islam that prevailed in Bosnia was not monolithic or puritanical in nature. It was a mix of different elements of Sunni, Shia and Sufi traditions incorporated into the local pre-Islamic culture of the land. The Ottoman authorities pursued a policy of supporting Sunni Islam but since a large number of Persian Sufi orders were present in Bosnia such as the *Mawlawiyya*, *Khalwatiyya, Rifaiyya, Naqshibendiyya, Qadiriyya,* certain Shia practices like the celebration of *Ashura* and even pre-Islamic Persian practices such as the celebration of *Sultan Nevruz*, the coming of spring, became part of Bosnian Islam (Karčić 2010). The Ottomans generally tolerated syncretism and syncretism proved a major factor in the conversion of Balkan people to Islam (Velikonja 2003).

Conversion to Islam remained a sensitive issue in Bosnia, regardless. Through the centuries, it became an integral part of the national mythologies, literatures and folk epics of the Christian communities. Christians regarded converted Muslims as apostates who converted to Islam to preserve their status and wealth. It is important to note, however, that the primary reason for hostility between religious communities in Bosnia was not religion but land. Whereas feudal estate holders could be Christians or Muslims in the initial stages of Ottoman rule, by the 19th century, all major landowners were Muslims and the majority of peasants cultivating the lands were Christians. The Muslim landowning elite of Bosnia identified themselves most closely with the Ottomans because of the economic and political privileges they received. It was with time that the economic divide between the Christian peasantry and the Muslim landowners acquired religious overtones — on the one hand was the dominance of the Muslim aristocracy patronised by the Ottoman authorities in Constantinople, on the

other hand was the frustration of the Christian peasants nourished by folk legends and traditions of the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

3.3. Nationalisation of Religions in the 19th Century

By the beginning of the 19th century, it became common among Christians to regard Bosnia's Muslims as greedy and cowardly. Their dislike for the Muslims sprung from the popular belief that Slavs were Christian by nature and therefore those Slavs who converted to Islam betrayed not only the Christian faith but also the Slavic race. Adding to the hatred for Muslims was the disfigured memory among the Orthodox people of the historic battle of Kosovo fought in 1389 where Turks defeated the Serbs and continued the successful conquest of the Balkan peninsula. The Serbian Orthodox Church had preserved the memory of Kosovo in the Serbian national mythology as an episode of collective shame and trauma for the Serbian people that had to be avenged one day. Serbian nationalist writers, poets, playwrights and painters seized on subjects like death, sacrifice, heroism and betrayal. The ultimate goal of Serbian nationalism became avenging Kosovo by liberating the Serbian nation from foreign yoke and expanding Serbian territory. Patriotic Orthodox clergymen supported these ambitions. The persecution of Muslims became a holy quest that also received the acquiescence of the Orthodox clergy.

Thus, although a sense of religious and national differentiation existed among the population, it was only with the rise of Serbian nationalism in the 19th century that the discord between peasants and landowners took the form of deep-seated hatred of Bosnian Muslims by their Christian, particularly Orthodox Serb, neighbours. Some argue that nationalistic ideas came to Bosnia from neighbouring Serbia and Croatia. Whereas this could be true, it is also certain that these ideas found reception from Bosnian Christians. At first, the political consciousness of the Bosnian Christians was directed against the Ottomans and Hapsburg rulers, but with time Bosnian Orthodox and Catholic populations began associating with Serbian and Croatian nationalisms across the border and progressively came to identify themselves as Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. In this way, the rise of nationalism in 19th century also merged religion with the concept of ethnicity: Orthodox people recognised themselves as

Serbs, Catholics recognised themselves as Croats. Only the Muslims did not develop a specific national or ethnic identity. They distinguished themselves from Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats on religious grounds alone (Brajovic 2006).

Serbs, Croats and Muslim Slavs formed the three main ethnic groups in Bosnia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Serbs were primarily agrarian with only a few landowners; their clergy was mostly uneducated; they gradually came to comprise the middle-class of towns and cities where they built schools and cultural centres. National consciousness of the Bosnian Serbs was strongly advanced by the Serbian Orthodox Church. Serbia began supporting Bosnian Serb nationalism in the last years of the Ottoman rule and continued this policy into the Austro-Hungarian period. Croats were also largely agrarian with a small number of landowners; they were influenced by the Franciscan order, which was nationalistic and politically conscious. National consciousness of the Bosnian Croats was advanced by the Catholic Church in Croatia in the first two decades of Austro-Hungarian rule. Thereafter Croatia began lending its support to Bosnian Croat nationalism. Muslims were forked into three classes: peasantry, middle-class and nobility. The peasants who were the most numerous lived close to the Christian peasantry; their religious guides were the relatively uneducated *hodžas*; despite their social and economic difference with the two upper classes of Muslims, the peasants were conscious of their privileged position under the Ottoman rule. The middle-class was mostly engaged in craft and trade and lived in towns and cities. The nobility which included religious leaders, wealthy merchants and landed elites were mostly occupied with preserving their position and privileges acquired under the Ottomans. When Bosnia-Herzegovina was transferred to the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1878 owing to dwindling strength of the Ottoman empire, Bosnian Muslims became one of the 'recognised religious communities' of the empire, and in 1882, the institution of the *Reis-ul-ulema* (Grand Mufti) was established (Karčić 1999). Bosnian Muslims remained ambivalent over the national issue, and continued to peg their identity on religious, cultural, economic and political foundations such as establishment of banks and companies, creation of Muslim political parties and demands for autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite the fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Croatia acted as the guardians of the ethnic and national heritage of their respective people during centuries of foreign domination under Ottoman and Hapsburg rule, the churches should not be solely accounted for the nationalisation of religions. To be sure, the Orthodox Church had resisted the modernising trends associated with nationalism in the 19th century. It was only when new nation-states appeared in the Balkans, which sought legitimacy partly through the proclamation of national churches, that Orthodox Churches became nationalised. Nationalisation of Orthodox Churches was thus a feature of the modern era and came about following the rise of nation-states in the Balkans. Nationalisation also marked a departure from the ecumenical tradition of Orthodoxy. Likewise, the Catholic Church in Croatia was not a key force in the awakening of Croatian nationalism. Croatian nationalism in the 19th century was built around the notion of continuity with the medieval Croatian kingdom and centred on aspects of common linguistic and historical traditions. However, even though national identity did not derive from religion, there was always a powerful connection between churches and national aspirations of the nations they represented. Because religious institutions served also as the national institutions for their community, religious identity usually became synonymous with national identity. From the second half of the 19th century, the clergy's position on the national issue resulted in and reflected the close relationship between religion and nationality. Both Croatian Catholicism and Serbian Orthodoxy ascribed a pivotal role to the nation in the history of the religion. Serbian Orthodoxy emphasised the inseparable link between the Orthodox Church, the Serb people and the land spreading across Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo. The Serbian Orthodox Church preserved the memory of the Serbian state with Kosovo so that Kosovo became the symbol of Serbian Orthodoxy and the driving force for the national unity of the Serbs under foreign domination. The Catholic Church in Croatia assumed the role of protecting and nurturing Croatian national identity. As Serbs honoured Kosovo and other shrines in Serbia and Macedonia, the Croatian nation took pride in monuments and artefacts from the era of Croatian native rulers located in Dalmatia on the Adriatic coast of present-day Croatia. Both Serbian Orthodox Church and Catholic Church in Croatia thus embodied the "soul" of their national people by establishing themselves as inalienable from the history and land of the people (Palmer 2000).

Developments during the Second World War brought forth the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Croatia as the definitive guardians of the national aspirations of their respective peoples. Following the carving of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941, the territories of most of present-day Croatia, all of Bosnia and parts of Vojvodina came under the rule of Croatian fascist Ustaše who were allied to the Nazis in Germany. The Ustaše sought to exterminate the Jewish, Roma and Serb populations in the territories under their control. It was during this time that the Catholic Church in Croatia for the first time became politically involved in the policies of its people by approving Ustaše's genocide of Jews, Romas and Serbs and forced conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism. Some lower clergy physically took part in atrocities against the Serbs. Even after the end of the Second World War, the Catholic Church continued its wartime subversive activities in the region. As the national church of the victims of Ustaše genocide, the Serbian Orthodox Church remembered the period of the Second World War as a time of the slaughter of Serbs in Ustaše-run death camps and forced conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism. These memories left a deep scar on the Serbian Orthodox Church and shaped its outlook in the following decades (Palmer 2000).

3.4. Religions in Communist Yugoslavia

During the seventy years of socialist rule in Yugoslavia, the state was highly anti-religious because communism was in principle opposed to religion, viewing it as 'the superstructure of bourgeois capitalism' which needed to be closely monitored and as far as possible repressed for the victory of socialism and its proletarian-international ideology. The state was also hostile to civil society[23] because the goal of communism was "the atomisation of the individual" by removing all unruly intermediate bodies between the individual and the state. Civil society declined as a force for social empowerment of citizens. There were differences in the state's attitude to different religions. Judaism, Islam and Protestant churches were usually of lesser concern; the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches were of primary concern (Miller 2007).

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[23] The realm of self-organisation of citizens in a given state for the purpose of pursuing more or less specific objectives: material interests, moral/ethical, ethnic goals or even hobbies (Miller 2007: 72).

With regard to the Catholic Church in Croatia, the Communist Party[24] feared that the Church could use its position as an autonomous institution to reawaken Croatian nationalism. Tito tried to persuade the Catholic Church, which had supported Ustaše during the Second World War, to renounce its ties with the Vatican and endorse the new socialist regime of Yugoslavia. The Church refused to align with the communists and suffered severe persecution consequently. Outraged by the repression of their Church, Catholic Croats denounced the idea of Yugoslav unity because it encapsulated communist ideology. Croats once again turned to their Church as the only institution which could advance their national aspirations (Miller 2007). The Church, which was otherwise subjected to persecution, had been spared as an autonomous institution of the Croat people. This result was that the Church became a national symbol and converging point of frustrated Croat nationalism, and Croatian Catholicism experienced unprecedented growth during the late communist period in spite of persecution at the hands of communists (Palmer 2000). Between the 1960s and 1980s, Croatian Catholicism attained the largest size in its history (Perica 2002).

Orthodox Churches also suffered under the general onslaught on religions by the communist regime. Orthodox Churches were different from the Roman Catholic Church because the former were essentially national churches which had historically played a part in sanctioning the legitimacy of the state. Tito forced the Serbian Orthodox Church, which had supported his Second World War adversaries, the royal Serb Chetniks, to adopt a low profile. The suppression of the Serbian Orthodox Church contained a message for other nationalities that Serbs would no longer be the politically dominant ethno-national group in communist Yugoslavia as they had been in the previous Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Tito tried to weaken the Serbian Orthodox Church further by promoting the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Although other Orthodox Churches were unwilling to recognise the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, primarily due to local geopolitics, Tito's move

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[24] The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was founded as an opposition party in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes which was created in the region of the Balkans in 1919. After the collapse of the Kingdom in 1941, Yugoslav partisans led by the Communist Party under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito became embroiled in a bloody war of liberation from the Axis powers and their allies in the Balkans. The liberation war ended in 1945, following which the Communist Party established a single party state in the region of the former Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SRF Yugoslavia). SRF Yugoslavia existed until the outbreak of war in the early 1990s. From 1945 to the 1990s, the ruling party of SRF Yugoslavia was the Communist Party. Like other ruling communist parties in the world at that time, the Yugoslav Communist Party persecuted religious institutions and suppressed individual religiosity.

significantly encouraged Macedonian national consciousness and challenged Serbian nationalism (Miller 2007). Interestingly, the Serbian Orthodox Church did not develop as a focus of nationalism among the Serb people as did the Catholic Church among the Croats despite the severe repression of the Orthodox Church by the communist regime. The Serbian Orthodox Church was a much weaker institution among Serbs compared to the Catholic Church among Croats. When nationalism was revived in Serbia in late 1980s, it was through the effort of Serbian nationalist intellectuals particularly from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Belgrade (Palmer 2000).

Unlike the Croats and Serbs, Muslims had favoured the political alliance of the South Slav people when Bosnia became a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941) following the First World War. The state often supported the Muslims calculating their potential to counter Serbs and Croats, the two other powerful nationalities in the region (Sterland and Beauclerk 2008). During the Second World War, Muslims suffered widely at the hands of the royal Serb Chetnik forces (Karčić 2010). Under communist Yugoslavia, Muslims faced repression similar to the Serbs and Croats: Sharia courts were abolished; veils were banned for women; Muslim intellectuals were persecuted; a number of them were sentenced to prison or death for their activities or faced death through extra-judicial killings; and all *waqf* (religious endowments) were nationalised stripping the Muslim community of its economic strength; the *Reis-ul-ulema* was appointed by the state; and the Islamic Religious Community, the official organisation of all the Yugoslav Muslims, was kept under tight control through infiltration by spies and collaborators making it in effect an apparatus of the state (Karčić 2010). The communist regime deliberately promoted a "secular" Muslim identity as a means to stop Serbs or Croats from dominating Bosnia. The Muslims were designated as a distinct ethnicity in 1961 and upgraded to the status of a nationality in 1968. Thereafter, Bosnian Muslims received steady support from the communist regime. The 1970s brought positive changes for Yugoslav Muslims. Mosques were reconstructed; interest in Islamic education was revived; publishing of original works and translations of foreign books gained momentum; use of Islamic social symbols became common; Muslim cultural organisations and solidarity institutions were founded (Karčić 1997). The 1970s and 1980s also saw increasing agitation from sections of the *ulema* (Muslim clerics) for the forming of a Muslim

republic (Ramet 1989). However, majority of the Bosnian Muslims denied the existence of a link between Islam and Muslim national identity throughout the communist period. Bosnian Muslims were the group which identified the most with Yugoslavia — from the political point of view of a pan-Slavic state and from their position as the most secular of groups in the country (Sterland and Beauclerk 2008). Muslim intellectuals had connections with the Communist Party and majority of Bosnian Muslims remained wedded to the idea of Yugoslav unity until its break-up in 1991 (Cohen 1998).

3.5. *Churches during the Yugoslav Crisis*

When Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic (who was Serbian by nationality, Serb by ethnicity, and Serbian Orthodox by religion) assumed power in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, he appealed to the Serbian Orthodox Church to espouse Serbian nationalism and endorse the 'in-gathering' of all Orthodox Serbs living in Yugoslavia. Already in 1981, the Church had aggressively defended the national interests of Serbs in Kosovo during Albanian riots. After war broke out in the 1990s, the Church strongly identified with the Serb national cause — the unity of all Serbs in a single Serbian state. It was unacceptable to the Church that Serbs would have to live under a nationalist government in Croatia — after suffering at the hands of the Croatian ultranationalist Ustaše during the Second World War — or under a coalition of Croats and Bosniaks in Bosnia. The Church saw the Serbian cause in Croatia and Bosnia as completely justified and believed that Serbs were entitled to exercise their right to self-determination. Until 1993, when Bosnian Serbs and Croatian Serbs were enjoying the heady days of Milosevic's campaign for a Greater Serbia, the Church did not make any objection to Milosevic's policies. After 1993, when Milosevic pressurised the Bosnian Serbs to accept the partition plans which the international community was proposing and make peace, the Church vehemently condemned Milosevic accusing him of betraying the Serb cause in Croatia and Bosnia (Palmer 2000).

The Catholic Church in Croatia supported the Croatian national cause believing that Croats had the right to self-determination. The Church believed that the war in Yugoslavia had started on account of Serbia's aggression and Croats had the right to defend themselves and

wrest independence from Serb-controlled Yugoslavia. Although the Church supported Croatian nationalism, it condemned the Croat forces' excesses against Serbs and Bosniaks and destruction of mosques. The Church appealed to the Croats for peace and mutual respect between the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim communities. In 1993, when Serbia and Croatia's plan to carve up Bosnia at the expense of Bosniaks became clear, the Church strongly condemned the policies of the Croatian government (Palmer 2000).

On the whole, the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Serbian Orthodox Church, both contributed to the climate of war by aligning themselves with the political aims of their nations. Not only that, throughout the war they maintained silence over the atrocities committed by their people. In the aftermath of the conflict, they condemned any attempt to give the war a religious content. The Serbian Orthodox Church denied the conflict was a religious war maintaing that the key motives and actors of the conflict had nothing to do with religion and that religious leaders were powerless in the face of the conflict and the actions of the political and military leaders. Serbian Orthodox Bishop, Lavrentije of Šabac-Valjevo, Serbia claimed that the Yugoslav crisis was caused by people's neglect of spiritual life during communist rule in Yugoslavia. Bishop Lavrentije emphasised that the Yugoslav crisis was not a war by the Orthodox against Muslims and Catholics, but a civil war between atheists on all sides because seven decades of atheist rule in the country had alienated all citizens from the church and the God. The position of the Catholic Church on the war was more mixed. In principle, the Church supported the Croatian national cause, whereas in their public statements, they were more cautious. After the war, the Catholic Church engaged but half-heartedly in ecumenical contacts with other religious institutions. It condemned the crimes committed by Croats, usually defensively insisting that the crimes of others were much worse (Palmer 2000).

No doubt the Yugoslav crisis precipitated for reasons other than religion, religion was implicated in the conflict all the same. Religious symbolism was repeatedly used during the war, not for their religious significance alone but to show belonging to a national community. Religious monuments were singularly targeted to cleanse an area of the cultural bearings of an enemy community. For instance, every mosque in Serb-occupied Banja Luka was

dynamited despite there being no belligerent activities in the city throughout the war. In 1992, when Bosnia became independent, Serbia and Croatia jointly launched an aggression to partition the new state between themselves by cleansing the Bosniaks from their respective captured territories. The four years of heavy fighting that followed in Bosnia made Bosnian Muslims more aware of their identity owing the religiously selected targeting of their people (Karčić 2010). In 1993, Bosnian Muslims adopted the name Bosniak (*Bošnjak*) to create a national identity based on the concept of a Bosnian territorial and cultural inheritance (Sterland and Beauclerk 2008). Following the war, there was a religious revival among Bosniaks, and religious nationalism in general rose among all people in Bosnia.

3.6. *Religious Communities in Post-war Bosnia*

Today, religious communities form an organic part of Bosnia. Although Bosnia is secular in law, religious communities have a major role to play because of which Bosnian society cannot be called secularised or secularistic. However, true to its historic tradition, the society is pluralistic, and religious communities have tried to become a constructive force in social development. Since the end of the war, religious communities have mainly concerned themselves with religious education. Through their congregations, religious schools, sermons and teachings, and most significantly through participation in public schools, religious communities provide religious education to children and students. Religious education may be of two types: confessional religious education (or religious instruction) taught to students belonging to a particular religious community by qualified clerics or laypersons of that community; and non-confessional religious education (religious studies) taught to students regardless of their religious affiliation by teachers not necessarily belonging to a particular or any religious community. The subject that is taught in public schools is called religious instruction which basically religious education of the confessional type. More than 95% of all students take it up as an optional course. Every religious community provides its teachers for the subject. The non-confessional type of religious education exists only in selected areas as a pilot project.[25]

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[25] Such as in the Tuzla-Zvornik canton. Alibasic, Ahmet, 'Religious Education in Public Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Towards a Model Supporting Coexistence and Mutual Understanding,' *Policy Development Fellowship Program 2008-2009*, Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina, 8, 12.

Religious education is a debated issue in Bosnia. The idea of having religious education in public schools was conceived in 1991 when ethnopolitical parties came to power in Yugoslavia. It was implemented throughout Yugoslavia in 1994 under severe war conditions when any discussion on this issue was not possible. Today, the system of religious education in public schools is one of those rare issues in Bosnia where top leaders of all religious communities are in complete agreement. They all believe that religious instructions should be given to children of their community through the public education system because religion has an overwhelming influence in the life of Bosnians. Representatives of the religious communities believe that religious instructions do good to children — it teaches them morality, humanity and respect for fellow citizens.

Mustafić (2015), Interreligious Officer of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Zovkić (2015), professor at Sarajevo Theological Seminary and member of Roman Catholic Archbishopry of Sarajevo expressed their views in detail on the issue of religious education. Mustafić (2015) explained that religion dominates every aspect of a person's life in Bosnia, be it their upbringing in the family, friendships in school, relations with neighbours and attitude to society and state. Therefore it is important to train young minds about religion so that they can think clearly about their own religious identity, doctrines and practices as well as those of others.

> If you have something that probably has the biggest influence on individuals, I believe that should be reason enough to have people educated about it. Whenever I think, my thinking reflects my religious upbringing, my religious knowledge and my religious ethics. So its important for me that my state considers having religious education because wherever I go, I take that with me.
>
> In our society, which is multi-religious, religious education is important because if I am brought up as a Muslim and my neighbour was brought up as a Christian then to understand each other better we should know that *something* which played a great role in our upbringings. That is why it is good to know and good to teach people the right place for those religious knowledge, information, teachings (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Mustafić (2015) explained further that religion's strong influence on people was the main reason the communist regime of Yugoslavia tried to sideline it. Socialism had good ideas, he believed, but communism destroyed any chance for those good socially oriented ideas to

exist because communism demanded people to have only one affiliation — the communist ideology.

> When you suppress people, you create radicalism and that ends in conflict. If you relax things, let people learn about everything and choose what is close to them, its better (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

As a person who was personally conditioned by religion, he wanted the system of religious education to continue so that ignorance about religions and identities, whether one's own or of others, does not turn religion into an instrument in war as it had done in the past. He clarified though that religious education should be only directed towards teaching people about the elements that constitute their identity and those of the others they live with.

Zovkić (2015) reiterated that removal of religious education from schools under the communist regime was detrimental to Yugoslav society in the long run. He recalled having received religious education till Class II when Yugoslavia was under the Serbian monarchy. Thereafter communists took over Yugoslavia and removed religious education from the school curriculum. He believed that society was relatively peaceful when religious instructions existed in schools before the arrival of communism in the Balkans. During the communist rule, when religious education was banned, society was full of unrest. Consequently, when communism fell, religious leaders requested the government to reintroduce religious instructions in public schools because parents who paid taxes to the state for education had the right to educate their children in their faith. Religious education returned to public schools in 1993 and it is has been over two decades that the subject is taught in schools.

> We are reaping the fruits of over two decades of having confessional education in schools — now the children know about each other's faith (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

Zovkić (2015) pointed out that some peace activists, intellectuals and public workers complain, off and on: "ignore the faith, the children would be more humane." But this is a Marxist way of thinking, he believed, which is not good for a democratic pluralistic society; it is faith which helps people to be humane.

> Some left-minded people in Sarajevo, who want to kick us out, say, 'Let the children be neutral confessionally.' This is stupid; there is no neutral growing up. You grow up in the identity which is

practiced by your family and your environment. We ministers of different religions don't allow children to grow up neutral because that means growing up with empty-heads and empty-hearts. You should know who you are. Only if you are sure about yourself can you accept those who are different from you (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

Mustafić (2015) and Zovkić (2015) both pointed out that textbooks for religious instructions are written by pedagogues from each religious community which ensures they have "good-quality" subject matter — without elaborating what good-quality meant. The textbook for each religion contains material about that religion as well as other religions because the goal of religious education is to teach students about every religion. The textbooks are exchanged between the communities so that all the communities are aware what is being taught about each religion. The communities can also make recommendations regarding the material on their religion. For example, the material on Islam in the textbook for Catholic and Orthodox children is first read by Muslim experts and only after their recommendations are incorporated, the material gets included in the textbook.

The opinions of Mustafić (2015) and Zovkić (2015) clearly shows that religious communities place a high value on religious education seeing it as a means of securing the faith and identity of the members of their community and making them more accepting of people of other communities. Religious education also appears to be popular among students and parents who see it as a means of preserving cultures and bolstering religion and ethnic identity. Bozana Ivelić-Katava, Senior Advisor in the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a Catholic Croat personally remarked, "Most people are very satisfied with this subject. Parents say they want this subject. Children also say they want this subject" (Ivelić-Katava 2015, personal interview). A Bosniak boy studying in Class VIII said that he liked religious education because he learnt about Islam and Christianity (Malagić 2015, personal interview).

Although religious education is provided enthusiastically by religious communities and received favourably by parents and students, the system is not without its own problems. One of the practical problems, pointed out by Kubaric and Moe (2006), is that the teaching of religious education always takes place in physically segregated classes according to ethnic affiliation. This physical separation of students is controversial because it reinforces the

general situation of ethnic segregation. There is also a system called 'two schools under one roof,' where children of different ethnicity attend school in the same building but are physically separated during teaching. The system of 'two schools under one roof' was started by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to facilitate the return of the displaced but subsequent attempts for its annulment have been resisted. Mustafić (2015) who advocated religious education, criticised the system of 'two schools under one roof' calling it "politics of separation" (Mustafić 2015, personal interview). In some areas, school buildings and classrooms are marked by religious or national logos of a particular ethnic community asserting the dominance of that ethnic group. One prominent example is in Mostar. Since the end of the war, Mostar has been a divided city between Bosniaks and Croats: Bosniaks occupy the eastern part of the city commonly known as East Mostar and Croats occupy the western part of the city known as West Mostar. There is a single *gimnazija* (secondary school) in the city which follows the system of 'two schools under one roof': Bosniaks study on the first floor and Croats on the second and the classrooms are marked with Bosniak and Croat national logos respectively. Palermo (2008) finds that the trend in recent years has been towards greater ethnic separation in schools with many children attending mono-ethnic schools either because they operate in ethnically segregated areas or because parents chose to send their children to schools attended by children of the same ethnic group.

Another practical problem is that while the law provides for religious education of all three religions in each public school, it is mostly the school's majority religion which is taught because it is usually not unfeasible to provide minority religions' education. While the students from these minority religions are excused from the majority religious education class, peer pressure, scheduling and the view that the subject can fetch good grades, commonly leads students to take up the majority religious education. While these classes are not mandatory for any student, Merdjanova and Brodeur (2009) find that more than 90 percent of students attend it.

The problem with religious education is not limited to practical ones alone. Its curriculum is no less controversial. Popov and Ofstad (2006) look at the subject matter of textbooks used by the Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic communities for their respective religious educations

and find that while each of the communities takes a confessional approach to religious education, they differ in the way they do it. The Islamic religious education focuses mainly on confession and duties of the Muslim. It contains certain exclusivist ideas such as the Muslim obligation to 'love and protect the fatherland' and Islam's attainment of universal truth compared to missing elements in Jewish and Christian religions. It mentions the necessity for tolerance but relates it more to intra-community relations than inter-community ones. The Orthodox religious education looks at ethics and dogma of the church as well as Orthodoxy in Serbian national history. It devotes very little attention to other religions, and when it does, they tend to be presented wrongly: those "from whom we need special protection ...[and] whose goal is to destroy the person, the family, and thus the whole society" (Popov and Ofstad 2006: 91). The Catholic religious education focuses on the Bible, values and stories of faith as well as the history of the Catholic Church. It shows openness towards other religious perspectives, and in some cases has a more inclusive curriculum than either Muslim or Orthodox ones which are more narrowly focused on traditional faith, values, culture and history. Merdjanova and Brodeur (2009: 92) say that the way religious communities have oriented their individual subject matters clearly shows that they see public school religious education as means of ensuring their survival after the state-imposed ban on religious education during the communist regime and dispelling common ignorance about the basics of their respective creeds. Kapo (2012) writes that the textbooks of all the religions emphasise on doctrine, ritual, community history, and are strictly mono-confessional, that is paying little attention to the other religions. Educating children in their faith in this exclusive way is an ideological instrumentalisation of religion because children grow up learning only about their own religion and own ethnonational community. Such mono-ethnic religious education, Kapo warns, can lead to antagonism among children towards members of the other groups in the long-run. Sterland and Beauclerk (2008) arrive at the same conclusion that public school religious education is generally inward-looking, emphasising on conservative theological interpretations and ethno-national history. Civil society activist, Ćudić (2015), noted that having religious education throughout the schooling of children practically ensures that by the time children are matured enough to discern the difference between religions, they have already 'learnt to hate' members of other religious communities. He said:

I don't have problem with religion. But if a child has religious education [of mono-ethnic orientation] all the way from kindergarten, primary school to high school then by the time s/he reaches university, s/he has already learnt to hate members of the other ethnic group because s/he has been taught, 'they don't believe in my God.' If you are Bosniak, for instance, after learning about your religion for twenty years you will take your first friend to be in Istanbul, not Serbia, Greece or Albania, and your first enemy to be here in Sarajevo (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

A final problem in regard to religious education is the teachers which individual religious communities provide to public schools for the subject. Teaching a sensitive subject like religious education requires a liberal approach, but many of the teachers in the schools are conservative in their outlook. Mustafić (2015) remarked that when conservative or nationalistic teachers impart religious education, then religious education could become indoctrination and that would do 'more harm than good' to the delicate balance of Bosnia's multireligious society. Besides that, many of the teachers do not have knowledge beyond their own religion but have to teach about other religions because the curriculum requires it. Ivelić-Katava (2015) who handles grassroots interreligious projects at the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina explained that when teachers of one religion teach about other religions without having sound knowledge of those religions, they are likely to provide wrong information which would only reinforce the prejudices and stereotypes present in society.

It is clear that religious education has some serious problems but doing away with the subject, as some civil society activists and academicians might want, does not seem a possibility given the enormous importance religious communities place on religious education. The experience of the last war has conditioned most people into thinking that religious ignorance leads to conflict whereas learning about religions and identities improves inter-religious relations. Ivelić-Katava (2015) claimed that religious education separates children by splitting them up during classes, but "this the reality of Bosnian society and people have to accept it as normal." Children have a right to learn about their religion, she insisted, so "why should they be forbidden that right when it is just regular like human rights. Children also want to know about other's religions, "they only need someone to teach them their own moral values and history and those of the others". Having said this, she also admitted that subject needs enriching in terms of its contents and its teachers (Ivelić-Katava 2015, personal interview). Sterland and Beauclerk (2008) hold that religious education in

Bosnia should be made more open-minded, and inter-religious and multi-religious perspectives, which are totally missing at present, should be included.

The last few years has seen some progress in the direction of liberalising religious thought. One well-known initiative was taken within the Islamic community in 2007 by Amra Pandžo-Đurić (2017), a local Muslim peace activist and director of *Small Steps: Association for Dialogue in the Family and Society.* She undertook a practical examination of key Islamic texts included in school textbooks to arrive at the theological proofs of Islamic tolerance towards other faiths. The lessons she drew were included in a teachers' handbook, which was later introduced in schools. Regarding the impact of religious education on student, a lot also depends on the calibre of those who are teaching the subject. They should have a balanced perspective and genuine knowledge about religions. Here too, initiative needs to be taken by individual religious communities in training their teachers so that they teach in a manner that would rule out the possibility of radicalising young minds. If religious education is undogmatic and inclusive it can have a positive impact on Bosnian society (Pandžo-Đurić 2017, personal interview). Smock (2005) asserts that knowledge of other religious communities is particularly important in the post-war scenario because it can work as an antidote to hatred for members of other faiths.

3. Interreligious Dialogue

Many in Bosnia claim that the different religious communities coexisted relatively peacefully in the past. Stuebner (2009) says that these claims are not entirely true. Historically, one religion predominated during one period: throughout the Ottoman rule in the Balkans (1463-1878), Islam was the dominant religion in Bosnia because the Ottomans were Muslims; during the Austro-Hungarian rule (1878-1918), the Catholic Church was dominant because the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was Catholic; during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941), the Orthodox Church dominant because the ruling dynasty were Orthodox Serbs. Each religious community took advantage of their position whenever they were the dominant religion and each felt oppressed during periods when another religion dominated. The communist rule (1945-1990) disempowered them all equally: no religious institution or

religious leader played any public role; most of the property belonging to the churches and the Islamic community were nationalised; religious education was banned for everyone. Towards the end of the communist period (1990-1992) and during the war in Bosnia (1992-1995), religious institutions moved into the public space to regain their lost position. Religious activities were revived within each community. Religious nationalism also surged as political leaders fraternised with religious leaders to draw legitimacy for their belligerent policies intended for reorienting Yugoslavia territorially and ethnically.

The war in Yugoslavia started for territorial gains but many of those who engaged in actual warfare fought out of ethnic and religious hatred for the other group. Excesses like murder, torture and rape committed by all warring sides is evidence that many of the fighters were driven by ethnic chauvinism and xenophobia. Bosnian society emerged from the bloody war deeply scarred by memories of ethnic and religious targeting. People were traumatised by the bloodshed and were extremely mistrustful of members of the other community because they believed them to have committed these atrocities. Moreover, massive population movement occurred during the war: thousands were expelled from their homes when the areas fell to the forces of other communities; many chose to flee areas where they became minorities and went to areas where their community was the majority. In certain areas, thousands were simply slaughtered to make the areas ethnically pure. The new demographic reality of the country was thus: Republika Srpska predominated by Bosnian Serbs; Western Herzegovina predominated by Bosnian Croats; rest of the country populated by Bosniaks. Some cities, like Sarajevo, retained their pre-war heterogeneous composition, but there too, one or the other ethnic group came to dominate.

Today, the three ethno-religious communities that constitute the majority of Bosnia's population have virtually separate lives: Bosniaks live within their own community, and likewise do Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats. In most of the areas, one ethnic group is a majority and the other two are minorities; consequently, in each area only one religion is preeminent (Steubner 2009). The majority group of an area dominates its life and usually takes no account of the minorities. In many places, the majority group has reoriented the visible public space to show its ethnic and religious dominance (Fetahagic 2015). In Mostar,

for instance, stands a huge Catholic cross on the western mountains indicating that side as the Catholic Croat part of the city. Likewise, in Republika Srpska, some schools are marked with the national logo of the Serb entity or the religious symbol of Saint Sava, the patron saint of Serbian Orthodoxy. Such usage of symbolism by majority groups has the effect of intimidating and alienating minorities. Sabina Pstrocki-Sehovic (2017), a staff member of the NGO called International Multireligious and Intercultural Centre (*Internacionalni Multireligijski i Interkulturani Centar - Zejedno*) commented that ethnic, national and religious symbols are very commonly evoked in Bosnia to show "who is the boss."

> When a non-Serb child studies in a classroom which has the national or religious logo of the Serbs, how would that child feel in the class? The child would feel that the class is not for him/her. Similarly, how would a non-Croat feel in the city of Mostar when s/he sees the Catholic Cross of the Croats? (Pstrocki-Sehovic 2017, personal interview)

What the majority group fails to understand is that their group members constitute the minorities in other areas, therefore, it is important that they treat their own minorities rightfully because otherwise their group members who are minorities elsewhere can get threatened by the majority group in those areas. Instead of understanding this logic, majority groups deride their group members who are minorities in other areas for choosing to live with others and believe that they are responsible for their own safety or lack of it. In some areas, religious leaders have contributed to this behaviour of majority groups by constantly sticking to mono-national stances and doing their best to avoid bonding with religious leaders of the other groups. Many people associate ethnic and religious dissimilarity with 'otherness' and habitually think of 'others' as their enemy. They are reluctant to interact or know about the others: how they live; what they believe in; what their traditions and customs are and so on. This shows "people do not know the value of each other" (Ivelić-Katava 2015, personal interview).

Picture 2: View of River Nevreta, Mostar, Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the war, the river indicated the division of Mostar into two: the East side controlled by Bosnian Muslims (the foreground in the photo) and the West by Catholic Croats (the background). Following the war, the city united in all but name. To indicate West Mostar as the Catholic Croat side of the city, the Catholic Church placed a 33 metre high cross on the mountain top (visible in the photo). Fieldwork, 18 December 2017, photo courtesy: Aparajita Goswami.

Many Bosnians feel that such an insular life cannot be a way of existence for a plural society. Prompted by concerns of excessive communalism in the society, several individuals have taken steps to revive interaction between people of different religions and by way of that promote cooperation between the religious communities. These can be considered as initiatives of interreligious dialogue. These initiatives have come from the high-level representatives of the religious communities as well as from grassroots level. Two of these initiatives are particularly well-known: (1) Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Međureligijsko Vijeće u Bosni i Hercegovini*) formed in 1997 by the leaders of the four major traditional religious communities in Bosnia — Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish communities — to overcome differences between religious communities, especially

memories and feelings related to the war and to promote dialogue; and (2) Pontanima Interreligious Choir (*Pontanima* meaning Bridge of Soul in latin) established in 1996 by the Franciscan priest Father Ivo Marković where people of different communities as well as atheists perform repertoires that includes songs of different religious communities to better understand and respect each other. The Interreligious Council is an elite-level initiative, it has the support of the government, and its twelve chapters are spread all across Bosnia. Its work has often been criticised by civil society activists for being merely ceremonious and by the international community for delivering less than expected; however, it has to remembered that the inception of the Council happened just after the war when all religious communities were extremely hostile to each other, therefore the tasks ahead of the Council were tough, to say the least. Despite that, the Council has served, for the last two decades nearly, as the national level body for dialogue on inter-religious issues and the principal body for coordinating the country-wide interreligious activities. The Pontanima Choir, on the other hand, is a grassroots level initiative, the brainchild of an individual Franciscan priest. The choir has received overwhelming participation and adulation from the locals including believers of all creeds as well as non-believers. The following subsections document the moral and social motivation behind the formation of the Interreligious Council and the Pontanima Choir, the larger goals towards which their work is oriented, their methods for achieving these goals and the major and minor challenges they face in their work.

3.1. *Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina*

The Interreligious Council came into existence in 1997 with the signing of a joint 'Statement of Shared Moral Commitment' in Sarajevo by the leaders of the four major traditional religions in Bosnia — Mustafa Cerić, *Reis-ul-ulema* (Grand Mufti) of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Metropolitan Nikolaj Mrđa, Serbian Orthodox Church, Vinko Cardinal Puljić, Archbishop of Vrhbosna-Sarajevo, Roman Catholic Church and Jakob Finci, Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The reason for the coming together of the religious leaders was a shared concern over the slow and ineffective implementation of the Dayton provisions and the ongoing separation between the two political entities of Bosnia. The joint statement recognised that the four religious traditions hold many values in common

and these shared values can provide a basis for mutual esteem, cooperation and peaceful coexistence in Bosnia. In 1997, the political situation in Bosnia was very fragile with many incidents, like attacks on returnees and destruction of homes, still occurring. At that time, it was almost impossible to use the term reconciliation; the joint statement therefore called the four religious communities to work for "durable peace based on truth, justice and common living," which was meant as a way forward towards reconciliation. The statement condemned violence against innocent persons, burning of houses, desecration of religious building, destruction of graveyards, obstructing right of refugees to return, acts of revenge and use of media to spread hatred and called on people to take responsibility for their acts. The statement also called for respect for fundamental rights including the right of every child to religious instructions in his or her own faith.[26]

After signing the Statement of Shared Moral Commitment, the first responsibility which the Council assumed was to dispel the myth of the 1990s war as an ethnic war. By bringing together leaders of the main churches and religious communities of Bosnia — communities whose members had committed crimes against each other in the war — the Council showed to Bosnians and to the international community that religious communities did not have an atavistic hatred for each other nor did they harbour enmity due to the events of the recent war; instead the religions communities wished to work together towards peace by drawing upon their individual religious traditions, which had teachings and values on humanity, love, respect and God in common. One of the first joint projects undertaken by the Council was the drafting of a glossary of basic religious terms used by the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish communities in Bosnia. The purpose of the book was to educate the people especially the media so that they could report correctly on religious events and persons following the nearly five decades of ban on religious expression.

The second responsibility which the Council assumed was to demonstrate that even in the volatile post-war scenario, interreligious dialogue was possible to practice. Bozana Ivelić-Katava, Secretary-General of the Council, told that there are places in Bosnia where people

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[26] 'Statement of Shared Moral Commitment' signed by the Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox and Catholic Community in Bosnia in June 1997. [Online] URL: http://www.mrv.ba/images/stories/documents/Statement.pdf. Accessed on 6 July 207.

belonging to one ethnic community do not even speak to those of another. There are also places where a decent amount of intermingling takes place, but on the whole, "as long as it is news that priest and imam are drinking coffee together, it is not a good society." In a "normal" society, interaction between members of different religious communities is an ordinary occurrence, not news. For the last eighteen years, the Council has striven to open channels for interaction between high, intermediate and grassroots level religious leaders throughout Bosnia based on the idea that by connecting the top leaders of different religious communities, the priests and imams under them can also be brought together, and by bringing together local priests and imams, the ordinary believers can be beckoned to engage with each other. Bozana explained that the Council relies on religious leaders to reach to common people because religious leaders in Bosnia exert strong influence on people, and this influence can be harnessed to generate "new ideas" and circulate "new energy" in society. Bozana personally believed that religious leaders in Bosnia are more persuasive, and certainly more respected, than political leaders. The words of religious leaders have far-reaching effects. What they teach in their community, therefore, is consequential for how their community members think: If they teach their people to be afraid of others, people would think of others as their enemy and "try to defend themselves by attacking others in some way"; but if they teach their people that "others are their neighbours with whom they must together build their society and country," people would learn to respect and value others (Ivelić-Katava 2015, personal interview).

The Council develops projects related to five priority areas — legal assistance, media, education, youth and women — and engages corresponding groups of persons — lawyers, journalists, teachers, youngsters and women. The Council works in the following method: it first approaches top religious leaders with its projects; when they grant their approval, the Council approaches intermediate and grassroots level leaders; when these pledge their support, the Council approaches local people with whom the projects are finally carried out. Bozana noted that once a project has the blessing of top religious leaders, getting local leaders on board becomes easier, and it is important to have the participation of local leaders because they are the officials directly in contact with common people. The local leaders are effectively the most important figures in the dialogue trail.

Bozana explained that executing the Council's projects is very challenging because offending any person at any level of any community can cause the withdrawal of the entire community or certain members of the community from the project. Sometimes this could mean the failure of a project entirely. "Dialogue here is like walking on eggs: one wrong move and everything falls down," she disclosed adding that it has been only twenty years since the war ended so "wounds are still fresh" (Ivelić-Katava 2015, personal interview). People remember painful incidents of the war and it makes them inimical to proposed interreligious activities. Keeping these in mind, the Council maintains great caution at every step of its work and progresses very slowly with the implementation of its projects. The Council also meets with occasional opposition from some religious officials. One religious leader who has consistently been opposed to inter-religious dialogue is the Bishop of the Catholic Church in Mostar, Ratko Perić, whose jurisdiction extends to all of western Herzegovina, which is under the influence of the Croatian political party, HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine* or Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina). Bishop Perić outright prohibits his clergy from participating in the projects of the Council.

Besides the above, there is a separate legal matter which creates difficulties in bringing all member communities of the Council on board for the same project. Out of the Orthodox, Catholic, Islamic and Jewish communities, only the latter two have their seats of authority in Bosnia. The seat of authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church is the Holy Synod in Belgrade and that of the Roman Catholic Church is the Holy See in Vatican. The law on religious freedom in Bosnia states that religious communities have the right to sign bilateral agreements between themselves as well as sign agreements with the state individually to address particular problems facing their community, but when agreements are signed by the Orthodox and the Catholic communities, they turn into international agreements because the signatories on behalf the communities are the Holy Synod and the Holy See respectively. One such international agreement is the concordat between the Bosnian government and the Holy See recognising the public juridical personality of the Roman Catholic Church and granting a number of rights, including legal personality, formation of educational and charitable institutions, religious education, and official recognition of Catholic holidays. The implementation of the concordat is overseen by a mixed commission of five members from the Bosnian government and five from the Vatican. A similar agreement exists between the

Orthodox community and the government, signed by the Holy Synod in Belgrade on behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia. A member of the Executive Committee of the Council explained that the presence of these international agreements ordains higher status to the Orthodox and Catholic communities in Bosnia because they get protection from abroad. The Islamic and Jewish communities feel disadvantaged as a result. This is a serious structural problem for dialogue. If all four religious communities would be equally disposed in the state, having same rights and status, then the Council would have it much easier to bring all the communities together on its projects.

3.2. *Pontanima Interreligious Choir*

Friar Ivo Marković, a Bosnian Franciscan priest in the Church of St. Anthony in Sarajevo founded the Pontanima Interreligious Choir in 1996, soon after the signing of the Dayton agreement, out of a personal conviction 'to be part of the dynamics of interreligious relations and reconciliation' in post-war Bosnia. Fra Ivo worked as a pastor and a professor at the Faculty of Theology in Sarajevo before the war. In 1992, when war broke out, the Franciscan priests were expelled from the Faculty of Theology by Serb forces and had no choice but to take refuge in Zagreb where he spent the rest the of the years of war. In Zagreb, he busied himself by helping displaced persons and war-affected people. After the Dayton came into force, Fra Ivo returned to Sarajevo at the orders of the head of the Franciscans in Rome. At that time, Sarajevo was the remnant of four years of intense siege. The people in the city had endured incessant shelling and witnessed frightful killings. Fra Ivo's village and parish had also been consumed in the war. So were a number of his family members including his father. The loss of his father and the surrounding desolation disturbed Fra Ivo deeply.

> When my father was killed, I was shocked and wounded. I protested against God: why was my father killed when he was a peacemaker? Wound is very dangerous. It makes us wish revenge and that makes us dependent on our enemy. I questioned myself whether instead of being a priest, would it have been better if had I bought weapons for my people (Marković 2015, personal interview).

But Fra Ivo realised that by brooding over his wound, he was living in the past; to return to a normal life, he needed to heal the wound. By healing himself, he would also be able to forgive those he held responsible for causing him the suffering. Fra's Ivo wish to get healed motivated him to also help others to come out of their pain. He made this his primary goal of

the future — to help individuals in personal healing and through their personal healing bring about social reconciliation. Reconciliation, for Fra Ivo, thus primarily meant healing.

> In religion, we talk of sins. For me, sin is when we look at our past. Past is always a history of sins. We have look to the future for something inspiring. Reconciliation is to look ahead of us, not in the past — to look for hope, not hate (Marković 2015, personal interview).

Fra Ivo studied theology as a student and loved music, which he pursued all the time as a hobby. Even as pastor, he worked with music trying his hand at various instruments. When Fra Ivo committed himself to work for reconciliation, his natural approach was to combine spirituality and art. He applied himself to analysing theologically, "What is art? What is spirituality? How does art affect an individual's spirituality at the surface and deeper levels?" (Marković 2015, personal interview). The theme of music and spirituality has been studied by Aristotle, Immanuel Kant and Hans-Georg Gademer. Based on their philosophies and his own theological investigation, Fra Ivo surmised that music influenced spirituality, and this potential of music could help in the personal healing of people. Besides this, Fra Ivo admired the worldwide practice of interreligious dialogue, and believed that it was especially relevant to Bosnia where members of one religious community had committed crimes against members of another: "If reconciliation was to happen in Bosnia, people of different religious communities needed to interact with each other" (Marković 2015, personal interview). Alongside personal healing, Fra Ivo thought interreligious interaction as necessary for brining about reconciliation.

Fra Ivo's approach to reconciliation was thus: in 1996, while working at the St. Anthony Church in Sarajevo, he formed a choir which performed repertoires from different religious traditions at churches and mosques. At first, the choir was made up of only Catholics, but participation was thrown open to persons of all religions. By 1998, singers of Muslim faith had joined the choir, which called its performances 'Symphony of Religions.' Atheists were also welcomed to the choir so that they were not left out of the process of reconciliation simply for being non-believers. Fra Ivo networked with journalists and media houses to get the choir aired on different television channels. He also sought audience in the neighbouring countries of Croatia and Serbia because these shared the same language. The choir was almost instantly noticed and received generous appreciation from the public for its

innovativeness: "People were thrilled and very accepting of this idea," said Fra Ivo, overcome with pride (Marković 2015, personal interview).

But the idea faced its share of difficulties in the initial days. Fra Ivo recalled that it was not easy at all to make Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims sing songs of each other's traditions. Catholics found it relatively easy to sing Hebrew songs since historically Jewish and Catholic faiths have been close. But for Catholics to sing Orthodox songs and vice versa, was quite distressing; more so because Catholic and Orthodox communities had fought each other bitterly in the recent war. Furthermore, many of the choir members had formerly fought at the front-lines and witnessed torture and death first-hand. For them to sing religious songs that too of different traditions was an emotionally churning experience. Once a Catholic member of the choir complained to Fra Ivo, "When I sing Orthodox songs, I feel disguised physically." Mindful of such psychological complexities, Fra Ivo urged members of the choir to deal with the suffering patiently. When this Catholic singer told Fra Ivo some months later that, "Orthodox songs are beautiful," Fra Ivo knew that the person had undergone "an emotional purification — a catharsis of grief" (Marković 2015, personal interview). Fra Ivo spent an entire year persuading Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish singers to sing together. Once singers from these communities were secured, Fra Ivo moved on to include singers from the Muslim community. This was yet more challenging because Muslims had suffered disproportionately more in the war and were the most aggrieved of all the religious communities. Fra Ivo's identity and popularity as a Franciscan priest failed to work in his favour as many Muslims suspected him of attempting to convert Muslims to Catholicism. But Fra Ivo was outspoken; he explained to people that his intention was nothing beyond engaging their religious identity to work for peace. He managed to convince people of his sincerity and it was not long before Muslim singers lent their voice to the choir.

> Personally I believe it is not correct to convert. According to the Bible, it is a sin. I did spread word about Bible and Christianity but I never tried to convert anyone. Instead I helped some Muslims to become better Muslims. Faith is very personal and at the existential level all faiths are the same but at the ideological level they are very different (Marković 2015, personal interview).

Fra Ivo had it in mind to make the choir sing in places where wounds of the war were deepest such as Srebrenica, Banja Luka and Mostar. He determinedly took the choir to perform in

these places, invited common people, journalists and other influential persons to listen to the repertories, and pursued television channels to broadcast these performances. On many occasions, he met with hostility and sometimes even opposition. In Vukovar, Croatia, Catholic priests accused him of provoking and disrespecting people's wounds. This accusation was made without having heard the choir though. Interestingly, after the priests actually heard the repertoires, they commended Fra Ivo on his unique endeavour: "It is a very fine idea to celebrate our God through the songs of our enemies," they conveyed (Marković 2015, personal interview). Such responses give him a sense of achievement and keep him endlessly motivated.

The healing effect of music is subtle: "Music heals but people are not conscious of it; still with music we can produce much more than we can do with words," observed Fra Ivo (Marković 2015, personal interview). Music enlivens the spirit, and does that to both singer and listener. One anecdote from Srebrenica: An Orthodox lady, who had come with her children to listen to his choir was uncomfortable sitting beside Muslims whom she believed to have wronged her people. Fra Ivo informed her that his repertoires would contain Islamic phrases like *as-salam alaikum* (Peace be upon you), *allahu akbar* (God is great) and *la illaha illallah* (There is no God but Allah) and asked her whether she would be willing to sing along. She bristled at his mere asking and declined straightaway. But ironically, as the music played, Fra Ivo found her singing jubilantly alongside everyone else. This incident exemplifies practically the healing capacity of music: Music helps people to escape the mundane aspects of daily life and be transported to a happier state of mind. Fra Ivo believed that when people engage with music, or any form of art for that matter, they experience creativity and beauty, two of the transcendental elements of art which constitute its healing force.

Artistic creativity also leads to dilution of cultural differences. When artists synthesise elements from different cultures into their work, they engineer an amalgamation of cultures, a phenomenon Fra Ivo calls "inculturation" (Marković 2015, personal interview). Whoever comes in contact with art, unconsciously embraces other cultures. For the members of the Pontanima Choir likewise, singing interreligious repertoires has made them absorb each

other's cultures. Those who have listened and liked their repertoires have also been exposed to cultures other than their own. This conveys an acceptance to a certain degree of one another's cultures. Moreover, when people participate in a constructive activity, such as singing, or interact for a common purpose, that produces a healing effect because all aspects of their identity are obscured save their similarities. This makes people feel emotionally closer to one another and translates to personal healing. In the last nineteen years, the Pontanima Choir has worked tirelessly to bring people closer through their interactive performances and the interreligious motifs of their music.

4. Reconciliation

Rigby (2001: 25-30) writes that the architects of Dayton assumed that with the signing of the peace accord, Bosnia would become a multiethnic state where formerly warring ethno-religious communities would automatically reconcile with each other and to the memories of violence, and strive towards building a shared future as the three constituent ethno-religious nationalities of the country. McMahon (2004) says that such assumptions are founded on Western liberal institutionalism which holds that new states can be designed from outside, which would have the typical traits of Western nation-states such as democracy, secularism, multiculturalism and capitalism. Twenty years of nation-building in Bosnia involving all kinds of domestic and foreign actors working at various levels of the state and society has exposed the naiveté of liberal institutionalist thinking. In post-war scenarios, nation-building cannot happen independent of reconciliation. For two decades, the international community has lavished aid and sympathy on Bosnia, but the country is not emerging according to the European Union's standards of normalcy because reconciliation is not being given equal weight.

The problems with reconciliation are galore. To begin with, reconciliation is not a commonly used and readily accepted term in the Balkans, some being even reluctant to use it. Peace activists rarely consider themselves as being involved in reconciliation. Next, people in the Balkans usually associate reconciliation with three components — truth, justice and forgiveness — and an overarching aspect, dealing with the past, but consensus is lacking over

what these components entail (Franović 2008). With respect to reconciliation in Bosnia, a report by the University of Edinburgh (Project on Religion and Ethics in the Making of War and Peace, and the Center for Empirical Research on Religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina) listed four perceptions popular among the locals: (1) Reconciliation treats all actors as having equal share in conflict, disregarding who precisely committed war crimes. (2) The focus of reconciliation is dealing with so-called victims and perpetrators instead of the needs of the society at large. (3) The meaning of reconciliation as a process is not clear: different religious communities understand reconciliation in different ways, but mostly as a goal or an imperative instead of as a process. (4) Reconciliation implies amnesties for perpetrators. Additionally, some researchers on reconciliation in Bosnia work around certain misconceptions: they have a tendency to project reconciliation as the idealistic solution for the problems currently facing Bosnia or imply that Bosnia currently faces a defined set of problems having their origin in the war or the socialist rule (Wilkes 2013).

This research identifies four components of reconciliation in Bosnia — dealing with the past, truth, justice and forgiveness. The order in which the components are named correspond to their priority in the process of reconciliation. Of highest priority is dealing with the past, meaning acknowledging and explaining atrocities committed in the past half a century or so in Bosnia. Dealing with past is a comprehensive exercise involving analysing and re-analysing, tallying and cross-checking, investigating and documenting the recent history of violence in the Balkans. It requires the initiative of the government and the participation of civil society organisations. Most of the local peace activists regard it as foundational for both reconciliation and nation-building. Some of them go on to say that peace cannot reign in Bosnia unless all the Balkan countries, individually and regionally, go through the process of sifting through their past. But uncovering the history of violence could take up to years, therefore, dealing with past should ideally be a continuing process. Once the process has been initiated though, other three components can be attended to. Among them, finding the truth comes first: what exactly happened, who all committed violence, and what kind of violence did they commit. Truth establishes a degree of transparency about the events of the conflict, which can help in restoring people's faith in social relations and building their confidence in the process of reconciliation. But truth requires truthfulness on the part of individual

communities. Some interviewees believe that not all Bosnia, her neighbouring countries Serbia and Croatia need to also be forthcoming in establishing truth. Dovetailing truth is justice. Justice could be of the following types — transitional, restorative and retributive. Lastly, forgiveness involves renouncing the desire to avenge crimes against oneself and one's community, thereby breaking the cycle of violence permanently.

4.1. *Dealing with the Past*

Dealing with the past assumes extraordinary significance in the context of the Balkans because the region has a turbulent history marked with wars, regime changes, large scale population movements and mass murders. Between the Second World War and the wars of the 1990s, an especially high number of killings and incidences of torture took place. During the Second World War, Yugoslavia had two warring sides, the Ustaše, who were Croatian militaries allied to Nazi Germany and the Chetniks, who were Serbian militaries allied to fascist Italy. Both Ustaše and Chetniks committed untold crimes against each other's ethnic groups and perpetrated genocide additionally against the Jewish, Roma and LGBT populations in the Balkans. When Tito and his partisans took control of Yugoslavia, all these killings were hushed up in their entirety. Tito himself made extensive use of force throughout his rule. However, not one of the crimes committed under Tito or during the Second World War was so much as whispered because Tito's personal powers were of dictatorial proportions and because communists ruthlessly suppressed any information on the wartime killings. Official history was totally silent on these points and people were as if drugged into not thinking of these killings through constant projections of the dynamism and uprightness of the communist regime. Images of these horrifying crimes circulated nevertheless, if only in the form of folk stories and rare photographs, so that when war broke out again in the 1990s, most people found it difficult to tell apart the present from the past. All the more because the warring parties were the same as during the Second World War — the Ustaše ultra-nationalists on the Croatian side and the Chetniks on the Serbian side. Consequently, the atrocities which the latest war engendered did not as much open new wounds as it refreshed old ones, unresolved for half a century or more. Franović (2008) states that the Balkan region has three ways of dealing with the past — censoring, denying or glorifying misdeeds. Why

so? Because talking about them as matters of fact would tarnish the self-image of one or the other groups.

In Sarajevo, a civil society organisation called *Udruženje Za Društvena Istraživanja i Komunikacije* (UDIK or Association for Social Research and Communications) focuses its work primarily on dealing with the past. Its founder and coordinator, Edvin Ćudić Kanka believed that the past is a source of constant discomfort in the Balkans because it has never been thoroughly investigated, written and spoken about. By not engaging with the past, the people have not been able to resolve their past, the result of which is that its memories haunt them to this day. In the words of Edvin:

> We didn't finish our job of dealing with the past since the Second World War. We spoke just about the killings between Ustaše and Chetniks, but we didn't speak about death camps and mass graves of Jews, Romas and LGBT community in the Balkans. Since we did not speak about these atrocities, we did not finish with this past. Therefore in 1992, when a new war broke out, it was based on the last history. We in the Balkans have a popular notion that Yugoslavia did not have any responsibility for what happened in the Second World War. If you mention about genocide, people think it happened only in 1995 in Srebrenica. But we had genocide of Jews, Romas and LGBT community, only nobody speaks about them. People here don't know the full extent of the Holocaust; they don't know that Jews were killed in Bosnia as well; all they know is that one concentration camp existed in Bosnia — in the city of Jasenovac, which was run by Ustaše — but there were many other such camps (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

Edvin told that talking about past misdeeds, holding protests for war crimes or making commemorations for genocide are considered out of place in Sarajevo. Sarajevo, which is dominated by Bosniaks, has a passive atmosphere. The people do not want war-related issues to be brought up again and again in public activities, social debates or media; nor do politicians and religious leaders want protests and commemorations to be organised for war crimes and genocide.

> When you speak about these things [past misdeeds], people don't look at you as normal. They feel it has been twenty years so please don't speak about the war. I say to them: Okay, I won't speak about war, but you have Nazis in the streets and that is normal. To make some protest in Sarajevo is practically impossible. The politicians and religious leaders will kill you. They say: Don't do anything in Sarajevo because Muslims don't protest. I say: Muslim's do protest, but for Palestine. You have 5000 people in the streets to protest for Palestine, but if its for genocide, you have 5 people (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

Though Edvin's observation was slightly bold, a statement by Catholic vicar general of Sarajevo substantiated this: "If we desire a safe future for all of us, it is important we stop

talking of crimes and accept those who are different from us" (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

Edvin, however, believed in the stark opposite: If people have to be reconciled, then past misdeeds have to be uncovered and repeatedly spoken about in society. "We need to see what happened in the past and who is responsible for that," argued Edvin (Ćudić 2015, personal interview). For now, most of the material related to Second World War genocides in the Balkans are preserved in Belgrade in archives created by Serbian NGOs. Bosnia houses very little primary materials plus the state does not have the finances and the know-how for maintaining such archives. Therefore, if Bosnians have to know about past crimes, the discernible means is to frequently flash them in the public eye. Edvin suggested several creative ways of doing this, such as theatre shows, documentary films, publications, television debates, public forums, seminars, street protests, commemorations and exchange programs. One specific idea in his mind is to have a 'Day of Srebrenica' designated in Bosnia similar to the 'Day of Genocide' observed by the European Union. Such designations would oblige people to think about war crimes and genocides. Edvin believed that through talking about past crimes, if people's curiosity about the past can at least be aroused, then the first move towards dealing with the past and reconciliation is presumably made.

Edvin explained further that protests and commemorations are civil society activities, and in Bosnia, it has been over twenty years that civil society has tried to deal with the past using constructive idea. But noticeably, their efforts have yielded little because the government does not support them. If dealing with the past has to progress, one of the inputs needed is government initiated 'peace education'. Adnan Hasanbegović, member of Centre of Non-Violent Action (CNA), lamented that despite widespread conflict in the world today, peace education is not very common globally and in the Balkans in particular (Hasanbegović 2015, personal interview). Edvin also complained that peace education is missing in Bosnia as if "genocide is not important," but religious instruction is very much present because "religion is important". As of now, history textbooks mention only the Srebrenica genocide; they do not touch on any other genocide, namely the Holocaust, Rwanda, Cambodia, Argentina and so on. For a country which itself experienced genocide, "is it not important to learn about

other people who suffered similarly and see how they are dealing with the past," questioned Edvin (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

> In Bosnia, teenagers say: No, there was no genocide. If this is their mindset, how can I explain to them something that happened before they were born? They don't want to see history. If you talk about the Holocaust in Sarajevo people say: It was not six million, that is impossible; it could be one or two million but not six. If you talk about Auschwitz people say: Auschwitz is lies; Jews killed themselves to make Israel (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

Very recently, for the first time, a course on genocide studies has been developed by the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo as part of its three main theological undergraduate degrees. Some argue that it is a defensive response of the Islamic community to the atrocities suffered by Muslims during the war at the hands of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats because the focus of the coursework is the suffering of Bosniaks between 1992 and 1995. Others, however, clarify that the Bosniak experience is placed in the context of other mass exterminations in history, which shows an effort to associate the atrocities in Bosnia with a historical, religious and social understanding of other people that have suffered similar fates in the 20th century (Sterland and Beauclerk 2008).

Edvin shared an observation that in Bosnia members of one community are generally indifferent to members of other communities, which results in unwillingness among people to recognise the suffering of those who are not their own. Serbs are indifferent towards Bosniaks and Croats, and Bosniaks and Croats return the favour. Every effort at reconciliation is hampered by the belief within individual communities that their community's suffering alone is grave. Edvin believed that such thoughtless attitude arises because people lack understanding about the recent war. Most people buy the explanation that the war was an ethnic war, therefore, in the post-war scenario, continuation of ethnic hatred is acceptable and even natural.

> When you have commemorations, Bosniaks go for Bosniak commemorations, likewise Serbs for Serb commemorations, and Croats for Croat. Can Bosniaks go to Serb commemoration? *No!* Bosniaks say: The Serbs committed genocide so they need to come to us. This attitude prevails in all communities (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

There are more examples reflecting the general insensitivity in the society towards suffering. (1) When genocide commemoration takes place in Srebrenica, Serbs in Republika Srpska usually watch the event on television. If they attend the commemoration or even discus

Srebrenica, the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is very powerful in Republika Srpska, would ostracise them for shaming the Serbian nation. (2) There are Croats in West Mostar who have never so much as glimpsed the 16th century Ottoman bridge called *Stari Most* (Old Bridge) standing on the River Nevreta in the middle of the city because to them it is a symbol of Islam and Muslim occupation of Christian lands. (3) There are Serbs in Banja Luka, capital of the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia, who have never been to Sarajevo, capital of the Federation entity of Bosnia, because they think that the Federation is a different country. (4) In many cities in Republika Srpska, the day during the war when Serb paramilitaries took over the city is celebrated each year as the day the city was made ethnically and culturally 'Serbian'. The day Srebrenica was taken over by Serb soldiers — shortly after which its Bosniak population was massacred — is celebrated as the day Serbs liberated the town. (5) Photos of Radovan Karadžić, who was the wartime leader of Bosnian Serbs and mastermind of the Srebrenica genocide, still hangs in many homes in Republika Srpska. With Karadžić currently in prison on charges of genocide, hailing him in Bosnia as a Serbian war hero is an outrage. (6) In the city of Prijedor, where some of the most terrifying crimes took place during the war in Serb-run death camps and rape camps for Bosniak men and women, a huge martyr moment stands in honour of Serb soldiers fallen in the war. Gestures like these, which disrespect the pain of the others, are intended to infuriate the suffering community and keep the cycle of hatred alive. Edvin fears that mutual lack of compassion and understanding in the society can be its undoing again. His final observation was that people are silent over crimes committed by members of their group but try to point a finger at the other group for having committed crimes against them.

> Serbs are quiet over the genocide of Bosniaks in Srebrenica, while Bosniaks are quiet over the killings of Serbs in Sarajevo. When we do commemoration in Sarajevo, Bosniaks say: What did Serbs do to us? They committed genocide against us. They did siege of Sarajevo. But I want to tell them: First speak about what you are responsible for, then speak about what others did (Ćudić 2015, personal interview).

The same is observed by Franović (2008) that every community has the tendency to blame other communities but not reflect on its own responsibilities. This attitude of shrugging from assuming responsibility of crimes committed by members of one's own group makes it very difficult to achieve public acknowledgement of past misdeeds. People are reluctant to admit that members of their own group committed atrocities; instead, they harbour the perception

that, "the *others* did it also" or "it was war, in war terrible things happen" (Franović 2008: 34). But denying past crimes establishes violence as the norm in society, Franović cautions. It is when crimes are brought in the open that non-violence is established as the norm.

Picture 3: View of public notice board on a street in Srebrenica, Republika Srpska. Notices on the left outlined in green mention about Bosniak (Muslim) women missing since the war. Leaflet on the right with photo of Jesus contains message from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Fieldwork, 26 April 2015, photo courtesy: Aparajita Goswami.

Thus, dealing with the past is an endeavour to condemn violence in its entirety. If past violence is not condemned, it continues to live in society through the passive memories of people. According to Ignatieff (1996), in the former Yugoslavia "the past continues to torment because it is not past," the people "are not living in a serial order of time but in a simultaneous one, in which the past and present are a continuous, agglutinated mass of fantasies, distortions, myths, and lies." During the 1990s war, when people told stories of atrocities to the reporters, they narrated it in such a way that the listeners were often left wondering "whether these stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941, or 1841, or 1441." This is because "for the tellers of the tale, yesterday and today were the same" (Ignatieff 1996: 120-121). This shows people's collective memory has not come to terms with the past for the last many centuries, the result of which is that the horrors of the past meddle with present. Dealing with the past, therefore, would have to be a perpetual endeavour in the Balkan region.

For Bosnia, reconciliation cannot happen unless information about historic genocides and other crimes taken place in the country in the last century are retrieved. The work of NGOs is indispensable in this regard. They have the liberty and competence to publicise crimes through social activities or through media. Their work needs to be backed by the government. The government must support NGO initiatives in dealing with the past, something it has clearly not done in the last twenty years of peacebuilding. Peace education is also must. Having courses or topics related to war and genocide in mainstream academics can break the taboo against speaking about crimes. People, both at the individual and group levels, have to humanise their outlook to those they consider as others. Dealing with the past is after all in the collective interest, so developing reciprocal relations between communities is necessary. Individual communities cannot discount the suffering of the other communities. They have to also be prepared for some mutual compromise. Finally, communities have to take charge of the crimes of their members. This alone can bring about accountability for crimes in a society where large scale violence has taken place.

4.2. Truth, Justice and Forgiveness

Truth refers to acknowledgement of the wrongdoings of the past: what happened, what made it possible, and who did it. While truths can be many since narratives and myths about the war are many, but one thing is undoubted that the war caused unaccountable suffering. It is important to revisit this suffering as not doing so would mean denying that wrong was done at all. There are three aspects of truth. First, truth requires that notions of "victimhood" and "enemy" be given up because as long as there is a perceived enemy and a belief in victimhood, all the attention of people is directed to undermining the enemy and satisfying the feeling of being victimised. This prevents people from taking responsibility for their actions but attribute crimes to others nevertheless. Second, truth requires knowing who committed a crime. Instead of besmirching an entire community as criminal, those members of the community who committed a crime must be singled out as individuals. Third, truth requires asking what ideology made it possible for people to commit heinous crimes against

their neighbours. Understanding the ideology can help in determining where fault lies in society and addressing the fault prevents such large scale violence in future.

Justice is commonly understood as putting perpetrators on trial, and if found guilty, meting out adequate punishment to them. In this way, victims get justice for the wrongs done to them. In the case of Former Yugoslavia, however, the violence that was committed was on such a scale that there are simply too many victims and too many perpetrators for any legislative system to cope with. Even if many of them were punished, the situation would not get normalised to pre-conflict days. What can be done instead is to change the militant perceptions of people by acknowledging wartime atrocities, publicly condemning the acts, and naming and shaming perpetrators. This effort could be made within communities instead of between communities to send the message that these acts are unacceptable in society regardless of which group committed them (Franović 2008).

Field interviews in Sarajevo confirm that notions of victimhood and enemy are deeply entrenched in the society. Ćudić (2015) observed that in the post-war milieu, the perception of victimhood is primarily held by the Bosniaks: "They were victims in the war because they were Muslims, they are victims in the country because they faced genocide, and they are victims in Europe because they are the only Muslim community in the continent" (Ćudić 2015, personal interview). According to the activist, that Bosniaks were victimised in the war is unquestionable, but then it is wrong of them to nurse the feeling of victimisation for the last twenty years rather than trying to overcome it. This earns them sympathy and aid, especially from Islamic countries, he reasoned. But, he added, Serbs and Croats have their hand in preventing Bosniaks from overcoming their victimhood. A myth exists in the Serb community that Bosniaks are actually Serbs who converted to Islam. Likewise, Croats mythologise that Bosniaks are originally Croats. This myth-making started in the Balkans since the formation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918. Velikonja (2003) confirms the presence of these myths, adding that Serbs and Croats have always believed that Balkan Muslims would gradually return to their actual national identity. Several other comments upheld that Bosniaks feel as victims. Many Bosniaks themselves acknowledged this, but then

urged that before repudiating Bosniak victimhood as an aberration, thought should be spared on why Bosniaks feel victimised.

In 1990, the communist regime collapsed in Yugoslavia and the country started to dissolve. The ones that were unhappy with the dissolution of Yugoslavia were Serbs. All the other ethno-national groups, including the Croats and Bosniaks, were ready to go back to the sovereignty of their republics. Only Serbia was not willing to become sovereign because since the end of the Second World War, Serbia had been the main authority in the Balkans, first through its dynastic rule in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and then through political and military domination in Tito's communist Yugoslavia. Even though communist Yugoslavia was not a national or nationalistic state, it was never free from Serbian nationalism and from Serbian intention or will to dominate. All high military positions were taken by Serbs. When Yugoslavia started to dissolve, Serbs started losing power, influence and domination and this made them act to stop it. The only way to stop it was, unfortunately, to engage in war. First in Slovenia and then, sequentially and principally, in Croatia and Bosnia. Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence and were granted recognition by the international community. When Bosnia decided to separate from Yugoslavia in 1992, Serbia opened war against the independent state of Bosnia. Croatia did not want Serbia to take over Bosnia —Croatian nationalists in independent Croatia wanted Bosnia for themselves. When Serbia realised that it was getting difficult to occupy the whole of Bosnia, it decided to occupy half the country and give the remaining to Croatia. Croatia agreed on Serbia's plan to divide Bosnia between the two of them — Serbia felt encouraged at this. Serbia and Croatia partitioned Bosnia in 1993 and created self-proclaimed states called Serb Republic and Herceg-Bosna respectively. Both began cleansing the people they did not want in their states, leading to the expulsions, mass killings and genocide of Bosniaks.

In Slovenia, which got attacked by Serbia first, Serbs had not been attacked by Slovenians. In Croatia, Serbs inhabited two areas, Vukovar and Knin. They proclaimed these areas as Serb enclaves and received the support of Serbia. Since Croatia was already an independent country, there was no way it would tolerate ethnic enclaves within its territory. Croatian government launched a short war to dismember the enclaves. By 1992, the wars in Slovenia

and the Croatia had already finished but Bosnia did not proclaim its independence yet because in Bosnia the population was ethnically mixed. But since 1990, weapons of the Yugoslav army had been arriving in Bosnia with the intention of occupation. Serbs put heavy artillery on the hills around Sarajevo believing that once the capital would be occupied, it would be much easier to occupy the rest of the country as the capitulation of the country would be singed in the capital. Bosnia declared independence in February 1992 soon after which, the first attack took place in the northeastern city of Bijeljina by paramilitaries of Željko Ražnatović, better known as Arkan.[27] Later in April, Serbs lay siege on Sarajevo and started shelling the city. Bosnia did not have an army of its own. When Sarajevo came under siege, Bosniaks started arming themselves and defending the exposed city. The same was true for other cities in Bosnia. In the Bihać area, for example, eleven cities were stranded between Serbian enclaves on the side of Croatia and Serbian forces on the side of Bosnia. The entire Bihać area was closed off. The only way to reach it was through Velika Kladuša. But in Velika Kladuša, Fikret Abdić, a Bosniak member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina who had political and economic connections with Serbian authorities, joined forces with Serbs and proclaimed the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia. The only way Bosniaks could exit the autonomous enclave was through Banja Luka where forces of Abdić joined the Serbian army to fight against the Bosnian army. Throughout the war as a result, nobody who was loyal to Bosnia and loyal to Bosnian army could pass through Banja Luka. Even the movement of humanitarian aid was halted.

The situation in the war was clearly one of aggressors and defenders. In the first instance (1992), the aggressors were Serbia joined by the majority of Bosnian Serbs, and the defenders were Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats. Bosnian Serbs had joined the Yugoslav army, de facto Serbian forces, and together attacked Bosnia. They attacked in the north and east, and placed a dividing line as they imagined their territory in Bosnia. Bosniaks and Bosnian

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[27] Arkan was a Serbian government agent and commander of a paramilitary force called the Serb Volunteer Guard, also known as Arkan's Tigers. Arkan was on Interpol's most wanted list in the 1970s and 1980s for robberies and murders committed in a number of countries across Europe. Arkan's Tigers were the most feared paramilitaries during the Yugoslav wars, responsible for torture, murder and rape. Testimonies from victims claim that Arkan personally also committed in torture, murder and rape. After the end of the war, Arkan was indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia for crimes against humanity. He was assassinated in 2000, before his trial could take place. Members of his paramilitaries never faced justice (taken from Balkan Transitional Justice, [Online] URL: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/arkan-s-paramilitaries-tigers-who-escaped-justice. Accessed on 19 July 2017).

Croats fought alongside defending the newly independent state of Bosnia. In the second instance (1993), Bosnian Croats joined the Bosnian Serbs with the idea of dividing Bosnia and together waged war against the Bosnia. At the same time, Fikret Abdić[28] also turned on Bosnia. By the end of 1993, it was only the Bosnian army comprising of Bosniaks and a small numbers of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, defending the country. The Bosnian army tried to free some of the cities and villages under siege, but failing to procure weapons, food and other supplies, they could not break the sieges laid. By the final instance (1995), it was only Bosniaks defending the country. The Serbian and Croatian aggression resulted in the systematic rape of thousands of Bosniak women, the killing of more than 100,000 people, the expulsion of thousands of Bosniaks, the genocide of more than 8000 Muslim boys and men in Srebrenica and the destruction of all mosques (nearly 1200 of them) in areas under the control of the Serb army. Towards the close of 1995, the United Nations intervened finally by attacking Serb positions around Sarajevo (Karčić 2010).

The Dayton agreement gave to Bosnian Serbs all the territory they had occupied during the aggression. The structure of the state was made same as the military positions during the war — Republika Srpska became a Serb entity, West Herzegovina was controlled by Croats, and the rest of Bosnia was jointly administered. In 1995, when it became known that Sarajevo was to be part of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbs living in east Sarajevo (Illidza and Grbavica localities) chose to migrate to Republika Srpska. They later claimed that it was Bosnian forces who forced them out, but in reality it was Serbian leader, Radovan Karadžić who on television invited Serbs of Sarajevo to settle in Republika Srpska. Today, Sarajevo has few Serbs because most of them chose to leave at the end of the war. Despite this, Sarajevo remains a multi-religious city.

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[28] Fikret Abdić was a Bosnian politician and businessman who first rose to prominence in the 1980s for his role in turning the Velika Kladuša-based agriculture company Agrokomerc into one of the biggest conglomerates in Federal Yugoslavia. During the Bosnian War, Abdić declared his opposition to the official Bosnian government, and established the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia, a small and short-lived province in the northwestern corner of Bosnia composed of the town of Velika Kladuša and nearby villages. The mini-state existed between 1993 and 1995 and was allied with the Army of Republika Srpska. In 2002, he was convicted of war crimes against Bosniaks by a court in Croatia and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, which was later reduced on appeal to 15 years by the Supreme Court of Croatia. He was released in 2012 after having served two-thirds of his reduced sentence. In 2016, he became the Mayor of his hometown Velika Kladuša.

According to Mustafić (2015), Interreligious Officer of Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, if the plight of Bosniaks is considered against an honest narrative of the war, it is not difficult to see why Bosniaks consider themselves victims. To begin with, they were attacked by the Yugoslav Army, the fourth largest army in Europe at the time, whereas themselves they had no army but fought back with a rag-tag force called People's Defence Forces. At the peak of fighting, Serbian forces stood in every city of Bosnia. In the capital Sarajevo, Serb forces occupied one side of River Miljacka and Bosnian forces the other. Bosniaks were defending, firstly, their lives, families and homes, and secondly, their villages, cities and country. Throughout the years of the war, Bosniaks lived from day to day. As if the war were not enough, Mustafić (2015) intercepted, the Dayton awarded the aggressors with everything they had captured during the war rendering meaningless the suffering Bosniaks had endured in defending their country. Thus, if Bosniaks consider themselves victims, it is not without reason.

> If they were not victims of aggression and genocide, I don't know what they were. I don't know who would be victims in this world, if those people were not victims. But today nobody looks at them as victims. Instead everybody is asking those victims to forgive; to forget (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Picture 4: Bosniak (Muslim) graves in Kovac cemetery, Sarajevo.
Fieldwork, 2 April 2015, photo courtesy: Aparajita Goswami.

According to Franović (2008), forgiveness means for victims to let go their desire to avenge their suffering. Forgiveness is a highly personal process of change which has to come from within. Victims cannot be demanded to forgive the perpetrators if they do not want to. Mustafić (2015) explained that Bosniaks do not desire revenge but justice for crimes committed against them. As victims they can forgive — though surely not forget — only when perpetrators of those crimes assume responsibility for their actions. Acknowledgement of crimes by perpetrators would mean truth for victims, and that truth is the only form of justice Bosniaks desire. That justice would help them reconcile with the past and with the perpetrators.

> The Catholic creed teaches the we have to forgive without having justice. I don't know how they understand that. What I know is that justice is healing. Most of these victims would forgive every one of those perpetrators if they only say, 'Yes, we know that it was wrong.' No other justice, no tribunals, would be necessary if those people who did the crimes would honestly say, 'I believe that was wrong. … *Now* I believe that was wrong' (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Franović (2008) considers giving up the notion of victimhood as the first requirement for truth, but Mustafić (2015) the argued the reverse: truth is necessary for giving up the notion of victimhood. Unless truth is known — what really happened and why — there cannot be justice for victims; as long as victims do not have justice, they cannot forgive and renounce their perception of victimhood. Bosniaks have the right to justice, before others expect forgiveness of them, he asserted. Moreover, when perpetrators acknowledge their crimes, perpetrators would also get justice for what they did and that would free them from living with the burden of their crime.

> Previous *Reis,* Mustafa Cerić, used to say, 'Those who committed crimes have a right to be brought to justice.' Some would call this paradoxical, but it is not: only justice can clear the perpetrators; justice can redeem them (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

But at present most of those who committed crimes, he said, do not want to justice because they know they are guilty and would get indicted.

> Unless there is a situation where perpetrators realise what they did was wrong, how can those who went through all that hell reconcile with those who put them through that hell? After whatever happened, perpetrators should at least say they were wrong. What is worse is that perpetrators do not feel remorse which means they do not feel what they did was wrong (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

As the second requirement for truth, Franović (2008) stated that members of a community who committed crimes have to be singled out so that the entire community does not get blamed for their crimes. The Interreligious Officer too stressed this aspect except that he added, telling who committed crimes is the responsibility of the community to which the criminal belongs. In the case of Bosnia, Serbs committed genocide against Bosniaks, so it is for the Serb community to speak out which of their members were involved in crimes so as to spare all Serbs from getting labelled as criminals. Pinning the blame on individual Serbs should not be the prerogative of Bosniaks or the duty of international tribunals.

> I can say Serbs are strange people or I can say some Serbs are criminals but some Serbs are normal people — one people cannot by genealogy be genocidal people. But I know that those people who committed genocide against Bosniaks are Serbs. Not all Serbs committed genocide, but those who did are Serbs, and whether all Serbs are genocidal or some Serbs are genocidal, it is not my problem, it is Serbs' problem. They have to find those bad apples and say, 'We are not like these ones, and they are to be punished' (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Zovkić (2015), a member of the Catholic Theological Faculty of Sarajevo, touched upon the same point but from the Croat side. He said that as a Croat he is aware that many of his fellow ethnics committed crimes during the war and he would like to see these people recognised.

> We should modestly and courageously admit that our people have committed crimes. I know some Croats who took part in the war actions, who raped Muslim women, so I admit that my people are not angels. I would expect similar attitude from Orthodox or Muslim religious leaders (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

He was unhappy that so far Orthodox Serbs, who organised an aggression on Bosnia expelling and killing thousands of innocent civilians, have not recognised these 'sins' at the level of community. He believed that for reconciliation, it is absolutely necessary that the Serb community admits the guilt of their specific members, even though this would be a difficult and time-taking process.

Franović's (2008) third requirement for truth was that the ideology behind committing brutality has to be understood so that such misguided ideologies are reversed and wars like this do not recur. Mustafić (2015) believed that atrocities against Bosniaks happened because wrong ideas were taught in the Balkans, especially by the Serbian Orthodox Church. Generations of Serbs grew up devouring vengeful ideas like the Kosovo myth, according to

which, Turks had entered Balkans five centuries earlier by defeating the Serbian king, Lazar Hrebeljanović, in the historic battle of Kosovo in 1389, and this bitter defeat has to be avenged. Serbs charged the Muslims during the 1990s war because they perceived them as Turks. When Ratko Mladić entered Srebrenica, he proclaimed that Serbs had finally taken revenge against Turks.

> For centuries, Serbs were teaching their children that they have to get back to the Turks one day so Serbs fought anybody who had any affiliation with Turkish history. Bosniaks are associated with Turks through religion, so Serbs targeted Bosniaks. But Bosniaks are not Turks, they are Muslims, yet now Bosniaks, who have nothing to do with Ottomans, are paying the price (Mustafić 2015, personal interview).

Perceiving others as enemies is still prevalent among the Serbs: "Even today, Serbs teach their children to take revenge against the Turks, and for them every Muslim is a Turk; Serbs use the term Turk for Bosniaks!" (Mustafić 2015, personal interview). Many around the world were stunned when as recently as in 2005, in a World Cup qualifying match between Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Belgrade, Serb fans waved a banner that read '*Nož žica Srebrenica*' (Knife, Wire, Srebrenica) referring to the Srebrenica massacre in which hands of Bosniak prisoners were tied up with wire. Mustafić (2015) lamented that there is no chance for reconciliation if Serbs continue teaching their youngsters that Bosniaks and Croats are historical enemies who have to be vanquished.

Picture 5: Magazine cover with photo of Maracana Stadium in Belgrade, October 12, 2005,
during the World Cup qualifying match between Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina.
The large banner reads 'Knife, Wire, Srebrenica' (taken from Miller 2006: 314).

When president Clinton visited Sarajevo at the end of the war on 27 November, 1995, he made the following statement:

> After so much bloodshed and loss, after so many outrageous acts of inhuman brutality, it will take an extraordinary effort of will for the people of Bosnia to pull themselves from their past and start building a future of peace. But …They have a chance to remind the world that just a few short years ago the mosques and churches of Sarajevo were a shining symbol of multiethnic tolerance, that Bosnia once found unity in its diversity. Indeed, the cemetery in the centre of the city was, just a few short years ago, the magnificent stadium which hosted the Olympics, our universal symbol of peace and harmony (Clinton 1995).

It is wrong to associate Bosnia only with war and crimes. Bosnia should be remembered by five centuries-long tradition of peaceful coexistence of different religions and ethnicities. Throughout its history, Bosnia was known in the Balkans for its "neighbourhood code" — everybody was equal, accepted and integrated in the largest numbers in Bosnia. There were many mixed marriages, even though it was not recommended by religious communities, because people were growing up, working and living together. Unfortunately, these values were not practised in neighbouring Croatia and Serbia; they were national countries — Serbia was for Serbians, Croatia for Croatians, and all others in the country were second-grade citizens. Serbia's and Croatia's nationalistic outlook and aim of ethnically homogenising the population of Bosnia led them to kill and expel Bosniaks from territories inhabited by Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats during the last war. For reconciliation to happen, society in Bosnia must bring back the values of "neighbourhood" and accept the idea of everybody living together as it used to be in the olden days (Mustafić 2015, personal interview). Many Bosnians already practice tolerance because "this is the wisdom of life" (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

> If you are sick and need a doctor, it is your neighbour who will take you to the hospital. You need the neighbour who is humane, who will help you and who you will help (Zovkić 2015, personal interview).

This "mentality of neighbour-to-neighbour tolerant behaviour" should prevail and grow further. It can be strengthened through influence of media, education system and public officers, who give the example of tolerance and who advice their electoral bodies to behave likewise (Zovkić 2015, personal interview). To summarise, if there has to be reconciliation then the idea of others as historic enemies has to be reversed. One of the fundamental way of deconstructing the notion of enemy is to take caution with what is taught to the younger

generations. It is known that indoctrination of both ethno-nationalist and religious kinds has been a problem in the Balkans. Part of the reason why indoctrination can happen is because the past has not objectively been dealt with. Dealing with the past is of course an independent component of reconciliation, however, parallel to dealing with the past must be the attempt to give proper education to youngsters. Children have to be taught from the youngest days to the university that their neighbours, or anyone else for that matter, who are ethnically and religiously different from them, are not their enemies but can be their friends.

In the final analysis of the reconciliation process in Bosnia, it can be argued that reconciliation is an unpopular term because it is usually equated with forgiveness. However, reconciliation should not be understood as a process that will bring about forgiveness, and thereby help in reconciling with crimes. "Nothing can reconcile us to the terrible atrocities that were committed" (Kuljić as qouted in Franović and Vukosavljević 2016: 226). In that case, reconciliation is a process of constructing the memories of past atrocities in such a way that they no longer haunt the present — they become a part of common history and collective identity. This process is as much of an individual struggle as a collective effort. In a recently concluded study on the culture of remembrance of the Bosnian War (1992-1995) by the Centre for Nonviolent Action, Sarajevo-Belgarde (*Centar za nenasilnu akciju, Sarajevo-Beograd*), the process of reconciliation is explained thus:

> This [reconciliation] is, on the one hand, a process of learning to live with the memory that crimes are also part of our history and our group identity. On the other hand, it is the process of liberation from narratives we were exposed to, not by replacing them with new, equally rigid narratives, but by re-examining and understanding the processes and mechanisms of their creation and reproduction in order to re-assemble them so that the defined collective identities will no longer present a threat to anyone, or serve to justify or incite violence. In that sense, the process of reconciliation is also directed towards ourselves, our own purification from the injustice we had condoned or ignored; it aims to make our societies better, freer, safer and happier, thereby improving our quality of life. The process of reconciliation starts with us and the contribution we can make to the betterment of the society we perceive as our own by ensuring a fair approach to the past prevails, and personal and collective responsibility for it (Franović and Vukosavljević 2016: 226).

The above passage means that reconciliation is a long-drawn inter-generational process. Those who were affected by the war as well as future generations who grew up in the midst of its painful memories, both are responsible for repeatedly revisiting memories and facts of the war and understanding and explaining why mass atrocities occurred and how they were

allowed to occur. Mass violence is a collective trauma. Once such an event has occurred, it stays in individual consciousness as well the consciousness of society as a whole. It affects personal lives and community living in imperceptible ways. To leave that trauma unaddressed is to endanger society once again. No matter how painful the process of remembering war may be, and how controversial, it is a process that must be undertaken — by every individual within his/her means for the common good in the long-run. This constitutes the chief lesson of war — to learn from the past and to prevent its repetition.

The next chapter deals with the case study of Nigeria. The first part of the chapter analyses the socio-historical factors that gave rise to communal tensions in Nigeria, namely British colonial policies of promoting North-South regionalism and Christian-Muslim competition. The second part analyses the contemporary causes of instability in Nigeria: Christian-Muslim rivalry over political power and economic opportunities; weak federalism; adoption of Sharia in the northern states; and religious violence. The third part looks at one prominent interreligious dialogue initiative in Nigeria — Interfaith Mediation Centre — exploring how they have impacted the local people's perceptions. The final part overviews the current causes of insecurity in Nigeria, namely oil politics and insurgency in the Niger Delta and Boko Haram assault across the country.

CHAPTER V

The Possibility of Religious Co-existence in Nigeria

Nigeria has emerged as a central concern for global stability. Since the transfer from military to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has suffered from violence and terrorism due to increasing internal instability. Ethnic and religious groups compete for political power and larger share in lucrative resources, most important of which is oil. Group solidarity and hostility towards members of different groups is widespread, leading to persistent corruption and favouritism in politics, and, in extreme cases, erupting in armed conflict. Increasing tensions between ethnic and religious groups has split the country into the North, predominated by Muslims and the South, predominated by Christians. Claiming the need for self-defence and citing incapability of the state to protect, many ethnic groups maintain armed militias as "community defence groups," some of which are equipped with highly sophisticated military weapons (John et. al 2007). The return to civilian rule was expected to bring a democratisation of the country and all-round improvement in the living conditions of the people, but as reality failed to meet expectation, people have rebelled against the many things they perceive to be unjust — concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, excessive corruption, increase in poverty and crime, and ridiculous levels of fraud in elections.

Some Nigerians believe that the North-South divide runs so deep that it threatens the very existence of the country. Some scholars and world leaders also fear that Nigeria is "dancing on the brink" of disaster because the problems in the country are insurmountable (Campbell 2011). At the same time, many Nigerian leaders have attempted to mediate in disputes between different groups. Amidst these speculations, scholars argue that if some form of dialogue among Nigerian groups does not begin soon, then we may witness more violence and terrorism in Nigeria and, worst of all, a situation of state failure. Failure in Nigeria would not only destabilise the whole of West Africa and Muslim world, of which it is a huge part, but also have extreme consequences for the rest of the world in view of its oil resources. One of the most needed actions in Nigeria at this point is to come up with ways for strengthening the engagement of civil society in resolving conflicts so that minor local issues do not flare up to threaten the fragile democracy existing in the country.

Religion in Nigeria, for various historical reasons, is based on ethnic traditions and locations. There are two primary religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, both practiced by roughly half of the population. Islam is prevalent in the North and Christianity in the South. African traditional religions are practiced by less than 10 percent of the population. There are 250 ethnic groups, three of which represent two-thirds of the population — Hausa, Faluni and Yoruba. Hausa and Faluni live in the North and almost all of them are Muslims. Yoruba live in the southwest and include about equal number of Muslims and Protestant Christians. In the southeast live another minority community, Igbo who are mainly Catholic Christians (Phillips 2004). Level of religiosity in Nigeria, among both Muslims and Christians, in terms of religious commitment, belief and practice are extremely high compared to international standards. Even within the same ethno-locational context, religious practices differ noticeably, especially between elites and masses. Secularism is a perspective adopted by very few in the country. Most Nigerians regard their country as overtly multi-religious (Paden 2005).

Islam arrived in Nigeria between the 8th and 9th centuries through Muslim merchants from other parts of Africa and the Middle East. Most of the conversions took place in what is today the northern part of the country. Christianity arrived more than ten centuries later with the colonisation of the country by the British. The British began colonising Nigeria in the 19th century, establishing their military and administrative rule first in the southern part of the country. They promoted Western education and allowed Christian missionaries to operate. By the 20th century, the British took control of the northern part, but did not allow missionary activities. Traditional ruling authorities were allowed to remain and Islamic practices continued among the people. This dual policy resulted in the creation of a predominantly Muslim North and a predominantly Christian South, which were later consolidated into one administrative unit that corresponds with boundaries of the modern Nigerian state. Conflicts along religious, ethnic, tribal and political lines began in Nigeria since then, and have continued till today. When the military rule ended in 1999, many northern states reintroduced traditional Sharia Islamic law. Sharia law comes from the Islamic belief system. Nigeria's criminal justice system on the other hand is modelled on the English Common law, which is

based on Judeo-Christian beliefs in which the God and Ten Commandments are at the centre. While the English Common law has evolved into a more secular regime distinguishing between morals and law, Sharia law does not distinguish between morals and law and between the state and religious institutions (Elechi 2006). This divergence between Sharia law and the national jurisprudence has resulted in new tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities as well as within the Muslim community. In Northern Nigeria today, religion is a powerful instrument of mobilisation, which is why many politicians engage with religious movements. Although their support cannot be reduced simply to political manipulation because their personal conviction is an important driver for their support, nevertheless, such support for a religious movement can bring a politician political rewards because religious leaders act as mediators between the politicians and the larger society (Kane 2003).

At the same time, since 1960, many attempts have arisen from civic cultures and organisations for mitigating local interreligious and interethnic violence. One example of NGO efforts in capacity building for conflict resolution is the Inter-faith Mediation Center based in Kaduna. The founders, an evangelical pastor and a Muslim imam have exemplified community peacebuilding. In the coming years, the civic cultures of Nigerians — Muslim, Christian and traditional — indeed hold an enormous potential for managing and mitigating grassroots level violence between religious and ethnic communities. Furthermore, prior to 1999, the military regime in Nigeria followed a policy of centralisation in the sphere of politics and oil management. The civilian governments after 1999 that bequeathed the dangerous legacy of this policy, however, managed to recognise the country's various geological and cultural zones and allowed power to be shared across those zones. National unity now heavily depends of political alliance formation across regions and thereby across ethno-religious groups. Therefore, local cultural mechanisms for conflict resolution are one of the keys to Nigeria's stability.

Most Western scholars and governmental organisations that have tried to understand the Nigerian context have tended to distinguish between political, social, economic, religious and other cultural dimensions of the conflict. In Nigeria, however, as in many other non-Western

or explicitly multicultural and multi-religious settings, the boundaries between these dimensions are not at all determinable. It is futile to try to analyse the nature and dynamics of grassroots conflicts in terms of political, social, religious and economic causes — all of these factors are present in an overlapping way.

McGarvey (2009) observes that identification with a religious community has intensified in Nigeria since the 1980s along with increased consciousness of membership to an ethnic community. With the increase in religious and ethnic identification, the conflicts between various communities have also increased. Christians believe that these conflicts are engineered by the traditional Hausa-Fulani Muslim ruling class to distract people from identifying and challenging the corrupt practices of the politicians. Muslims, in their turn, believe that Christian, and particularly Christian politicians, are responsible for the conflicts. Thus, ethnic and religious conflicts have increased in Nigeria since the 1980s, many of which have escalated into violence. McGarvey points out that today these conflicts often occur at any time and in any place because of seemingly insignificant reasons. Most scholars attribute these conflicts to a variety of religious and non-religious reasons. It would not be incorrect to say that these conflicts are a result of a combination of historical developments dating back to the British colonial rule and political, economic and social factors from Nigeria's post-independence, and more post-military (1999 onwards) phase of nation-building.

This chapter is concerned with two main avenues of discussion: first, the broad causes of the current ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria, and second, the inter-religious peacebuilding initiatives so far undertaken and the possibilities for such dialogical encounters with a view to reconcile differences between ethnic and religious communities. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 discusses the legacies of the British colonial rule which have influenced Nigerian society in a way that contributes to conflict between ethnic and religious, particularly Muslim and Christian, groups. It discusses two such legacies: the fragmentation of the country into northern and southern zones, which came to be dominated by three distinct ethnic groups — Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo; and the rapid spread of Islam in Northern Nigeria, the spread of Christianity through the activities of missionaries and the growth of the class of Western-education Christians who monopolised the bureaucracy and

academia. Section 2 looks at the factors existing in post-independence Nigeria that have led to clashes between already antagonised ethnic and religious communities. This section explores four major factors for current conflict: Christian-Muslim rivalry; weaknesses in Nigeria's federal democracy; reinstatement of Sharia law in the twelve states of the northern region; and religious violence exacerbated by the adoption of Sharia in the North. Section 3 deals with one prominent interreligious dialogue initiatives between Muslim and Christian communities called the Interfaith Mediation Centre, and draws attention to the challenges faced in dialogue. Section 4 looks at the causes of current security crisis in Nigeria: oil politics and insurgency in the Niger Delta; and Boko haram assault. Section 5 makes some general reflections on the overall security situation in Nigeria and the possibilities for dialogue and reconciliation in the furture.

1. Colonial Legacies of Nigeria

The colonisation of Nigeria occurred slowly, taking up nearly the whole of the second half of 19th century. Through colonisation, many independent states inhabited by different ethno-religious groups, which were connected to each other through trade and culture over the previous centuries but had never experienced political unification of any kind, came together for the first time under British rule. The process of colonisation was aided by the presence of Christian missionaries, however, in the final years when colonial rule was being consolidated, force was used against the people. British colonial rule brought many changes to the people, institutions and societies of Nigeria. The aim of the British colonial rule in Nigeria was to govern its territories, expand its commerce, and civilise and modernise people they considered inferior and backward. British colonial officers were supposed to alter only those customs, traditions, and institutions that they deemed detrimental to Nigeria's development, leaving other local political and social institutions unharmed to the maximum extent possible. In practice, however, colonial officers vigorously went about restructuring Nigeria in the years after the establishment of colonial rule such that many significant transformations took place in Nigeria's political institutions, economic orientation and societies. These transformations have a major contribution in the making of current socio-political turbulence. Two such developments, which scholars believe account in great measure for ethnic and

religious conflicts in Nigeria are: (1) the fragmentation of the country into the northern and southern regions and predominance of the country by three ethnic communities identified with particular regions, the Hausa-Faluni in the north, the Yoruba in the west and the Igbo in the east; (2) drastic expansion of Islam in Northern Nigeria, spread of Christianity in Southern Nigeria and the emergence of the class of Western-educated Christian elites. These two broad developments gave rise to tensions between Muslim and Christian communities. Since religion was identified ethnicity, and ethnicity was identified with location, Christian-Muslim tensions took the shape of socio-political conflicts, involving questions of identity, territory, resources and economic competition.

1.1. North-South Regionalism

The administration of the British colony of Nigeria was based on the philosophy that colonial rule should benefit both the British and the Nigerians. Calling this the ''Dual Mandate,'' the British argued that it was their duty to govern Nigeria effectively so that Britain could benefit from Nigeria's raw materials and from the opening up of Nigerian economy to the European markets. At the same time, they claimed that colonial rule could bring progress and civilisation to the primitive Nigeria societies by developing their economy, putting an end to slavery, removing the corruption they believed existed in traditional political institutions, promoting a work ethic they believed lacked in traditional societies, and educating the subjects on European conceptions of health, hygiene, and so on. To pursue the Dual Mandate, the British adopted the system of "Indirect Rule" according to which they would govern the protectorates by allowing the indigenous kings and chiefs to continue as leaders and administer their territories through traditional political and social institutions because the populations were accustomed to that. The job of the British officers would be to ensure that the local rulers conformed to the directives of the colonial administration. The British believed that by co-opting with native ruling elites, they would balance foreign dominance with indigenous governance to be able, in the long run, to achieve the stability required for transforming Nigerian societies. The British believed that the system of indirect rule would also benefit Nigerians because it would end those customs and traditions that were detrimental to their society while continuing those which were valuable and effective. Thus,

colonial rulers were convinced that indirect rule was in the best interest of both the Nigerians and the British.

After its implementation, however, the effects of indirect rule turned out to be different from what was expected. In principle, indirect rule was supposed to promote continuity between indigenous and colonial institutions while preserving traditional political institutions. In practice, however, the power of indigenous rulers existed at the behest of the British colonial officers, who ensured that colonial directives were enforced at all times. Therefore, indigenous rulers had very little actual authority, and if they were disobedient, the British officers simply replaced them with complaint ones. In due course, traditional authorities became alienated from the local people because of their association with the colonial regime. Thus, indirect rule did not lead to synthesis between traditional and colonial ruling institutions.

Further, when the British took control of Nigeria in 1900, they ruled the region by dividing it into the Northern and Southern protectorates. The policy of indirect rule was first applied in the Northern protectorate and more than a decade later in the Southern. Within each protectorate as well, the policy of indirect rule was applied differently in the different regions, depending on the administrative outlook of the colonial officers in that region and the diversity of local governing institutions. In the Northern protectorate, the British identified three distinct cultural groups: the Sokoto empire (sometimes referred to as the Fulani empire), the Borno empire (or Kanuri empire), and the minorities of the Middle Belt. Of these, the Sokoto Caliphate was the largest entity and its people, the ethnic Hausa-Faluni, comprised nearly 30 percent of the population of entire Nigeria at that time. In 1914, when the British united the Northern and Southern protectorates for administrative convenience and economic gains, the policy of indirect rule was extended to the Southern protectorate. In the Southern protectorate too, the British identified two ethnic groups: the Igbo in the east and the Yoruba in the west. The Igbo and Yoruba constituted 17 percent and 20 percent of the population, respectively of Nigeria then. Thus, by the first half of the twentieth century, the stage was set for the domination of the national political landscape by three ethnic groups, Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo, and each of these three groups was located in a particular

region — the Hausa-Faluni in north, the Yoruba in the west and the Igbo in the east. In addition to that, the northern and southern protectorates took on very different characters because of the different times and the different ways in which indirect rule was applied to the two regions. Even the unification of the two protectorates did not bring about actual integration of the two regions. It was only after 1946 that they came into administrative contact, but by that time a decisive north-south regionalism had already developed in Nigeria that influenced all future developments in the country (Paden 2005).

Anugwom (2000) explains that after the independence of Nigeria in the year 1960, the first five years were extremely turbulent leading ultimately to the first attempt at democracy because throughout the colonial period, the British administered Nigeria as a federation of three large regions identified with three distinct ethnic groups. The British emphasised the differences between the ethnic groups thus souring their inter-ethnic relationships. By the time of independence and soon after, the relations between the three major ethnic groups, Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo were marked by bitterness, distrust and rivalry over power and resources. Falola (1986) points out that prior to the colonial period, the three main ethnic groups were actually linguistic communities. They lacked consciousness of belonging to an ethnic community. For example, the Yoruba-speaking people never perceived themselves to be a single socio-political entity during the pre-colonial era. Falola contends that the British colonisers constantly emphasised the differences in language and ethnicity between the people, sowing the seeds of ethnic consciousness among them. The notion of ethnic identity and ethnic solidarity, thus originated in the 19th century with the coming of colonial rule. Through the 20th century, these tendencies were heightened and intensified as a result of colonial politics leading to politicisation of ethnicity and outright conflict after the country became independent. Nnoli (1978) makes the same point that in the pre-colonial era, Yorubaland was made up of different kingdoms, which were involved in wars with one another. Likewise, the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani never had any significant measure of group solidarity before the advent of colonial rule. It was the colonial era politics that pitched them against one another in an unhealthy competition thus arousing their sense of membership to an ethnic community. Whereas after independence ethnic rivalry and schism had been between the three dominant ethnic groups; since the late 1980s, minority ethnic groups also

started to assert themselves based on perceptions of marginalisation in terms of treatment and distribution of power and resources.

Figure 3: Map of Nigeria showing the north-south division and three major ethnic groups and their locations: the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the west and the Igbo in the east (taken from Elechi 2006: 4).

1.2. Christian-Muslim Rivalry

Colonial rule had an important role to play in expansion in Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. Islam had arrived in Sub-Saharan Africa around the tenth century, but it was during the colonial period that Islam spread at unprecedented levels in the northern part of the country. Christianity, on the other hand, had arrived in the 1800s with Christian missionaries, but it was the British policy of promoting Western-education to fill the ranks of their bureaucratic that led to the rapid spread of Christianity as Western-education was provided by Christian missionaries and closely linked to Christian values and lifestyle. In the Northern protectorate, the British established the policy of indirect rule whereby they chose local elites to rule who would in turn be accountable to them. As a result of indirect rule, the Muslim emirs of the north, who had previously only raided those territories for slaves or related with them as tributaries, gained political power over them. The British made an agreement with the Sokoto Caliphate in the north not to interfere with Islam in the region. The British prohibited Christian missionaries from proselytising and opening schools in the Northern protectorate for the first thirty years of colonial rule. The only exceptions were those areas where missionaries predated the British or where the emirs permitted missionaries of their own

volition. The presence of a small number of Christian missionaries in the north meant that the only education available in the region was Islamic education, which was provided by Islamic reform groups who carried out mass conversion campaigns during these years and undertook education as a means of increasing the membership of their groups. The British also allowed all the customary courts in Northern Nigeria to rule according to Sharia law, thus giving Islam authority over non-Muslim populations. Before the arrival of colonial rule, the non-Muslim populations of the north settled their disputes through the authority of their community chiefs. After the establishment of sharia law, however, non-Muslim communities of the north found themselves obliged to submit to two imposed legal systems, British and Islamic. By allowing Sharia courts, the British institutionalised the dominance of Muslims over all minorities in the northern part of the country. The only aspects of the Sharia which the British modified were the punishments which they considered to be barbaric, such as amputations and stoning to death.

Barnes (2010) explains that in Northern Nigeria, the colonial officers had identified an Islamic African civilisation which had evolved on its own to a medieval stage of development. The task administrators set before themselves was to preserve that civilisation from assault by southerners with their hybrid Western ways, while grooming the elite of that civilisation to be able to rule in the colonial state. The Northern colonial administrators disliked the class of Western-educated Nigerians of the Southern Province, whom they labeled 'denationalised,' implying 'Christianised'. Northern administrators equated 'denationalised' Nigerians with 'babus' of India, as people who had given up their own culture upon the assumption that they could become Europeanised. Therefore, the colonial government put the ban on Christian proselytisation to protect the indigenous aristocratic civilisation from the corruptions of Western culture. The ban on Christian missionaries also helped in reaffirming the sovereignty of the elites of the Northern Province. Since the 16th century, European countries had recognised the validity of the principle of *cujus regio, ejus religion* — the principle that the religion of the ruler was the religion of the people under that ruler's authority. In declaring to the Sultan of Sokoto in the Northern Province that the colonial government would not interfere in the practice of Islam, the British officers committed to uphold this principle. Consequently, they banned missionaries from evangelising Muslim communities of the North because it was contradicting the principle of

cujus regio, ejus religion. The British officers were convinced that if indirect rule was to work in the Northern Province, keeping missionaries out was something they had to do.

In contrast to the Northern protectorate where the British ruled through local Muslim leaders chosen and groomed by them, the Southern Protectorate came under the direct rule of the colonial authorities. Furthermore, whereas missionary activities were largely prohibited in the north, the colonial government gave full freedom to Christian missionaries in the south, whose chief activity was to provide formal education to the local population and disseminate Christian ideals. The rise in literacy in the Southern Protectorate gave rise to a class of Western-educated Nigerians, who were African in heritage, but reflected European tastes and values acquired through their education. For instance, most of the Western-educated Nigerians were against slavery at a time when other Nigerians still practiced slavery in their homes. Most of the educated Nigerians also became practising Christians because Western education was provided by the missionaries and was embedded in Christian value system. For example, educated Nigerians preferred the Christian-style of monogamous marriages as opposed to their age-old tradition of polygamy (Falola and Heaton 2008).

The class of Western-educated Christian elites of the Southern Protectorate had a lasting influence on intellectualism and nationalism in Nigerian society. These Nigerians embraced the good in European education and Christian values, but did not discard their own local cultures. They tried to blend the culture of the West with the traditional African culture. They consciously promulgated an identity that combined the two cultures in order to show that the two were not incompatible. For instance, in school and in everyday life, they encouraged the use of indigenous languages alongside English. In the teaching of history in schools, they supported African histories alongside European history. New African-led churches also came up, which professed Christian values but incorporated local cultural elements. For example, the churches accepted traditional singing, drumming, and dancing. The churches were also tolerant towards polygamy. The educated Nigerians, most of whom were Christians, appreciated the colonial regime for allowing Western education in their country. But they also resented the regime for the racial ideology — looking upon Africans as a race inferior to Europeans who were in need of being civilised with the help of the British. The racial outlook informed every policy of the colonial government. For instance, Nigerians could get

employment only in low-ranking bureaucratic positions of the colonial government or European firms. Once hired, they could scarcely hope to rise in their professions. British policy of excluding European-educated Nigerians from the processes of government and subordinating local authorities, made the new educated class of Nigerians conscious that in spite of their Western education, the British colonisers did not view them as equals. Consequently, they tried to distinguish themselves from the colonial culture through criticisms and protests (Falola and Heaton 2008).

In addition to the influence of Islam among northern communities of Nigeria and Christian missionaries among the southern, there was also a significant amount of diversity in the religious compositions of the two regions. In northern Nigeria, there were a substantial number of Christian Hausa converts and smaller local groups determined to assert their difference from the Hausa-speaking majority or from the authority of the Muslim elites. Likewise, the Yoruba-speaking south-west was populated by equal number of Christians and Muslims. The Igbo-speaking south-east region was relatively more homogenous, the main religion there being Christianity (Nolte et al. 2009: 10)

Most scholars argue that British colonial policies have a major role to play in the socio-political conflicts that began towards the end of the colonial rule and flared up into full-fledged sectarian violence after the independence of the country. McGarvey (2009) argues that the policy of indirect rule — administering through the structures of the Sokoto Caliphate, albeit under British guidance — and the implementation of Sharia law gave the Muslim ruling class control even over non-Muslim ethnic groups who had until then been independent. The dominance of Muslim elites created widespread discontentment and anger among the minority ethnic groups, who began to threaten Muslim dominance by asserting their right to political power. Many of the minority communities embraced Christianity as way of resisting Muslim dominance and accessing education in missionary schools or employment in the colonial bureaucracy. The identification of the many minority tribes with Christianity led to further degeneration of relations between Muslims and non-Muslim ethnic groups. Muslims viewed the Christian Nigerians as Westerners and thus as their enemies. Nolte (2009) argues that the colonial state's reliance on the structures of the Sokoto Caliphate affected religious and educational politics in northern Nigeria. In many parts of the north,

missionary education was forbidden, preventing the emergence of an educated elite that could challenge either the Muslim ruling elites or local Muslim traditions. As a result, when the colonial phase ended, the already established Muslim elites emerged as the natural tenants of northern Nigerian politics. Anugwom (2000) writes that northern Muslim elites colluded with the British throughout the period of colonial administration. When colonial rule ended in 1960, these elites took charge of governance of the newly independent country and sought to perpetuate their privileged status in society and protect their positions in the government. Anugwom further claims that the colonial policy of providing selective education — restricting missionary schools in northern Nigeria and favouring Christians for giving formal education — was the reason why the class of Christian elites emerged in southern Nigeria who were Western-educated and had the skills needed to compete in a capitalist economy towards which Nigeria was moving. Nolte (2009) also writes that since the primary activity of missionaries was to provide education, with the setting up their schools and colleges in the south, a class of educated Nigerians emerged, most of whom adopted the Christian faith because missionary education was strongly linked to Christian values. Criticising both the colonial state and the traditional rulers through which the state had ruled, the Christian elites considered themselves the rightful rulers of post-colonial Nigeria.

Harris (2012) sums up that the legacy of colonialism is largely the cause of the sectarian violence plaguing Nigeria since its independence in 1960. When the British arrived in Nigeria in 1900, they divided the region into the Northern and Southern Protectorates, ruling the former indirectly through compliant Muslim elites and the latter directly. Missionaries and their schools were allowed to flourish in the south, but were kept out in the north, resulting in an imbalance in education and skill levels between the south and the north. To compensate for this, at the time of independence, the British granted the north greater political power, which the northern elites ever since tried to retain. The political culture in Nigeria since independence in 1960 has been dominated by the northern elite, initially by the northern political class and later by the northern military class. Christians tend to be educated and have skills needed for employment but their opportunities to find work are stunted due to widespread clientism. Many Nigerians feels that qualification and competence are of little worth for finding employment in an environment where connections are what matters. In northern Nigeria, the highest positions in politics are usually occupied by Muslims, which

many Christians believe is due to their support to the co-religionists to get employment in spite of their lower qualifications and skills. This has caused resentment among Christians. The Muslims, on the other hand, associate secular education with Christianity. Many Muslim Nigerians hesitate to or avoid sending their children to state schools, most of whose curricula are those inherited from the British and therefore largely reflecting a Christian worldview. The state education makes Muslims feel excluded and exacerbates their negative perceptions of Christians. Thus, differential treatment of Muslims and Christians during colonial rule has resulted in strained relations between the two religious communities in the post-colonial times. The education system has contributed to sectarian tensions by failing to develop positive inter-personal and inter-community relations.

2. Post-independence Nigeria

Prior to British colonial rule, the territory of Nigeria was inhabited by different ethno-religious groups, namely Hausa-Faluni, Igbo, Yoruba, Ogoni, Ijaw and Urhobo. With the arrival of the British, these groups were brought together under an overarching authority for the first time. After the dismantling of the colonial structure, the groups amalgamated into the federation of Nigeria. Thus, it was the British colonial government that constructed the present-day Nigerian state. As a result of six decades of debilitating colonial rule, from the very start of its nationhood, Nigeria faced a host of regional, ethnic, and religious conflicts. As discussed earlier, British colonial policies had created a north-souh divide and encouraged inter-ethnic competition over political representation and resource allocation. The British had also encouraged the predominance of the three major ethnic groups — Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo — and prevented the mixing of religious communities, in particular of the Muslim Hausa-Faluni with the Christian Yoruba and Igbo, as a result of which, hostility between majority and minority groups and interreligious schism, particularly between Muslims and Christians had developed. At the time of proclamation of independence, without heeding the minorities and the various inter-group rivalries, the different ethnic and religious groups were amalgamated into a nation-state. Thus, the Nigerians who coalesced to form the state of Nigeria did not have a shared national identity. Agbiboa (2013: 10) writes that in the postcolonial era, "Nigeria is an amalgam of rival ethnic groups pitched against each other in a jostle for power and resources that have been reflected in the political processes, sometimes

threatening the corporate existence of the country." Because of the absence of an overarching national identity, Nigeria has witnesses repeated ethnic and religious conflicts since its independence, which have stymied national integration in the country. The current challenge for Nigeria is to forge a national identity by overcoming ethnic and religious differences that manifest in political polarisation and violence. Uchendu (2004) writes that nation-building in the Nigerian context refers to, among other things, "the deliberate effort by which, through articulated programs and policies, the different peoples of Nigeria, while retaining their cultural diversity, would become effectively integrated as one or made to regard themselves as having a lot more in common that they ever thought they did" Uchendu (2004: 132).

Religious conflicts, especially between Christians and Muslims, have assumed particularly dangerous proportions with serious socio-political consequences. Aguwa (1997) contends that since Islam is doctrinally against the bifurcation of religion and politics, it has tended to be more dominant in Nigerian social and political life. This has produced fear among non-Muslims of eventual Islamicisation of Nigeria. Christianity, on the other hand, because of its historical links to Nigeria's colonisers appears to Muslims to be a part of imperialism and West's cultural onslaught on Nigeria's traditional lifestyle. Uchendu (2004) writes that negative perceptions between the Christians and Muslims exist also because of a lack of understanding of the other's system of belief and sometimes because of sheer religious chauvinism. In combination with ethnic manipulation and political strife, religion remains all too often the source or detonator of violent conflict. In a country characterised by ethnic and religious diversity, the recurring outbreak of such conflicts has a highly disruptive effect on social harmony and the process of nation-building.

Christian-Muslim conflicts are accentuated by the current shape of democratic federalism in Nigeria. After independence in 1960, Nigeria adopted a federal state structure comprising of three regions — East, West, and South — which were granted full autonomy. In 1963, when the country acquired a republican status, a fourth region — the Midwest — was carved out. From 1963 to 1966, a parliamentary form of democracy based on the British model of governance existed in Nigeria. But from its very start, the parliamentary government was unstable because of unequal distribution of power and resources between the constituent federal regions. The parliamentary democracy crumbled in 1966 following the capture of

power by an authoritarian regime which ruled through military juntas. With the coming of military rule, governance became increasingly centralised and freedom of civil society was progressively curbed. From four federal regions, the country was sectored into thirty-six federal regions whose autonomy with regard to resource management was severely limited. As a result of the chaos created by the onset of military rule, Nigeria remained in a state of civil war between 1967 and 1970. Wuam (2012) states that the civil war was one of the biggest challenges to nation-building in Nigeria: "Nigeria fought the war and came out with no winners, no vanquished" (Wuam 2012: 107). During this period, oil exports increased drastically though the majority of Nigerians continued to sever in extreme poverty. In 1979, a presidential system of governance was established, which lasted for the next four years. In 1984, military fiat was reinstated in Nigeria, which lasted till as late as 1999. In 1999, civilian rule returned to Nigeria along with a constitutional change intended to once again reform the federal system (Kifordu 2011).

Many scholars argue that Nigeria's experience of democratic federalism is responsible for much of its current sociopolitical instability, particularly communal conflicts. Adamolekum (2005) explains that during the long period of military rule in Nigeria — from 1967 to 1999 — federalism existed only in name. The system of government did not actually run along federal lines, decision-making was highly centralised. During the interlude of civilian administration from 1979 to 1983, attempts were not made to decentralise power, and after civilian rule was reestablished in 1999, the trend of power centralisation inherited from military rule continued with the result that political and social tensions have soared, economic performance has stagnated, and poverty has deepened. Ukiwo (2003) likewise opines that structures of military authoritarianism such as repressive security forces, personal rule, favouritism and corruption persist in the current structure of Nigerian federalism. Even though substantial independence exists at both state and federal levels, power-sharing is not institutionalised. Most of the governance is carried out through simple majoritarian principle in a way that needs and interests of minorities get left out. According to Abutudu (2010), Nigerian federalism is at a crossroads: tensions between the federal regions and the central government, competition between the federal units themselves, and clash of interests between various identity groups, and demands for equity and justice in the allocation of resources and political space from minorities and marginalised groups have shaken the legitimacy of the

federal system. More importantly, these sources of unrest suggest that the national question is still lingering in Nigeria.

To complete the cycle of problems is the reinstating of Sharia in the Northern states, from customary law to criminal law, without adequate preparation or clarity, and the emergence of the Boko Haram in the year 2009, whose leaders aim to impose a conservative variant of Islam in Nigeria by inciting communal conflict. The latter developments not only pose a challenge to Nigeria's secularism but also expose the weaknesses of its federalism. The membership of Boko Haram has enlarged dramatically since it's uprising in 2009 partly because of the economic dislocation and ethno-regional party politics. Some scholars believe that Nigeria is in "dire straits," a "hot spot" for ethnic conflicts where national integration is a "Herculean task"; while more hopeful others describe the situation as "big troubles but a big future."

2.1. *Ethno-religious Conflict*

Most scholars contend that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are by and large the product of the improper patterns of interaction between Christians and Muslims during the colonial period. Towards the beginning of colonial rule, there was little scope for interaction between the Christian and Muslim communities because the colony of Nigeria was geographically divided into the Northern and Southern protectorates with a Muslim and a Christian majority respectively. After the unification of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, the Muslim and Christian communities came into contact and were compelled to cooperate for administrative and economic reasons. While uniting the two protectorates, the British cautiously resisted the intermingling of different religious and ethnic groups lest they united to launch a national movement against the British colonial rule. The British allocated resources and political power in such a way that the northern and southern regions got into a fierce competition which, because of the historical association of the two regions with Islam and Christianity respectively, turned into inter-religious rivalry. The years of living in seclusion followed by decades of unhealthy competition resulted in deep-seated feelings of suspicion between Christians and Muslims, which quickly turned into mutual hostility following independence. Most scholars argue that religious communities in Nigeria never got

the chance to develop inter-community friendship as they were pitted against one another for security and livelihood throughout colonial rule. Uchendu (2004) writes, "the absence of any friendly and purposeful communication between Christians and Muslims from the early days of existence of Nigeria as a nation denied members of these faiths the opportunity of intermingling, through which they would have grown together, learning about each other's religious cultures as well as appreciating and tolerating different religious beliefs and systems of worship" (Uchendu 2004: 135).

Aguwa (1997) argues that since independence, the Northern Muslims have particularly stood in the way of nation integration in Nigeria because of the fear of losing the political and religious privileges which they have enjoyed in the past. During the colonial period, the British allowed the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria to retain its authority and preserved their Islamic traditions, including the legal system, Sharia. The British also granted Muslim Emirs the power to ban Christians and Christian missionary activities, which the latter exercised vehemently to check Christianity from spreading in the north. Because the Muslims lived in an exclusively Muslim quarantine in the north from which missionaries and Christian Nigerians were outlawed, Christians had an impression of Muslims as deeply conservative and secluded people. Muslims, on their part, felt superior and privileged to have a separate political entity for themselves ruled according to Sharia, and looked upon Christians with suspicion whom they perceived as religious kins of the British colonialists. Being secluded in the northern part of the country also reinforced the feeling of estrangement among Muslims from the rest of the religious and ethnic groups. After independence, Aguwa believes, Northern Muslims were unprepared and unwilling to concede their political privileges and join the Southern Christians in the project of nation-building. The majority of Northern Muslims desired an Islamic state in Nigeria — a theocratic system of governance in which Allah is the state. Consequently, Northern Muslims have repeatedly attempted to erode the constitutional secularity of the state to install a religio-political system. Aguwa believes that the attitude of Northern Muslims has much to do with the nature of Islam itself which considers separation of politics from religion as anomalous. Aguwa (1997) writes, "the issue here is not the universal experience that political matters often become religious problems and vice versa. It is rather that by virtue of the nature of Islam, Muslims inevitably seek to sacralise the entire political terrain by a legitimacy granted only by their religious

norms" (Aguwa 1997: 344). Uchendu (2004) writes that some Muslims from the North realised the evil intent of the British in stratifying Nigerian society along religious lines and keeping Christians and Muslims segregated, but they did not try to reverse the ill-effects of this after independence. Muslim authorities in the North continued to support religious segregation, for instance, by demanding for separate schools for Muslims in the North.

Since independence, Muslims and Christians in Nigeria have viewed each other through the distorted lens acquired during the colonial era. Muslims associate Christians with proselytisation through the use of Western education and technological advancement; Christians associate Muslims with backwardness, conservatism and more recently, fundamentalism. There is a mutual feeling of fear. Much of the responsibility of this fear lies with political leaders. Political leaders from both Muslim and Christian communities have incited inter-religious fear and suspicion by making irrational or disparaging remarks. Carelessly uttered statements have been responsible for numerous misunderstandings between Christians and Muslims. Religion took on an explosive character with the beginning of the Sharia debts in 1977-78. The situation between Christians and Muslims reached a tipping point in 1986, when Nigeria, a constitutionally secular state, was registered as a full member of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) of which Nigeria had only been an observer state so far by the unilateral decision of the president then, Ibrahim Babangida. This development instilled fear among Christians over the possible transformation of Nigeria into an Islamic state. The implementation of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria in the following years served only to confirm their fears. Christians are uncertain about the purposefulness of Sharia law in a secular society where a modern system of jurisprudence already exists. They are also unclear about what Sharia laws entail, which of these laws are applicable to all citizens and which solely to Muslims. Many scholars believe that the fear of Christians over the implementation of Sharia law are not ill-founded. Citing the cases of patterns of Sharia implementation in Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and others, they argue that establishment of Sharia in Northern Nigeria spells danger for non-Muslim minorities of that region. From the time of the Sharia debates, religious crisis has remained a persistent feature of Nigerian society (Uchendu 2004).

Many of the Christian-Muslim conflicts that have been erupting since the 1980s have ethnic undertones. Most scholars agree that ethnic consciousness in Nigeria emerged during colonial era. Ethnicity emerged in Africa "either as a mechanism for adaptation to the imperialist system or as an instrument for ensuring a facile and more effective domination and exploitation of the colonised," argues Nnoli (1978: 25), a leading anthropologist on Africa. Nnoli proceeds to explain that this kind of ethnic control led to negative competition in terms of resource distribution eventually manifesting in deep-seated ethnic grievances and inter-ethnic hatred which carried on into the postcolonial phase of African countries. "Ethnicity is not a primordial feature of African societies but an instrumental marker that is used to mobilise and successfully appropriate power, resources, and political ascendency," writes Agbiboa (2013: 6). This means that ethnicity is not merely a socio-biological feature for distinguishing people. But a collective identity around which support can be garnered for political and economic motives. In Nigeria, ethnicity tends to be understood as "the employment and or mobilisation of ethnic identity or differences to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or co-operation," writes Osaghae (1995: 11-13). "Ethnicity is seen as the most basic and politically salient identity of Nigerians," claim Çancı and Odukoya (2016: 91), citing the findings of a survey conducted by Lewis and Bratton in Nigeria that showed 48.2% Nigerians (almost half the population) identifying themselves with an ethnic identity as compared to 28.4% identifying themselves with respect to class and 21% identifying with a religious group (Lewis and Bratton 2000 as mentioned in Çancı and Odukoya 2016: 91).

In Nigeria, there are seven largest ethnic groups constituting about 88% of the country's population — Hausa and Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%), Igbo (18%), Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), and Tiv (2.5%) (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). The population disproportion is reflected in disparities in political influence as well. The Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo are the most prominent ethnic groups. They are regarded as the majority ethnic groups while the rest of the classified as minority ethnic groups (Paden 2008:4). Ethnic boundaries tend to coincide with religion. Most of the Hausa-Faluni are Muslims. Most of the Igbo are Christians. Only the Yoruba ethnic group contains almost equal numbers of Muslims and Christians.

The present-day ethno-regional state structure of Nigeria can be attributed to the administrative policies of the British. During the colonial period, the British identified three major ethnic groups — Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo — and encouraged their hegemony in the region inhabited by them — Hausa-Faluni in the north, Yoruba in the southwest, and Igbo in the southeast. The motive was to use them as anchors for regional administration. All the three ethnically based regions enjoyed administrative autonomy. At the same time, there existed sharp differences between the political power of the Muslim Hausa-Faluni in the north and socio-economic power of the Yoruba in the southwest and the oil-rich Igbo dominated lands in the southeast. At the time of independence, British colonial authorities and Nigerian nationalist leaders agreed upon a federal state structure in which powers would be devolved among the three ethno-regions. It was hoped that the adoption of a tripartite federal model of government, a stable political system would be created which would distribute power and resources between the three ethno-regions and counter the intense competition between the three major ethnic groups (Thomson 2000). Within the first few years independence itself, it became apparent that the ethno-regional federal structure was unsustainable. Agbiboa (2013) explains that because of ethnic and regional rivalry developed over six decades of colonial rule, the three ethno-regions groups were suspicious of each other right from beginning refusing to cooperate in making the federal government function. The federal constitution also allowed for two ethno-regions to form an alliance against the third. This provision came to be used repeatedly by the ethno-regions for blocking any fruitful decision-making at the federal level. Furthermore, the three major ethnic groups in the federal government cut out other ethnic groups completely from political representation and resource allocation. The minority ethnic groups could not displace the former's hold on the federal government either. Agbiboa says that these problems created so much of regional and ethnic tensions that the federal government lost it legitimacy within a matter of six years after independence and collapsed irretrievably. From the state failure of 1967 to the reinstating of democracy in 1999, conflicts over power and resources broke out recurrently between the Hausa-Faluni dominated, numerically superior northern region, the Igbo dominated, oil-rich southeastern region and the Yoruba dominated, industrially advanced southwestern region. The regional rivalry over power and resources inevitably turned into conflicts of ethnic vengeance because of the underlying ethnic animosity in Nigeria.

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, several socio-economic and political changes have taken place in the country that has transformed the delineations of ethnic identity and politics. For over one century, the key players in politics were the three major ethnic groups — Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The rest of the minority groups comprising over 250 smaller ethnic groups were considered inconsequential. After 1999, minority ethnic groups became active in politics and economy. The most prominent case is the Niger Delta region. The only resource in Nigeria that is considered a national resource is oil, and the only region in Nigeria where oil is found is the Niger Delta (Ukiwo 22). Revenue from oil constitutes the largest share in Nigeria's GDP. Despite this, the local communities of Niger Delta who are a part of Nigeria's ethnic minorities remain politically marginalised and economically deprived. This led to the outbreak of militancy in the Niger Delta by the local communities to wrest greater control from the federal government over oil (Çancı and Odukoya 2016). The nationalisation of Niger Delta oil, alienation and pauperisation of the oil-producing communities, and their subsequent resistance through militancy and demands for self-determination has emerged as one of the greatest threats to Nigeria's stability since 1999.

2.2. Weak Federalism

Following the end of military rule in Nigeria, incidents of ethno-religious violence have risen sharply. Most scholars attribute the rise of ethno-religious violence by and large to the nature of federalism established in Nigeria since 1999. The Nigerian federal experience can be divided into four phases: 1954-1965, considered to be the "golden age" of federalism in Nigeria; 1966-1979 and 1984-1999, also called the period of "militarised federalism," when federalism was dominated by a military fiat; 1979-1983, when civilian rule returned briefly; and 1999 to date. Adamolekum (2005) offers an overview of the key features in each phase of Nigerian federalism. During the first phase of federalism (1954-1965), he says, both federal and regional governments could make choices in the political and economic realm because their respective functions and resources were clearly distributed and defined. Each regional government exercised the freedom to determine the institutional arrangements for governance in the region under its administration. Each regional government was also free to determine its own economic and social policy. Each region, therefore, had its own plan for socio-economic develop. There were similarities and dissimilarities between these plans. There also

emerged an informal competition between the regions. Adamolekum argues that the competition was mostly constructive. Each region tried to make advancement in education, health, housing, transpiration and communication. To implement the developments policies and projects, each region created a cadre of civil servants. Adamolekum (2005) writes, "With the regions occupying centre stage in the development of infrastructure and the delivery of public goods and services, the federal government was a distant institution for the average Nigerian. He or she was aware of a common Nigerian currency, and there were occasional newspaper and radio reports of the federal government taking one position or another in international affairs" (Adamolekum 2005: 387). The point to be noted about this phase of Nigerian federalism is that the federal government had a lower profile and lesser visibility than the regional governments. The central government did not have the authority to block the decisions and actions of the regional governments nor it had the resources to take over their functions.

During the second phase of Nigerian federalism (1966-1979 and 1984-1999), a military government came to power. Nigeria continued to exist as a federation, however, the military leadership decided to restructure the federation from four constituent regions to twelve states: six in the northern part of the country and six in the southern part. The new federal structure had a centralised system of political management and revenue allocation. In the political sphere, this meant that henceforth, all powers were concentrated in the hands of the federal government and states could take charge of only those issues that the federal government considered appropriate for them to handle. The military officers who headed the state governments were subordinate to the military leaders at the centre. The military heads of the state governments were responsible only for implementing decisions taken by the central military government. The actual rulers of the federation were the military leaders at the centre. Consequently, the diversity which hitherto existed in the policies and programs of the regional governments are replaced by uniformity. Adamolekum (2005: 389) writes, "there were no checks and balances, and responsiveness to the demands of citizens was at the pleasure of the ruling military men at both the federal and state levels." After 1966, since all administrative functions were in the hands of the federal government, in the economic sphere too, the federal government unilaterally assigned itself a greater proportion of national revenue than was the case before 1966 and continued to retain the lion's share of the national

income until 1999. The state governments had to accept whatever shares of grants that the federal government provided. The federal grants were allocated for specific development activities that the federal government anted the states to pursue, notably education, housing and agriculture. However, because of the unpredictability of the grants and the constraint on activities on which they were supposed to be used, the grants did not contribute to development effectively. According to Adamolekum, during the entire period of military rule, from 1967-1999, there were only a few advancements in transportation, housing, agriculture, and tertiary education, although the quality of education declined significantly. Three decades of military dictatorship also led to a curb on the independence of the judiciary, assaults on the freedom of media, and persecution of civil society actors. The civil services, which had existed as a proud body for implementation of state government policies, became a shadow of its former self. Needless to mention, poverty and corruption escalated fewer and fewer Nigerians partook in the governance of the country. Abutudu (2010) argues that the military's internal logic as an institution — emphasising on chain of command — when reproduced in the government led to centralisation of powers, thus redefining the shape of Nigerian federalism. The state creation exercise, which led to a division of the federation into twelve constituent units or states in place of the earlier four regions, accrued to the logic of military authoritarianism: the states, being smaller in size and resources, were rendered weaker than the central government. The latter wielded the authority to decide the functions of the states and how power was to be distributed between them. The central government also reserved for itself the authority to appoint the governors of the states. The drive for centralism was not confined to federal governance only, fiscal federalism also underwent rearrangement in such a way that national resources became centralised. States had to rely on the central government for virtually all of the finances needed for their governance and developmental programmes.

Between 1979 and 1983, there was a brief spell of civilian rule. During this third phase of federalism, the governmental system was a combination of parliamentary, military and presidential types of governance. Adamolekum (2005) writes that whereas the senior politicians, especially the key leaders of the dominant political parties in every state had exposure to both parliamentary form of governance and military regime, the younger politicians were familiar only with military rule and neither the senior nor the younger

politicians had any familiarity with presidential rule. The "confusing reality" was that too much importance was attached to party politics and little attention was paid to socio-economic development. Also marking this period was centralisation in administration and revenue distribution — a legacy of the previous military regime. The federal government at the centre appointed federal liaison officers posted in each state of the federation to serve as the political representative of the federal government in that state. The role of the liaison officer was to ensure the smooth functioning of intergovernmental relations, but in reality, liaison officers acted as agents of the federal government engaged in distributing federal grants and enforcing provisions of the national constitution. The presence of these liaison officers was resented by states whose government was controlled by parties different from the party ruling at the centre. Adamolekum argues that on the whole, the network of federal liaison officers instead of enhancing intergovernmental relations, the task for which it was created, ended up subverting those relations. The legacy of the previous regime was also apparent in the continuing practice of the federal government to keep the largest share of the national revenue for itself. Its share of spending also remained as high as under the previous military rule. The fifty-one month civilian rule wreaked havoc in both political and economic spheres.

The fourth phase of Nigerian federalism, 1999 to date, has been characterised by party politics but unlike the strong attachment to centralism noticeable during the fifty-one month civilian interlude (1979-1983), since 1999, partisan politics has revolved around ethnicity and religion. Inter-ethnic competition over natural resources and government offices and Christian-Muslim rivalry are now the dominant issues in Nigerian society and politics. May scholars argue that although the goal of Nigerian federalism since 1999 has been to promote national unity by preventing the federal government from domination by any state(s) or ethnic group(s) thereby granting all Nigerian citizens equal access to resources and offices irrespective ethnic origin, the manner in which federalism has been implemented has made region and ethnicity primary bases for acquiring resources and offices. Dibua (2011) explains that prior to 1999, federal regions or ethnic groups were the basis of political representation and wealth distribution. After 1999, many structural changes were made in the federation to replace the salience of former regions and ethnic groups with states. Division of the country into states achieved two purposes at one time: it pacified the demands of the major ethnic

groups for a degree of autonomy and self-governance in both administrative and financial matters; at the same, it weakened the potential of the major ethnic groups to dominate the country as multiple states balanced each other in political and economic advantages. "State creation despite the fact of its proliferation has fulfilled the need for self-determination in the Nigerian federation without the fear of domination by the major ethnic groups over the minorities," states Wuam (2012: 108). Wuam considers state creation to have in large measure weakened the tendency of regional and ethnic hegemony in the federation as many of the states chose to liaise directly with the federal government and other states. Dibua (2011) contradicts this position. He believes that despite state creation and other structural and constitutional adjustments for power-sharing, the majority ethnic groups have remained the reference point in the implementation of the federal principle in governance over the last two decades. Instead of bringing political stability and inter-ethnic harmony, as was widely expected, power-sharing between the elites of the three major ethnic groups resulted in discrimination against the elites of minority groups. The minority elites in turn sowed the seeds of discontentment in their ethnic groups with the result that far from producing national unity through elite accommodation and consensus, federalism has led to a kind of ethnic quota system at the level of core political executive elite in which individual members and groups of the elite are drawn from similar social, ethnic and political party backgrounds. In a study of the composition of political elites in Nigeria and their effect on politics, Kifordu (2011) argues: "The greater the influence of a small number of individuals or groups in society, the more the rights of others, and the openness of the political system, inclusiveness and the rule of law may come under pressure. The result is a reproduction rather than circulation of political elites. Reproduction is the result of typical practices of particular groups of individuals with common backgrounds and social networks. This reproduction leads to a hybrid form of governance. Here, hybridism refers to incomplete liberalisation and systematically curtailed inclusion, matched by quite ineffective government" (Kilfordu 2011: 16). Kifordu believes that the Nigerian federalism reflects the interests of few, who mostly hail from one of the three majority ethnic groups, and excludes the majority of the population from political and social processes. The exclusion of the masses reflects in the economic sphere as well. About 60 to 70 percent of the Nigerian population lives below the poverty line in both rural and urban areas despite the heavy flow of revenue into the country from export

of oil. For instance, Dibua (2011) points out, communities in the Niger Delta are among the most neglected and marginalised communities of Nigeria despite the fact Nigeria's oil, which constitutes the primary source of its foreign exchange earnings, comes from the Niger Delta. The neglect and marginalisation of the oil-producing communities and the perception of these communities that their ethnic minority status is responsible for their plight has engendered many agitations in the Niger Delta for resource control. The tensions between the states and the centre, between the states themselves, perceived inequality in the sharing of resources, marginalisation of minorities from the political space, and intensification of the Niger Delta crisis, have shown that the return to civilian rule in 1999 did not produce the political order needed to manage the diversity in Nigeria. This has provided the context for repeated demands for restructuring Nigerian federalism often involving violent ethnic or religious clashes. Those who make the demands for restructuring what to see adjustments or introduction of new mechanisms in the federal system that would accommodate effectively the multiple nationalities and cultures of Nigeria, prevent the domination of the politics by one group, generally enlarge the democratic space in Nigeria.

Many scholars argue that the current societal dynamics and the ongoing demands for restructuring the federal system are a reflection of the unresolved national question in Nigeria. The roots of the national question can be traced to the nationalist movement for independence which began in the early 1930s. Prior to 1930s, the idea of nationalism embraced by European-educated Nigerians was based on a race consciousness highlighting the stark difference between indigenous Black Africans subjects and White European colonialists. This is not to say that nationalist sentiment did not exist. There were prominent voices demanding greater self-rule. By and large however Nigerians did not see themselves as Nigerians. In the 1930s, a new generation of educated Nigerians emerged who had not received education abroad — in the United Kingdom or United States as their predecessors invariably did — but were educated at home in the European schools and universities. This class of educated Nigerians had witnessed colonial malpractices and injustices throughout their formative years. When they burst into the political scene, they espoused the goal of a pan-Nigerian identity and replacement of the British government with a Nigerian government. Beyond this goal, however, the new generation of European-educated nationalists differ significantly. On one hand was the ideological divergence between radicals,

moderates and labour unions: radicals wanted an immediate end to colonial rule at any human and material cost; moderates wanted a gradual weakening of colonial rule; labour unions wanted immediate market reforms. On the other hand was regional difference between north, southwest and southeast regions. To elaborate, in 1938 an organisation called the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) emerged with the exclusive aim of uniting indigenous people across ethnic boundaries for fighting colonial rule. NYM pushed for greater involvement of indigenous people in the civil services, more elected representatives in the colonial government, and better wages and conditions for workers. In short, NYM evolved into a pan-Nigerian nationalist organisation demanding a Nigeria for Nigerians. In 1941, certain members of NYM broke away to create the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC). Its aim like that of NYM was to promote a pan-Nigerian identity and gain self-governance for all Nigerians. NCNC soon replaced the NYM as the leading nationalist organisation. NYM continued to exist until 1941 but with a severely diminished significance. Parallel to emergence of a pan-Nigerian identity was the growth of ethnic identity. Ethnic consciousness began to grow and ethnic affiliations became aligned with regional divisions. In the northern region, Hausa-Faluni nationalists strove to uphold regional divisions because not having enough educated men from their own community and region to fill the ranks of the civil service they feared domination by southerners in the event of the creation of a unitary state. Hausa-Faluni nationalists promoted ethnic and regional unity of the northerners to counter what seemed like an impending southern domination. In the Southwest Region, Yoruba nationalists actively fostered unity among Yoruba people, promoted Yoruba language and culture, and worked for Yoruba progress through greater control of politics in their region. In the Southeast Region, Igbo nationalists tried to garner Igbo support for progress of the Igbos. In addition to the Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo nationalist fronts, minority ethnic groups also created their own cultural organisations however by it was already apparent that Nigeria was heading towards a tripartite state structure — Hausa-Faluni dominated Northern Region, Yoruba dominated Southwestern Region, and Igbo dominated Southeastern region. From the perspective of the three regionally based, ethnically motivated nationalist fronts, regionalisation of Nigeria was good, perhaps even necessary. In 1947, the British introduced the Richards Constitution which provided for the appointment of a majority of unofficial Nigerians to the central legislature as

well as the inclusion of northerns in the legislature. This provision was meant to strengthen national unity. At the same time, however, the Constitution provided for creation of regional assemblies for north, southwest and southeast regions paving the way for dividing the country regionally. Nigerian nationalists had a mixed reaction to the creation of regional assemblies. They understood that regional assemblies would be detrimental to the pan-Nigerian identity but they also believed that Nigeria was such a diverse country in terms of geography, ethnicity and religion, that a unified government would neither be functional nor reasonable. The Richards Constitution on the whole marked the first step towards a federated Nigeria having a legislative body at the central level and assembly houses at the regional level. Following the application of the Richards Constitution, the southwestern and southeastern regions demanded granting complete self-governance to the regional assemblies. The northern region opposed it stating that it was not yet prepared for self-governance. In 1954, the British introduced the Lyttleton Constitution which tried to reconcile those whole wanted complete self-governance and those who wanted strong central rule by establishing Nigeria as a federation of three regions — Northern, Southwestern, and Southeastern — as had already existed informally. In 1960, when Nigeria became independent, Nigerians were euphoric about achieving freedom from colonial rule but by then inter-regional and inter-ethnic divisions had already materialised to a dangerous extent. Falola and Heaton (2008) state:

> The nationalist movements that had emerged as pan-Nigerian efforts to promote the indigenization of the government in the 1930s devolved into regionally based political parties with memberships that were divided largely along ethnic lines by the early 1950s. The independence thus achieved in 1960 was a fragile one, unified under a federal constitution in which politically conscious ethnic groups vied for control of the central government through ethnically based political parties (Falola and Heaton 2008: 137).

Abutudu (2010) states that at the start of nationhood, Nigerians were not consulted about the structure of their would-be state. The choice of a federal democracy was made by the outgoing British colonial rulers keeping in mind the regionalism which had grown and become entrenched in all aspects of Nigerian life because the north-south administrative divide and resource competition throughout the colonial period. The legacy of regionalism and the establishment of federalism after independence opened up the national question in Nigeria. Fearing the domination of majority ethnic groups in the constituent regions, the minorities in each of the three regions complained of submergence and marginalisation. The

fear of domination circulated at the regional level too: regions complained of exclusion from participation in the central government. These fears were not unfounded because asymmetries in power and resource allocation between the regions and the centre and between the three constituent federal regions indeed existed. In just half a decade after independence, despite the implementation of power-sharing federal policies, the nation-building project of Nigeria slipped into chaos: ethnic parties emerged in all the regions of the federation threatening national unity. When the federal government was taken over by a military fiat, the national question took a new course. Stating the alibi that federalism under civilian rule suffered from centrifugal tendencies that could disintegrate the federation, the military regime undertook a series of changes that sought to break the traditional group loyalties of people and direct it towards the military leader. To achieve this, the military government at the centre intervened in the social and economic development of the federal units. Oil revenues, which formed the primary source of national revenue, were centralised, affecting not only the economic but the social position of communities in the oil-producing states of the Niger Delta belt. Losing oil revenue while sustaining the gross environmental degradation caused by oil exploration, led to the emergence of military groups in the oil-producing states in the 1980s and 1990s whose activities were directed towards rectifying the social, economic and environmental deprivation by demanding for control of their own oil. The crisis of the oil-producing states and the issues raised therein have become the major defining feature of the national question. Abutudu writes that according to the dominant discourse of the national question, the military rule tilted political power in favour of the northern region. This belief and its attendant consequences intensified ethno-national and regional sentiments over the need to restructure the federation in order to achieve a balance in terms of power, wealth and development among the ethnic nationalities and states. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the national question and associated demands for restructuring the federal system involve ethnic and religious violence, have revolved around a number of issues, which are generally not new. (1) Restructuring federalism: Various groups in Nigeria demand a form of federalism where constituent states enjoy concurrent powers, clearly subordinate to the central government, but without skewing too much power in favour of the centre. Abutudu argues that such a delicate balance of power can be achieved only when states generate their own income for running their administration. Presently, the constituent states survive on the basis of allocation of

revenues by the central government derived from oil wealth. Abutudu says that as long as the logic of centralised resource allocation holds, states will continue to weaken in relation to the central government, and demands for creation of states would continue. (2) Resource control: The issue that defines the national question more than any other is the demand of oil-producing communities for control over their resources in order to create a just and equitable federation. Since independence, the people of the oil-rich Niger Delta have been demanding for the return of oil resources and oil revenues to the states and local communities of the belt. They not only want that local resources should be available for local development but also make the resource owners the centre of the development process. (3) Citizenship and indigeneity: The concept of citizenship that guarantees equal rights to all its subjects is still missing in Nigeria. No matter how long someone has dwelled in a place, if that place is not his/her ancestral place, citizenship right is typically abridged. To acquire citizenship rights, the person must relocate to the ancestral place. Thus, regardless of the constitutional provisions outlining citizenship, it is the so-called "indigenship," and not citizenship, that confers certain civic rights. Abutudu tells that irrespective of tax status, it is practically impossible to seek public office or get employment in the state of one's domicile, if it does not coincide with the state of origin of one's parents. This state of affairs encourages nepotism and favouritism, and gives reason for ethno-religious violence.

To summarise, the transition from military to civilian rule in 1999 was a much awaited change for Nigerians, but the constitution that came into effect in 1999, which defined the functions and resources of the federal government and state governments, did not reflect inclusivity, autonomy, accountability and legitimacy. The constitution was bespoke of concentration of power with the centre, inherited from the long period of authoritarian rule. Today, Nigerians demand for restructuring the federation in order to see peace, political stability, justice, equity and development. By way of working towards these goals, they also hope to foster national integration and unity. However, restructuring would entail procedural and substantive issues, and procedurally, it would be difficult for minority communities to put their concerns on the agenda of the central government, much less have them adopted, as long as decision-making happens on the basis of the majoritarian principle. Sadly, the quest for federal restructuring has been largely underwritten by a violence unleashed by ethnic militias. The ethno-religious violence caused by the meddling of ethnic militias, though

usually localised raises instability and insecurity, disrupting, once again, the search for national community.

2.3. *Sharia Implementation in the Northern States*

Soon after the transition from military to civilian government in 2000, the state of Zamfara in Northern Nigeria adopted the Sharia law. The Sharia law is a criminal code derived from the Islamic faith. It is an oral tradition of dispensing justice systematised into a legal code over the centuries. In other words, Sharia is not a written law. There are four sources of Sharia: the Quran, the Sunna (traditions of the Prophet), Qiyas (reasoning by analogy), and Ijma (consensus). The Quran takes primacy in legal matters followed by the Sunna. The Qiyas and Ijma are secondary. The open-ended nature of Sharia implies that its implementation is subject to interpretation. Since Sharia is a religious system of criminal jurisdiction, it is believed by many to be incompatible with the democratic form of governance because that necessarily demands neutrality of the State towards religion. Moreover, because of the harsh nature of some of the punishment under Sharia law — amputation of arm for theft, flogging or stoning to death for adultery, and stoning to death for apostasy or conversion to another religion — Sharia is regarded by many as misplaced in the modern world governed by human rights and notions of human dignity. For these very reasons, the adoption of Sharia by the Zamfara State in Nigeria became highly controversial: it challenged the secular nature of the Nigeria State as well as jeopardised the fundamental rights enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution for protecting life and human dignity.

The initial response of the federal government was to declare the act of Zamfara State as unconstitutional. The governor of Zamfara, however, responded by challenging the federal government to prove the charge of unconstitutionality in court. The federal government, despite its initial outrage, soon showed reserve. Instead of dragging the matter to the court, it opted for a political solution hoping that the sharia debate would fizzle out soon. Contrary to expectation, the debate did not die out. Subsequently, eleven other northern states — Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Niger and Kaduna — passed the sharia law, applicable to Muslims only. In those states, which followed a hardline interpretation of Sharia, some of its laws, such as ban on alcohol and prostitution, were

applied to all citizens. Since each of the twelve northern states had to establish its own Sharia rule, there were variations in how they interpreted the law, what procedures were used for consulting with the learned Islamic legal scholars, and how they handled appeals. Since then a long-drawn debate has ensued in Nigeria over the Sharia revolving mainly around two issues: (1) the constitutionality of the unilateral implementation of Sharia by the northern states and its implications for fundamental rights enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution; and (2) the patterns of implementation of Sharia and its implications for Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria, particularly the fuelling of interreligious conflict.

2.3.1. *Constitutionality of Sharia Implementation and Implications for Fundamental Rights*

To explore whether the unilateral decision of the northern states to adopt the Sharia law was constitutional or not, it is important to look at the legislative and the judicial powers of the federal and the state governments granted by the Nigerian Constitution. To begin with, the constitution is the supreme law of Nigeria. If any law in the Federation is inconsistent with the Constitution, then the Constitution enjoys legal priority. In terms of legislative powers, the federal and the state governments share legislative and judiciary powers in the Federation; however, if any state legislature contravenes federal legislature, then federal legislature prevails. In other words, the specific legislative powers for both the federal and the state governments and their extent of such powers has been defined in the Constitution. The constitution additionally allows the state governments to make laws for their respective states, as long as those laws do not conflict with federal laws. In case of such a conflict, the federal government has the power to override the law made by the state based on provisions derived from the Constitutions. According to this provision, the northern states acted constitutionally when they unilaterally adopted the Sharia law because states have the competence to legislate laws; however, the debate does not end here. It remains to be explored whether or not the Sharia law itself falls within constitutional limits. For this, it is pertinent to highlight two aspects of Sharia: the mechanism used for enforcing the Sharia system, and the evidentiary requirements for holding Sharia trials. It is important to know that the right to make arrests within the whole of Nigeria rests only with the Nigerian police. The police force of Nigeria is a centralised unit under the command of the federal government. State governments do not and cannot have their own police forces. It follows

that for arresting offenders and taking other disciplining measures required under Sharia, the northern state governments cannot have separate police forces nor can they put in charge the federal police forces. Consequently, these states have established vigilante groups who patrol the streets and are responsible for reporting offences and arresting offenders. The vigilante groups are usually made up of overzealous religious men, who take the opportunity of being in power to terrorise people and make arrests on mere suspicion. The vigilante groups then are quite obviously illegal bodies armed with weapons and granted state authority to arrest people. Further, in terms of evidences for prosecution of offenders under Sharia law, there is a hierarchy in the value accorded to the testimonials of different persons: of highest value is the testimonial of a Muslim of deep faith and good character; the testimonials of two Muslim women are in equal in value to the testimonial of one Muslim man; and finally, the testimonial of non-Muslim is invalid. The result of this hierarchy is dangerous, especially for women. In the case of adultery, it is usually the women who gets indicted — all the more easily if she is found to be pregnant — while her male accomplice gets away because she must produce in her defence four Muslim men of good character and deep religiosity who have eye witnessed the act of penetration. Because of the same evidentiary requirement the crime of rape can easily be made to appear as a case of adultery — consensual intercourse outside legal marriage. Men who have raped seldom get punished because it is nearly impossible for the female victim to produce four male eyewitnesses of the rape. Those offenders, who want to appeal against a Sharia court ruling, must put a plea in the Sharia court of appeal. This involves expenses, as a result of which, those who are poor have had to take the help of relatives to fight their cases or resign themselves and accept the penalty served in the first instance. Thus, intentionally or unintentionally, women and the poor have ended up as the largest casualty under the Sharia law. To summarise the debate so far on the question of the constitutionality of the unilateral implementation of Sharia: while the unilateral adoption of the Sharia law by the northern states was not unconstitutional, the enforcement mechanism and evidentiary requirements of the Sharia law itself, places the Sharia outside constitutional limits: the use of force by a body other than the federal police is unconstitutional; so is the preferential treatment of testimonies because according to the constitution, every individual's testimony carries equal weight.

Further in the debate, the Constitution vests the judiciary powers of the Federation in legal courts operating at two levels — federal and state. The federal and the state courts have been established by the decree of the Constitution, and are therefore superior courts of record in Nigeria. In addition, the Constitution grants states the right to establish their own courts, if needed, but with subordinate jurisdiction. It is necessary to elaborate what is meant by superior and subordinate jurisdiction. Superior relates to criminal jurisdiction while subordinate refers to civil. The right to hand out criminal justice has been reserved by the Constitution for only those courts that have been established by it. This means except the federal and state courts established under the Constitution, no other court has the authority to prosecute criminal cases. The extent of their judicial power for the Sharia courts then, cannot exceed civil jurisdiction because these courts have been established by their respective state governments — not by the Constitution. As far the Constitution is concerned, it grants the Sharia courts the right to preside only over Islamic personal law relating to family and inheritance matters. Summarising the debate once again at this point: the northern states have acted constitutionally so far as they established courts that would hand out justice based on Islamic law; however, they have acted unconstitutionally by conferring criminal jurisdiction on these courts because criminal jurisdiction is the exclusive power of federal and state courts established by the Constitution.

The final aspect of the constitutionality debate is the question of clash between fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution and the Sharia law. The Constitution declares that the Nigerian State will not adopt any religion as the state religion, meaning the state will not privilege, protect, sponsor, or advance any religion. Further the Constitution guarantees every citizen freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Those who support the decision to adopt to Sharia argue that Muslims who are not living under Sharia are deprived of their fundamental right to freedom of religion. The Sharia states are in effect helping their Muslim populations to enjoy religious freedom. To counter this argument, it needs to be iterated clearly that granting of religious freedom and wholesale adoption of a religious law are not the same. By adopting Sharia law, the northern states have effectively embraced Islam as the state religion. The governor of Zamfara in fact issued unequivocal public statements to the end that he would try to align all functions of the state government with the Sharia system. Furthermore, freedom of religion is relational concept — one person's freedom of religion

cannot come at the expense of another's. The northern states are not inhabited by Muslims alone but also significant populations of non-Muslims. Under Sharia law, the religious freedom of non-Muslims suffers. For instance, certain values of Sharia, such prohibition on free mixing of sexes in the public and restrictive dress codes for men and women in government-run institutions, are applicable on both Muslims and non-Muslims. This makes it certain that non-Muslims of the northern states are affected by the existence of the Sharia. Having made this point, it is also important to impress that existence of Sharia violates the freedom of religion of Muslims as well. The right to freedom of religion entails the right to abandon religion or convert from one to another religion. Under Sharia apostasy and conversion from Islam to another religion are deemed the highest crimes punishable by death. It follows that from fear of dying Muslims in these states, do not explore other religious possibilities even if they desire. In other words, Muslims too only partly enjoy the fundamental right of freedom of religion.

Another fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution is the right to free trail before punishment. As mentioned earlier, the Sharia has hierarchical approach to testimonials, which is unconstitutional in the first place. In practical terms, this presence of hierarchy in witnesses, and equally important, the invalidity of non-Muslim witnesses, makes it very difficult for defendant to gather credible witnesses. The jury almost ensures that offenders cannot defend themselves on the basis of testimonial evidences. Also mentioned earlier, vigilante groups responsible for arresting offenders have frequently done so on the basis of suspicion, and arrested offenders have always been assumed guilty till the time of the verdict. Under Constitutional law, however, persons cannot be arrested on the basis of mere suspicion, and the prosecuted must be treated as not guilty until the guilt has been evidentiary proved. In cases of adultery and rape, for instance, the concerned women are treated as offenders from the moment the crime is brought to notice. Another complaint by the locals Muslims is that those responsible for enforcing Sharia have been selective in the cases they have prosecuted. They contend that Sharia courts have rarely indicted political, religious and economic elites. It is usually the poor whom they ground, all the more easily because the poor neither have the money nor the literacy to fight their cases. The Sharia court constructs the cases in such a manner that it is very difficult to prove oneself not guilty.

Finally, some of the penalties under Sharia, such as stoning for fornication, amputating the right hand for theft, amputating a hand and a foot for highway robbery, and between eighty to three hundred lashes of the cane for various other offences, violate the fundamental and human rights notion of human dignity. Such penalties amount to torture, degrading treatment and in the sense, excessive punishment. Indeed, human rights groups have had to intervene on several occasions when one or the other Sharia court has handed down cane strokes and stoning to death as punishment for cases of fornication to the guilty women while completely discounting the male partner. These and several other minor fundamental rights, which are breached as a result of Sharia, greatly diminish the credibility of Sharia proponents in the debate over the constitutionality of Sharia implementation. Islamic scholars and political leaders from the Sharia states have no doubt pin-pointed articles and sections from the Constitution that can lend justification to their action. In the final analysis, however, Sharia implementation can be considered unconstitutional because it indirectly defies many of the constitutional provisions (Nmehielle 2004; Elaigwu and Galadima 2003).

The question arises then that how did Muslim elites who advocated for Sharia link their policy proposals to the democratic system emerging in Nigeria after its transition to civilian rule in 1999. In an incisive analysis of the Sharia controversy, Kendhammer (2013) brings to notice a threefold framework, which Muslim elites resorted to for justifying Sharia implementation. The three frames include rights, social justice and economic development, and holding elites accountable. Under the rights and social justice frame, Muslim political and religious leaders of the northern states argued that the constitutionally protected right to freedom of religion required the State give Muslims the opportunity to fully practice their religion. By placing themselves under Sharia law, Muslims were duly recognising and enacting the freedom of religion granted to them under the constitution. Under the social justice and economic development frame, proponents of Sharia argued that each Sharia state was responsible for developing policies that would reflect the Islamic values of northern Muslim communities, and would ensure the use of state resources to promote the so-called Islamic good society. Accordingly, measures such as enlargement of state government funding for religious leaders, Islamic education and building mosques done as part of Sharia implementation were in effect for achieving that social and economic egalitarianism which

was advocated by the Islamic value system. Under the third frame — holding elites accountable — Sharia advocates argued that the criminal and civil penalties under Sharia would be deployed to curb corruption and other inappropriate behaviour by political elites, which was a source of poor political and economic performance by the states. While all the three frames put forward by Muslim elites in defence of Sharia are legally vague, the overall thrust of their argument was that the Nigerian State was politically, and economically degenerating, the root cause for which was moral degenerating. Sharia implementation provided the much needed solution: it was a state-led movement for economic and political change through moral reform. Adesoji (2010) writes that viewed from a broader perspective, Sharia implementation was an effort to pacify a section of northern Muslims who had consistently agitated against secularism in Nigeria and were perhaps seen either as a threat to the tenure of the political office-holders or as a support base that could not be quietened by manipulation.

Frame	Argument
Rights	Sharia is necessary for Muslims to freedom of religion; In a democracy, majority rules — and where Muslims are the majority, they have a right (constitutional and natural) to sharia.
Social Justice and Economic Development	Sharia promises a new concern with the welfare of ordinary Muslims; Sharia will pave the way for "Islamic development" - human development in accordance with Islamic principles of justice.
Holding Elites Accountable	Sharia applies equally to all; Leaders who drink, "spray" money, engage in corruption, and are otherwise un-Islamic will be made to account for their actions through sharia.

Figure 4: Threefold Framework of Muslim Elite Discourse on Sharia (taken from Kendhammer 2013: 298).

2.3.2. *Patterns of Sharia Implementation and Implications for Muslim-Christian Relations*

Given the controversial relation between Islamic reform and democratic governance, there was significant debate within the Muslim community of the North over how to implement Sharia. The debate was essentially between conservative political elites and populist

reformers and critics. The block of conservative political elites desired such an implementation of Sharia that would maintain continuity with the historical Sokoto Caliphate while adopting a reformist stance — addressing popular concerns about corruption, economic inequality, and a lack of livelihood opportunity — through a return to core Islamic principles. The opposite block, of populist reformers and critics, wanted Sharia to be implemented in a manner that would crackdown on corruption and religious immorality in the elite circle primarily. To resolve debate between the conservatives and the populists, elite-level consultations and public forums were held in each of the prospective Sharia states prior to the implementation of Sharia. Conservative Sharia advocates suggested ordinances aimed at Ismalicising the masses using state funds to check and reform morally decadent elements of the society. Populist advocates demanded policies that would focus on economic problems particularly (Kendhammer 2013).

Among the twelve northern states of Nigeria implementation of Sharia followed different patterns, ranging from a full-blown interpretation — allowing punishments like flogging, decapitation, amputation and stoning to death for offences such as theft, fornication, adultery and murder — in the states of Zamfara, Jigawa, Niger and Sokoto — to a gradualist interpretation — disallowing severe punishment — in the states of Bauchi, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Borno, Gombe and Kaduna. Since the Zamfara State was the first to introduce Sharia, its Sharia implementation model was regarded as a forerunner for the other states. Zamfara State prohibited prostitution and consumption of alcohol for all. Despite public declarations by the governor of Zamfara assuring that Christians had nothing to do with Sharia, it was seen that aspects of Sharia that were based on Islamic value system extended to all persons, such as prohibition on mixing of sexes and restrictive dress codes. Christian programs were taken off television and radio. It was also brought to notice by local Christians that if they wished to purchase land for personal use, they were made to sign an agreement stating that they would not use the land for constructing a church or hotel. The state of Kano had a more heterogenous population because of which Sharia was implemented gradually in this state. Whereas one may think it was a wise move on the part of the governor of Kano, certain Islamic scholars and Muslim leaders, who favoured strict implementation of Sharia, scorned the governor for being unenthusiastic and moderate. The governor ultimately lost because of this in his attempt at a second term. The new governor at once pledged to carry out Sharia to

the optimum. He assured the Christian population that implementation of Sharia was not being carried out with an intention to Islamicise the state. Notwithstanding his assurances, deliberate measures were taken to extend Islamic moral code to the non-Muslim populations, such as ban on consumption of alcohol, dancing, and pre-marital sex. A somewhat opposite development took place in the state of Kaduna. Having a large Muslim population in the southern part, the governor of Kaduna was elected based on his ability to skilfully accommodate the interests and wellbeing of all sections of the society. Kaduna took two years after Zamfara proclaimed Sharia to pass its own Sharia bill into law. Even the years following the adoption of Sharia were marked by recurrent violence clashes between the Christian and Muslim communities. In the state of Borno, prostitution, lesbianism, homosexuality and other sexual immoralities were prohibited. The governor of the state of Gombe, like the governor of Kaduna, tried to ease the apprehension of the non-Muslim populations over the possible Islamicisation of the state through the introduction of Sharia by issuing statements to make transparent the actions and intentions of the government. It is said that the governor of Gombe passed the Sharia law only under pressure. He knew that his state had a large Christian minority who would get antagonised at once if Sharia was adopted. The state of Bauchi, also hosting a large Christian minority, introduced Sharia at an extreme risk of conflict. He claimed publicly that non-Muslims populations would be allowed to maintain their own culture and identity. He even instructed the judges of Sharia courts to not rush to judgment. Violence nevertheless ensued the implementation of Sharia. the level of interreligious violence in Bauchi equalled that of Kaduna. The governor of the state of Katsina was also partially coerced into adopting Sharia. Even then, he desired a lenient interpretation of law that would give concessions to non-Muslims, such as allowing Christians to build churches. However, traditional Islamic elites have made sure that Islamic moral code, such as ban on gambling, alcoholism, and prostitution, extended to all quarters of the society.

The brief overview of the patterns in which Sharia was implemented in some of the more prominent states of the North shows interreligious relations were deeply affected by this new development. The governments that spearheaded the implementation of Sharia maintained that introduction of Sharia was not a project of Islamicisation. As evidence, they cited that considerable concessions were granted to non-Muslims. At the same time, however, these

governments pointed out that Sharia was introduced by popular demand. It was meant for redefining Muslim identity by taking charge of the issues of morality and law and order. Statements to this end imply that Sharia adoption is at least not as straightforward an affair as Muslim leaders want to make believe. Sharia law has been extended to all aspects of public life in these states, indicating that Sharia implementation is more than a policy of legal reform: at the state level, Sharia is leading to centralisation of power; at the federal level, Sharia is ensuring greater autonomy for state governments.

The reactions of Christian Nigerians to Sharia are no less complex. Many Christians felt further marginalised ever since Sharia was introduced — not without some justification. In the social sphere, the earlier lifestyle and movement of Christians was hampered because of the obligation to follow Islamic moral values. In the religious sphere, activities of the church, such as evangelising on television and radio, was curtailed. The use of media to educate masses about Sharia law, however, was widespread. In the legal sphere, Christians felt underprivileged because like other non-Muslims, Christians did not have the right to testify in Sharia courts. This was all the more unfair because many a times Christians were convicted in Sharia courts. Some of the puritan and conservative sections of the Christian community, however, welcomed certain aspects of Sharia. The Pentecostals, for instance, approved of criminalisation of homosexuality and prohibition on alcohol and gambling. On the whole, Christian Nigerians felt fearful of the possibility of Sharia blowing up into Islamic fanaticism. The wave of terrorism by Boko Haram since 2009 has shown that their fears were not altogether unfounded. Christians leaders, in their turn, have made pronounced association between their religion and politics. Making references to Biblical ideas, organising Christian rituals after election victories, and projecting in politics the Christian component of their personal identity is now almost a norm (Ludwig 2008; Paden 2005).

2.4. *Inter-religious Violence*

The issue of religion assumed centre stage in Nigeria following the implementation of Sharia in the twelve northern states. It should be reiterated that interreligious tensions existed during the long period of military rule because of the politicisation of religious identity by elites. However it was not until the return to civilian rule and the concomitant implementation of

Sharia in the northern half of the country that religious violence increased exponentially. Some scholars contend that religious violence started in Nigeria solely because of the implementation of Sharia in the North. Omotosho writes that the singular act of the Zamfara State governor "opened the floodgate of religious antagonism" in Nigeria (Omotosho 2014: 137). It is true that Sharia majorly ruptured interreligious relations among Nigerians. At the same time, it cannot be denied that historical and socio-political factors had already eroded interreligious trust. Six decades of British colonial rule had given rise to Christian-Muslim rivalry and North-South regionalism. Successive failures at establishing democracy after independence in 1960 resulted in long periods of centralised dictatorial rule under military fiats during which oppression was based on religious identity. The federal democracy established in 1999 at the end of the military era proved weak in checking religious discrimination and politics of religious appeasement. The religious tension that had been mounting was finally let loose by the unilateral adoption of Sharia in the northern states belying the constitutional principle of religious neutrality of the state and the fundamental right to religious freedom. The implementation of Sharia has brought to the fore the issue of religious identity and the challenges of democratisation in the context of deep religious and ethnic divisions. Christians minorities of the North fear domination, religious victimisation and Islamicisation. They seek to resist the hegemonic ambitions of the majority Muslims by excluding them from participation in the political affairs as much as possible. Muslims, on their part, accuse Christians and the federal government of systematically trying to oust them from political life. The result of this tension is that no years has passed since 1999 without close to half a dozen incidents of violence between Christian minorities and the Muslim majority in the northern states.

One of the first causes of inter-religious violence since 1999 is the increased level of intolerance and fundamentalism in Nigerian society. The first major incident of violence after 1999 was the Miss World riots which happened in Kaduna in 2002 reflected the mutual hostility between religious communities and the inability of believers to harmonise religious ideals with changing times and needs. The Miss World 2001 Beauty Pageant was won by the contestant from Nigeria because of which the next year's contest was to be hosted in Abuja. In the run up to the contest, Muslims from the North protested that it coincided with the month of Ramadan and that the spectacle of scantily clad girls parading themselves before an

ogling audience violated the principles of Islam. To accommodate the first issue, the organisers postponed the event to after Ramadan. Over the second issue, however, they could not take any action. Both moderate Muslims and moderate Christians were united in their view of the unchastity of the Beauty Pageant, but neither community went further than condemning it from mosques and churches. Amidst peaceful protests, author Isoima Daniel wrote an article in a newspaper, *This Day*, alleging that Prophet Mohammed would have loved to have the girls. Fundamentalist Muslims who were in the habit of associating any profanity with Christianity reacted to this slanderous joke on their Prophet by attacking Christians and churches. Rioting ensued claiming nearly 250 lives. The Miss World crisis demonstrated the high level of intolerance and abhorrence between the Muslim and Christian communities (Paden 2008; Sampson 2012).

Another trigger of violence is the troublemaking modes of worship adopted by the religious leaders of Christian and Muslim communities. There is a tradition in the Christian community of organising mass crusades and revivals on highways or properties adjacent to highways. This obstructs movement of traffic for long periods of time causing inconvenience to the public. Many see this tradition as an affront to people's right to use public roads and as a sign of insensitivity and religious arrogance and. Similarly, in Muslim-dominated areas, all roads are routinely blocked during Friday prayers. Commuters are forced to wait till the finishing of the prayers. This practice has caused disturbance especially in areas where Muslims and Christians are in equal numbers. The violence in 2001 in Jos, the administrative capital of the Plateau State, erupted when a Christian lady, Rhoda Nyam, insisted on passing through a public highway blockaded for Friday prayers. Following exchange of insults between the lady and the Muslim youth present there, violence broke out between the Christians and Muslims due to rumours of the lady's death, on the one hand, and supposed death of Muslim youths in revenge attacks by Christians. The ensuing violence claimed over 1000 lives in Jos city and displaced nearly 2000 people. It also had a spillover effect to other parts of the Plateau state (Egwu 2001: 58-59). In addition to barricading roads, both Christians and Muslims are in the habit of installing loud speakers on churches and mosques respectively much to the annoyance of neighbours. During night vigil ceremonies of Christians and Tafsir of Muslims in the month of ramadan, the loud speakers are used throughout the night. The use of loud speakers has been a daily irritant raising the intolerance

between Christians and Muslims. Both religious groups engage in constructing their respective places of worship indiscriminately. In this, they often have to compete with each other to acquire public spaces. Members of both communities have also gone so far as constructing places of worship in public offices. All this has led to further politicisation of religion (Sampson 2012).

Inter-religious violence has precipitated due to the style of preaching and proselytising activities. Both Christian and Muslim religious leaders are in the habit of sermoning in a way of discrediting other religions and proclaiming the ultimacy of their own religion. Religious leaders make disparaging remarks on each other's religion. A few religious leaders attempted to interpret the other religion's holy book only to mock at it. Religious sermons are made to reach a large audience through taped CDs and cassettes, radio and television channels, social networking sites and religious websites. Religious leaders often come out with publications containing provocative religious interpretations. There is little or no censorship on the content of oral and written religious preaching. It goes without saying that negative sermonising is extremely destabilising. It creates an atmosphere of constant unrest in places such as exists in the conflict-prone city of Jos or the mixed population areas of the state of Kaduna. There is also pervasive stigmatising of religious others. For instance, Muslims, especially northerners, tend to refer to all non-Muslims as *Arna* or *Kafir* meaning 'non-believer' in Arabic language. Christians, on the other hand, like some of their counterparts in other countries, tend to refer to all Muslims as jihadists and terrorists. Religious intellectuals also sometimes reinforce religious stereotypes by writing uncritically or irresponsibly. In addition to negative sermonising and stigmatising religious others, both Christian and Muslim communities engage in proselytising. The Islamic fundamentalist group Boko Haram, for instance, believes Western culture as represented by Christianity to be morally decadent. They and other fundamentalist Muslims view members of all other religions, and even moderate Muslims, as a corrupted lot needing purification and initiation to the true Islam. Accounts of conversion and thoughts and feeling of new converts are circulated through media attracting the outrage of the opposite religious community and moderate members of their community. Christians in their turn undertake proselytism through house to house evangelising as well as evangelising in public places such as hospitals, prisons, public transport avenues. Their actions outrages non-Christians who find message referring to the Truth, the Father and Jesus

Christ as provocative and denigrating their own faiths. University campuses also prey to evangelising. Wherever they have been undertaken, these evangelising campaigns have led to a low intensity inter-religious conflict (Sampson 2012).

Apart from religious leaders, political officials also contribute to interreligious violence by patronising members of their own religious group. Although the constitution of Nigeria forbids distinguishing between persons on account of their religious background, there is a well established custom religious preferentialism. Political officials advance their own religious community at the expense of others especially where they are numerically superior. They instate religious leaders of their own religious community and grant them public privileges that are denied the other religious communities such as land acquisition for constructing places of worship or air time for religious sermonising. In Muslim-dominated northern states, political officials spend public funds on purchasing and distributing food to Muslims fasting during Ramadan. In the same way, in Christian-dominated southern states, public funds are allocated for Christmas celebrations. Due to the content desire and effort of public officials to assist their own religious community, policy-making and public affairs in Nigeria is governed to a great extent by religious sentiments (Sampson 2012).

The use of religious symbols is another source of inter-religious tension. Muslim women insist on the use of the *hijab,* and the *niqab* and *burka*, even where the concerned authorities prohibit it. For example, in 2005, following the prohibition on head scarves by female students in the faculty of law in Ahmadu Bello University in the state of Zaria, a Christian lecturer disallowed a Hijab wearing student from attending his lecture. The incident roused the anger of the Muslim Students Society who issued a *fatwa* (Islamic death sentence) on the lecturer forcing him into hiding. This action caused serious religious tension on the campus as well strained relations between the governments of Kaduna State (in which the university was located) and Benue State (which was the lecturer's home state) over the lecturer's safety. Another case of discomfort between the Christian and Muslim communities over religious symbolism is the Arabic inscription on Nigerian currency. Christians vehemently oppose it associating it with Islam. They believe it to be a move in the Islamisation agenda of northern Muslims. On the other hand, Muslims have continuously opposed the use of the cross as a symbol on public hospital sign boards, equipments and cheques. It must be noted that

religious symbols are not always used with ulterior motives. In many cases, they are used as part of tradition. However, because of the already unhealthy inter-religious relations, religious symbolism are taken to mean superiority, domination and insensitivity. As a result, religious symbols remain a potent trigger for violence.

The state machinery also has a hand in maintaining the cycle of religious violence. Despite two decades of religious violence, the state has an unplanned, piecemeal approach to handing religious violence. At the policy-making level, the government instituted several constitutional and legislative to curb religious conflict: exclusion of religion as an index in national population census; establishment of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council for promoting inter-faith cooperation and dialogue; establishment of the Federal Character Commission to prevent the predominance of one religious group in all government institutions; application of the principle of power sharing between the north and south as well as between Christians and Muslims; disqualification of political parties with ethnic or religious quotas; and prohibition of registration of banks with religious appellations. When incidents of violence occurred, the government adopted three-pronged strategy for violence management: first, using force to crack down on perpetrators of violence; second, investigating the cause of violence with the help of the constitution of commissions or boards of inquiry; and third, identifying perpetrators and sponsors, recommending appropriate sanctions, and taking measures to prevent further occurrences. The third strategy usually involved facilitating inter-religious dialogue amongst religious groups. The establishment of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council in 2000 was meant to institutionalise inter-religious dialogue and thereby promote religious tolerance. Despite these constitutional and legislative stipulations for undercutting the political influence of a particular religious groups and targeted strategies for managing incidences of religious violence, in times of actual crisis, the government usually unleashed repressive operations which involved the use of retaliatory force and occasional setting up of judicial panels for inquiry. The short-term deployment of state forces for repressing political violence shows that the government favours a re-active response as opposed to a comprehensive conflict management approach. The inquiry commissions and judiciary panels produce findings and hand out sanctions and recommendations but they are never acted upon. At the end of September 2001 disturbances in Jos, for instance, both the federal and Plateau state governments responded by setting up

inquiry commissions of inquiry. The federal government set up the Justice Suleiman Galadima Commission to investigate the circumstances under which 23 inmates of the Jos prison were killed, while the Plateau state government set up the Justice Niki Tobi Commission of Inquiry to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the violence to as well as proffer solutions. As expected, the reports of these commissions were closed to the public for years (Krause 2011: 58; Egwu 2011: 63). While the reluctance of the government to respond effectively reflects a lack of political will to manage religious violence, the position of the government is not an easy one either. The government is faced with the dilemma of choosing between prosecuting perpetrators of violence and perpetuating violence. This is because responsibility of crimes in cases of religious violence is not limited to the visible miscreants but extends to those who planned and supported them logistically and financially. The latter are usually high profile individuals who may be employed in public services or armed forces, or be part of the intelligentsia or the business community. Hence, prosecuting such individuals may be open a full-fledged conflict. On the other hand, instant retaliatory violence risks only further violence. The bottom line is that at any rate, the approach of the government for managing religious violence is arbitrary and, therefore, ultimately ineffective. The government has not able to break the cycle of violence over the last two decades.

There are some aspects of religious violence that are particularly damaging to the possibility for religious coexistence in Nigeria in the future: first, high intensity and brutal nature of the violence; second, displacement, relocation and religious segregation of the local population following violence; and third, spillover effect of the violence. Confrontations that happen along religious lines involve a very high level of brutalisation resulting in significant loss of life and property. In the case of the 2002 Miss World riots in Kaduna, the Kaduna State Commissioner of Police issued a report following the violence on the calibre of weapons retrieved from combatants in the conflict. It listed lethal weapons such as locally made pistols, Dane guns, swords, cutlasses, daggers, axes, and knives, and military weapons including large size rocket launchers, medium size military bombs, small military grenades, and .9 mm ammunition and cartridges. The staggering stock of weapons suggests that the intention of the combatants was to cause the maximum damage possible. Similarly, in the case of the September 2001 violence in Jos, the Human Rights Watch documented the nature

of the violence. It contained accounts of abductions, rape, and women and children forced to work for their captors (Human Rights Watch 2005). The nature of these crimes demonstrate the extremely high level of hatred between religious communities and the readiness to engage in savagery (Egwu 2011). In the 2008 Jos violence, properties both private and public, particularly churches and mosques, were targeted by combatants. Such hooliganism points to a general breakdown of law and order in times of religious crisis and incapability of the federal government's Special task Forces to control emotionally charged mobs.

Each spate of religious violence is also accompanied by large-scale internal displacement of population. Due to the religious angle of the violence, the internal displacement follows the pattern of religious segregation. Muslims and Christians relocate to parts of the city or town which hosts a majority of their religious kinsmen. The result is a redrawing of the religious map of cities and towns which serves to only reinforce religious divisions. In Jos, for instance, following the 2001 crisis, violence broke out again in 2002-04, 2008, and 2010, leading to progressive segregation of religious communities. Internal displacement also brings with it extreme hardships, especially for women and children. For the internally displaced therefore the trauma of religious violence continues long after the actual incident has died out. The people remain fearful of returning to their original homes. Their sense of security is severely eroded because of the violence. In this regard, a Geneva Declaration Secretariat report on the series of religious violence in Jos between 2001 and 2010 states:

> After the 2008 riot, some residents were still willing to build up their destroyed houses for a second or third time, trusting that they could live peacefully once again among their neighbours of another faith. Today, even families whose houses have not been destroyed voluntarily move into areas dominated by their own religious group. Voluntary and forced displacements have reshaped the city of Jos (Krause 2011: 45).

Finally, although religious violence begins with a single, often minor incident of misunderstanding, disagreement or sentimentality — the Jos 2001 crisis erupted when a Christian lady persisted in having her way through a highway barricaded for Friday prayers while the Kaduna 2002 crisis happened over the hosting and airing of the Miss World 2002 Beauty Pageant in Abuja — the violence easily flares up to involve more and more people and spread to nearby areas. Every religious violence broke out in Jos, it spilled from the city centre to the rural areas, and before long, the atmosphere of unrest engulfed the whole of the Plateau State (Krause 2011: 56). The 'spill-over effect' of religious violence is one of the

reasons why religious violence claims so many lives is so short a time, and why the Special Task Forces are unable to bring the situation under control. The spill-over effect is indicative of the tendency to engage in reprisal attacks. In other words, religious violence always assumes a cyclic pattern — hence it is so devastating.

3. Interreligious Dialogue

It would not be an overstatement to say that the need of the hour in Nigeria is greater contact, conversation and dialogue between religious communities. This of course needs to be supplemented by a co mmitment to keep the Federation united and to uphold the ideals of democracy. But as an immediate and doable step, inter-religious dialogue has to be reinvigorated. The understanding of interreligious dialogue suited to the Nigerian context would be a process where the being and truth of one person is confronted by the being and truth of the other. In such dialogical interactions, partners have some prior awareness about each other, and through dialogue they seek to enhance that awareness and thereby deepen mutual understanding. The aim of such dialogue is to get used to the religious other — see their otherness as normal, regard differences as a part and parcel of life, and learn to appreciate religious diversity. Rev. Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua, Director of the Department of Mission and Dialogue in the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria located in Abuja writes:

> Nigerians have gone through many faces of violence, slavery and colonialism to the extent that the value of trust has been replaced with prejudice, preconception and mutual suspicions. … Dialogue has been used in Nigeria to help people resolve long-standing conflicts and to build deeper understanding of contentious issues. Dialogue is not about judging, weighing, or making decisions, but about understanding and learning. Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust, and enables people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own. Dialogue is one sure way to heal memories and wounded hearts. In dialogue, education, formation, awareness and understanding are key words.[29]

One particular pair of activists is especially famous throughout Nigeria and abroad for their efforts in encouraging dialogue between members of their respective religious communities. These are Imam Mohammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye. Hailing from the volatile state of Kaduna, which is one of the worst-hit states in terms of religious rioting in the early 2000s following the implementation of Sharia, they have worked tirelessly for the past twenty years

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[29] [Online] URL: http://omonokhua.blogspot.in/2014/07/challenges-of-religious-pluralism.html. Accessed on 19 July 2017.

to condition the minds of leaders and common people to live together peacefully without compromising their personal identities.   Ashafa, a scholarly Muslim, and James, a charismatic Penticostal Christian, had grown up in the maelstrom of religious violence. In their youths, both were leaders in militant organisations of their respective religious communities participating personally and training youths in fighting. Both also took an active part in the Kaduna riots of early 1990s. Later, however, both had personal spiritual experiences that transformed them so profoundly that they gave up violence once and for all and dedicated themselves to reconciling warring communities. Each discovered values from within their respective religious traditions that replaced their earlier militant religiosity to a belief in tolerance and love. Together they arrived at the conclusion that they needed to preach tolerance to their communities and find ways to put it into practice. Together, they founded the Interfaith Mediation Centre, a grassroots peacebuilding organisation that has been involved in mediation and reconciliation efforts between Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria since 1995. Despite myriad and grave challenges, the Interfaith Mediation Centre has made significant contributions toward easing interreligious tensions.

3.1. Interfaith Mediation Centre

Mohammad Ashafa and James Wuye were religious leaders in their respective religious communities. Ashafa came from a religiously educated family, and at young age itself, learnt Arabic and showed complex understanding of the Quran. As he grew older, it was only natural for Ashafa to assume the role of a religious teacher — Imam. His family was proud of their religious identity and heritage. They shunned Western education which they saw as a remnant of British colonisation in Nigeria. In contrast, James was not always religious. He turned to religious seriously after an epiphany. One day while attending church sermon, he felt that the sermoniser was addressing him directly. This incident moved him deeply inspiring him to embrace the path of Jesus. James chose to become a Pastor to be able to serve God and the Christian community (Little 2006).

Yet, in spite of their religious calling, neither Ashafa nor James rejected violence. Even as Imam and Pastor, they were involved in youth militias of their respective religious

communities as leaders and trainers. "My hate for the Muslims then had no limits; and no Muslim ever impressed me for whatever reason," tells James (as interviewed in Fakeley 2014), adding that as a person who had grown in military barracks and who saw himself as marginalised, "choosing to fight for the cause of my faith was an easy thing" (as interviewed in Ground Truth 2009). The kind of thinking he had developed due to his military training in younger days and the turbulent times in which he grew up, prompted James to take recourse to the scriptures to manipulate the thoughts of the people in favour of violence. Ashafa felt a similar dislike for the Christians: "I was a Muslim youth activist . . . seeking to Islamise the country, to bring back the Islam of Usman dan Fodio days. I felt that our tradition had been submerged by Western tradition, that our core values had been marginalised. And I could not and did not separate Western culture from Christian culture" (Ashafa as quoted in Little 2006). Charged by his Islamic upbringing and personal zealousness for reviving the lost Islamic glory of Nigeria, Ashafa believed that he was doing something good by fighting and killing in the name of his religion.

In 1992, when riots broke out in Kaduna, because of their religious zeal and military preparedness, both James and Ashafa plunged into the right with their respective militias to fight the opposite community. Ashafa describes vividly his role in massacring the Christians: "For 48 hours we were killing and maiming one another. I was fighting, believing I have to defend my faith by maiming and killing the others" (as interviewed in Fakeley 2014). But it did not take long before tragedy visited Ashafa. In the riots, James' militias caught hold of his spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Tijani, a seventy year old man, and murdered him by suffocating him in well. Ashafa also received news of the loss of two his cousins. For the next three years, Ashafa set out with vengeance to eliminate James. "I was nursing anger. The motive was revenge," says Ashafa (as interviewed in Fakeley 2014). The occasion presented itself soon. Ashafa's militias one day got hold of James. Having caught him, they decapitated his right arm. James narrates his version of how he lost his arm: "I had taken an oath sincerely never to attack first. But the issue is the line between attack and defence is thin. That is how I lost my arm, while defending the church — in my understanding of defence" (as interviewed in Ground Truth 2009). Following the loss of his arm, James too

was consumed with revenge. "I thought: if I ever find those boys [who fought us in the riots], I must kill them" (James as quoted in Little 2006).

Ashafa and James met face-to-face for the first time in 1995 while representing their respective religious communities in a meeting at the governor house in the city of Kaduna. Their encounter was marked by mutual suspicion. With the personal loss that each had suffered at the other's hand, their first meeting produced feelings of mutual dislike and thoughts of taking revenge. Ashafa confesses that he was thinking of ways to eliminate James when he saw him for the first time in person, while James reveals that he was tempted to hit Ashafa with a club. At the meeting, a civil society activist named Idris Musa, who was also a common friend to Ashafa and James, pulled the two aside during tea break and spoke the following words: "The two of you can pull this nation together, or you can destroy it. Do something" (as quoted in Little 2006). He left them without saying more. Puzzled with what they had heard, Ashafa and James parted cordially that day.

After that meeting in the governor house, Ashafa and James met several times under different circumstances. They were on talking terms now, some form of dialogue and cooperation was also taking place, but suspicion and mistrust still clouded their minds. James confides that on occasions when Ashafa and he put up in the same room at night, the thought of suffocating Ashafa with a pillow often came to him. Ashafa and James both agree that while their meetings were helping in building trust progressively, the real breakthrough in their relation came about as a result of personal spiritual experiences rather than those meetings. Ashafa's inner awakening happened one day after hearing an Imam in the mosque. He recounts:

> I was in the mosque and the Imam was talking about the power of forgiveness. He was saying: 'Yes, it is written in the law that you can do evil equal to the evil done to you … however it is better to turn to the evil with that which is good in you.' … [After hearing that I thought] How can I forgive this enemy of mine? This guy [James] who has maimed, killed my spiritual teacher and two of my brothers. The Imam was looking at me as if he knew what was going on in my heart. I was in an ocean of confusion, ocean of war, between my conscience, my desire for revenge and the reality of my standard, which was my test. … After that I started thinking, can I really forgive James? (as interviewed in Fakeley 2014).

Ashafa says he wept that day after listening to the preaching of the Imam. The message of forgiveness contained a hint for him. For several years he had been living with hate in his

heart, not knowing that hatred was poisoning his own life. Now when he decided to let go off his vengeance, he felt relieved and at once happy:

> As I heard the Imam say, 'Turn to the evil with that which is good in you; and if you that, the worst of enemies will turn into the best of the friends,' I got free, I got relieved. [Earlier] Everyday I was full of pain; my heart was always heavy. But since I let go, I forgive unconditionally, I [have] become a free man (as interviewed in Ground Truth 2014).

Following his change of heart, Ashafa started extending his friendship to James. He visited him when his mother was sick, and also gave his condolence with a group of other Muslims when his mother passed away. Ashafa's kindness put James in confusion at first. Habituated to suspicion, he did not know how to respond and tried to find the hidden motive behind Ashafa's kindness. However, during this time, James too had an overwhelming experience that transformed his personal spirituality and perception of the surrounding. James recounts how one day a priest who was also a friend told him:

> James, you cannot preach Jesus Christ with the kind of hatred you have for the Muslims. Christ is love and the message he is carrying is love. I know James what you are doing, and if you will truly do this work, you must learn to forgive them for every hurt against you, against anyone you loved, or against any of your loved ones. That broke me finally. So, when I came back I was anxious to meet Ashafa. It was a lover looking for his loved one. I was trying to demonstrate this new insight. That was my real turning point. That was when I really got into this work (as interviewed in Fakeley 2014).

Their respective religious transformations prepared the two to develop a profound level of trust and a lifelong friendship. Together they founded the Interfaith Mediation Centre in 1995, earlier known as the Muslim-Christian Youth Dialogue Forum. The foundation of the organisation is the extraordinary rapport between Ashafa and James. Leading by example, Ashafa and James intend to harness the potential of all sections of the society for diffusing interreligious tensions, and restoring inter-community trust that has been eroded as a result of years of isolation, ignorance, stereotyping, and violence.

The Interfaith Mediation Centre has a multi-level, multi-track approach. The Centre has some major areas of work. (1) Women and youth are given special attention because women are believed to be the educators at home, while youth are known to be the most vulnerable to violence. The centre organises intensive problem-solving workshops for women and youth groups. (2) The Centre works with technocrats, small-business owners and traders because these are the people who have a vested interest in peace and stability. If they can be turned into partners in the reconciliation process, they can prove extremely valuable. (3) The Centre

organises   capacity-building programs for local religious leaders, community leaders, and members of civil society. (4) The Centre provides trauma counselling for victims of violence, and other humanitarian services. (5) The Centre provides support for violence management during elections and consultancy for various government agencies. It has acted as an in-house advisor for the federal government, assisted a number of state agencies to develop conflict management systems, set up community early warning early response structures to liaise with government security agencies, established community peace road maps that can facilitate alternative processes to intractable legal litigations, and trained staff from the Office of the Bureau for Religious Affairs in the Kaduna State Government (Steele 2011: 42).

One of the outstanding achievements of the Interfaith Mediation Centre is signing of the Kaduna Peace Declaration in 2002 by the governor of Kaduna and twenty local religious leaders, ten from each community, Muslim and Christian. The Declaration called the society to: respect each other's religious heritage; promote education based on respect for religious diversity; oppose all forms of hatred, incitement, violence, and misrepresentation of one another; engage in interreligious dialogue, and cooperate for achieving justice through freedom of worship, judicial reform, economic development and spiritual regeneration.

Methodology of the Interfaith Mediation Centre as described by Ashafa and James

1. Getting the contact persons
2. Doing a case study of the situation
3. Holding an all stakeholders conference to understand the context, using conflict mapping analysis to redefine the issues from positions to core needs of the people, and testing the conflict materials generated from the conference
4. Starting the reconciliation process through the smoke screen of a workshop
5. Having participants state their case
6. Debunking stereotypes and misconceptions
7. Reprogramming the people through a mixture of trauma counselling, spiritual empathy and sharing of stories
8. Building trust and confidence through cooking and sharing meals
9. Facilitating a healing process through the act of forgiveness, letting go pains of the past (writing on papers their grievances and burying their hurts)
10. Ending with peace festivals, using traditional songs that depict peace

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Figure 5: Methodology of the Interfaith Mediation Centre (based from Steele 2011: 42).

From the above methodology, it can be surmised that according to Ashafa and James, reconciliation is a long, time-taking process which begins with physical contact between

persons, followed by transformation of perceptions about identities and group solidarities, then reconstruction of relationships between people through communication (speaking, active listening, empathising, sharing food and space), and finally, forgiving and renouncing hatred and grief. Ashafa and James believe that as far as the role of religion is concerned in their reconciliation process, religion serves as a moral guide providing people the strength to accept the reality and change. They argue that no one can interpret another person's religion, nor can common grounds between two religion be found; however, what can be done to bring people together is to recognise common humanity. Protecting and preserving life is in the interest of everybody, and therefore, must be everyone's duty. Ashafa and James strive to appeal to the humanism, believed to be hidden within every person, waiting to be evoked. Their own life story reflects the same: they were pious as people but still harboured hatred and used violence to defend their faith; however, when a series of events helped them discover the humanism inside them, they gave up violence, once and for all, and took to peacemaking.

Ashafa and James' accomplishments in Nigeria in the last twenty years have been so praiseworthy, that neighbouring countries like Kenya, Sudan and Egypt have invited them at different times to diffuse tensions through dialogue. Ashafa and Wuye believe that their peacemaking work as significance for societies all over Africa. Even though faced with a wall of challenges, Ashafa and James are of firm faith that repeated dialogue, complimented by mediation, can break the cycle of violence. Interviewed for the *Peacemakers in Action* project of the Tanenbaum Centre for Interreligious Understanding, James comments:

> I think we will encroach into countries — spaces that are closed. This is happening in Nigeria. We are duplicating ourselves in many young people, including pastors and imams. With the recruitment of these religious people, I think the war can be conquered. And the synergy that we will bring will be the solution to most conflicts and most violence in the world. My future is future where peacemakers will create an army of peacemakers and go and conquer violence (as interviewed by Tanenbaum 2013).

4. Challenges to Peace and Security

The need for dialogue and cooperation in addressing Nigeria's myriad ethno-religious issues is frequently quoted by local peace builders and sometimes even by religious and political leaders. Yet, the reality is that Nigeria is affected by violence not only of from ethnic and

religious tensions, equally troublesome in terms of threat of social harmony and political security is the local insurgency in the oil-rich Niger Delta and the assault of the Islamic fundamentalist group, Boko Haram, across the country. Niger Delta is where all of Nigeria's oil produce comes from. It is also Nigeria's richest ecological region with over 850 tree species and 248 fish species. In fact, it is Africa's largest mangrove zone and one of the largest wetlands. It is also the last surviving lowland rainforest in the country. The Delta covers nine states and hosts about five to six thousand ethnic communities falling into the ethnic minorities categorisation. Ijaws are the most populous of them (Campbell 2011: 63). Oil drilling in the Delta started in the 1950s. Following the seizure of power by the military oil production boomed in the 1970s. This laid the foundation of politicisation of the oil industry, and subsequently, militarisation of oil politics. Since the 1970s oil boom, a crisis has been unfolding in the Delta resulting from four inter-related issues: the subversion of democratic elections in the Delta, accompanied by misrule and predatory activities by political elites; suppression of the political will and impoverishment of the local ethnic communities sparking off a military resistance by local insurgents, infiltrated by some opportunistic and criminal elements; and the role of international oil companies and their home countries in the struggle for control and exploitation of oil in the Delta further undermining democratic politics, social justice, and re-allocation of oil wealth in the Niger Delta (Obi 2011: 86-89).

4.1. Oil Politics, Violence, and Internationalisation of Conflict in the Niger Delta

Oil is the most widely used source of energy today. International trade in oil constitutes one the highest shares in the global capital. Because of this, oil-rich countries command economic and political power in the world. Given the supreme value of oil in the global market and the fact that oil reserves are limited and located in few countries of the world which are usually politically volatile precisely because of their oil wealth, the stakes involved in accessing and controlling oil are very high. Such high stakes makes the political economy of oil strategic game primarily where issues of production, accumulation, and distribution are characterised by inequalities and, organised violence. "Oil power is seized rather than negotiated, and once taken it is defended by force," remarks Obi (2004: 4). The case of accompaniment of

deprivation and violence to oil can be seen from the crisis of Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta as well.

4.1.1. _Growth of the Oil Industry and Marginalisation of Local Communities_

Niger Delta's oil was nationalised by the military fiat which usurped power from Nigeria's first democratic federal government in 1966 by staging a coup. They military government passed two decrees (Decree No. 51 of 1969 and Decree No. 9 of 1971) by which control of the Delta's oil was transferred completely from the local communities to the military government. It must be reiterated that the local communities constituted Nigeria's ethnic minorities while the military fiat constituted primality of the three ethnic majorities. Once oil was made into a national commodity, the government decided to upsurge oil production throughout the decade of the 1970s. Oil revenues came to account for over 85% of national revenue and over 90% of export earnings. The responsibility of collecting and distributing oil revenues also resided with the government. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the successive military governments reduced the oil revenue allocation of the Delta states from 50% (in 1966 prior to military rule) to 1.5%. This means that by the 1990s, monopoly over the political economy of oil shifted all but in name from the state to the central level (Obi 2011).

The nationalisation of Niger Delta's oil and progressive reduction in the share of oil revenues allocated to the oil-producing states was seen by the local ethnic communities as a gross economic injustice as well as a strategic move to shift control of oil from ethnic minorities to ethnic majorities. From the 1950s onwards when oil extraction started in the Delta and throughout the military era (1966-1999), its local population (ethnic minorities) remained one of the most impoverished and backward people in the whole of Nigeria. The federal government (dominated by ethnic majorities hailing from non-oil producing states) marginalised these communities of political representation by repeatedly subverting the elections in their states. It disposed them of a fair share of national oil wealth regardless of the fact that it was their land which was generating the oil from which the national wealth was being created. It also prevented them from having socio-economic opportunities like education, public employment, land entitlements, welfare services. In short, the federal government had made it impossible for these communities to develop. In this context, when

the federal government apportioned the lion's share oil revenue for itself (de facto to the non-oil producing states), it was clear to the Delta communities that the politics over control of oil and oil revenue had become a continuation of the larger, existing ethnic strife between minorities and majorities. After the return of democratic rule in 1999, ethnic minorities of the Delta became vocal about the unfair distribution of oil revenue. The resistance to reduction in oil revenue allocation and demand for control over oil turned into a struggle of local ethnic minorities against the majority ethnic groups represented by the federal government. Put alternatively, the pre-existing struggle between ethnic minorities and the ethnic majorities became the object of the politics over control of oil and oil revenues. On one hand were the ethnic minorities from the oil-producing states of the Delta demanding self-determination to control the oil, compensation for ecological and economic damages inflicted on the Delta due to excessive oil production, and access to an increased share of oil revenues. On the other hand were the non-oil producing states intent to maintain the status quo with the federal government arbitrating on their behalf (Obi 2011).

The struggle for resource control by the ethnic minorities of Niger Delta was joined by domestic and international environmental and human rights groups protesting against excessive oil exploitation, degradation of rainforests, farmlands and fishing reserves in the region, and neglect and injustice towards the local population by successive federal governments and oil companies both national and international. Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941-1995), a Nigerian writer, poet and award-winning environmental activist penned the following thought about the effect on his native Ogoni community of oil exploration and drilling by the Dutch-English oil giant, Shell:

> The Ogoni are embattled and imperilled. Since oil was discovered in the area in 1958, they have been victims of a deadly ecological war in which no blood is spilled, no bones are broken and no one is maimed. But the people die all the time. Men, women and children are at risk; plants, wild life and fish are destroyed, the air and water are poisoned, and finally the land dies. Today Ogoni has been reduced to a waste land (Wiwa 1995:131 as quoted in Owolabi and Okwechime 2007: 4).

The operations of the oil industry have indeed had a devastating effect on livelihoods of the Niger Delta communities who mostly rely on farming and fishing. The major source of environmental degradation is oil spilling and gas flaring. Oil spills not only rendered lands unsuitable for farming destroy fisheries, they are destroying mangrove forests and threatening endangered species like Delta elephants, white-crested monkeys, river hippopotamus and

crocodiles with extinction. Additionally, oil spills are not effectively contained letting their harmful effect travel far beyond the original site of accident. An estimate of the ripple effect of oil spills can be got from the fact that certain oil spills spread to nearly 100 kms into the Atlantic affecting the neighbouring of Ghana, Benin and Togo (Nigerian Petroleum News 1998:1 as quoted in Owolabi and Okwechime 2007:13). But perhaps the most damaging effect of oil spills is contamination of ground water used by people for drinking. Equally damaging as oil spills are gas flaring. Gas flaring burns the crops in the neighbouring areas and has been held responsible for acid rains. Local communities complain of 'eternal flames,' heat and vibrations emanating from gas leakages. Together oil spills and gas flaring has caused the outbreak of unidentified diseases among the local inhabitants. Environmental degradation due to oil spills and gas flaring is a part of the oil politics. Oil spills and gas flaring happen usually due to blowouts, corrosion and malfunction of machinery, or lack of maintenance and surveillance. However, when accidents are reported, international oil companies operating in the Delta cite sabotage by local insurgents as the cause. This is because the state policy on sabotage is such that oil companies are exempted from paying compensation to victims. When local communities try to sue oil companies for compensation to victims and cleanup, the companies appeal repeatedly until the plaintiffs run out to resources and abandon the case (Owolabi and Okwechime 2007).

After the end of military rule in 1999, the new democratic government increased the oil revenue share of Niger Delta states from 1.5% to 13%. The increase was the result of international campaigns and protests by the local ethnic minority communities, and the strategy of the new democratic government of seeking legitimacy by attending to the grievances of local communities. Another motive behind increasing the oil revenue allocation of the Delta states was to nullify the protests of the ethnic minority communities by providing patronage to their ethnic elites, co-opt the leaders of the protest groups, and create the conditions for the oil industry to operate smoothly. The outcome however was contrary to the ones intended. Delta states demanded further increase in revenue allocation from 13% to 25% in 2001, and a progressive increase by 2005 to 50% — what it was prior the takeover of the democratic government by the military fiat in 1966. The federal government refused to raise the revenue allocation to 50% (Obi 2011).

To summarise, the nationalisation oil, appropriation of the lion's share of oil revenues by the federal government, and distribution of oil revenues to non oil-producing states alienated the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta. The paradox of the circumstance is clear: transnational oil production in the Delta enriched the national and local elites and international oil companies while polluting the Delta region and impoverishing the local communities of the region. This situation inevitably pitched the ethnic minorities of the Delta against the oil international oil companies and their domestic ally — the government. At the root of the conflict was competing conceptions of oil as a national resource and as a local community resource (Ukiwo 2011: 21).

4.1.2. *Rise of Local Resistance, Transition to Militancy and Inter-ethnic Strife*

The critical circumstance outlined above led to a gradual heightening of the local resistance to the federal government oil industry. From the peaceful protests of the 1970s, when the oil drilling had boomed, the resistance assumed the shape of a community based movement during the 1980s, and by the 1990s, the local civil society, ethnic groups, and youth organisations had mobilised so much that the resistance movement turned into region wide conflict. Parallel to the growth in the size of the resistance movement, its demands and strategies of struggle also transformed considerably. First, there was a broadening of the goals of the resistance movement from greater oil control and revenues to establishment of equity, justice, group rights and state reforms and resolving the national question. Second, there was an emphasis on mobilisation based on ethnic affiliation. Third, there was a change from the culture of accommodation of the local ethnic elites with the state and international oil companies to that of direct challenge and open confrontations. Fourth, there was an enlargement of the means of struggle to include the use of violence (Ekelegbe 2005: 215).

The armed resistance by the local ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta, often referred to as insurgency, is not a single unified movement. There are a lot of factions founded on ethnic-affiliation with political goals differing from demands for complete independence from the Nigerian Federation to appeals for structural and economic reforms within the federation. The most widely cited insurgent demand as revision and upwards raise of oil revenue allocation to the state governments and local communities of the Delta region which hosts the oil industry

(Campbell 2011). Some of the prominent insurgent groups represent the Ijaw and Ogoni ethnic groups. These include Ijaw Youth Council, Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality, and Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, all created during the 1990s. Since the 1990s the insurgent groups have undertaken extensive actions against the federal government and international oil companies including seizure and disruption of oil infrastructures, taking foreign and local oil workers as hostages and demanding ransoms, hijacking and seizure of helicopters and boats of the oil companies, and attacking federal military and police forces instated for protecting oil installations and oil workers.

The local resistance movement made the transition from peaceful protests to armed insurgency to compel the federal government to grant greater oil revenues and regional autonomy to the local communities. At the same time, the insurgent groups realised that the Nigerian state was heavily dependent on oil revenues so was the global oil market on Nigerian oil because of the volatile security conditions in the oil-producing states of Middle East in the 1990s, namely Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Kuwait (Ukiwo 2011: 24). The insurgent groups understood that the international oil companies backed by the federal government would try to maintain their control over oil by any means. In other words, they did not see any reason why state oppression and corporate exploitation in the Delta would lessen when all indicators pointed to greater need by the federal government and oil companies for Niger Delta's oil. In their view, the only answer was violence: attack oil installations and stop production; kidnap oil employees and demand ransoms from oil companies and home governments as a way of making money as well as capturing the world's attention; set up local oil extraction and refining facilities; attack federal army and police forces to upset the federal government. The idea was: "if they [insurgents/local ethnic communities] do not benefit from the oil output, then they will stop the oil from being produced' (Arnold 2000: 224 as quoted in Ikelegbe 2005: 215).

The politics of armed resistance to transnational oil production is complicated further by inter-ethnic strife. A major source of benefit for local communities from the international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta is ownership of land and water bodies in which oil fields are located. Contestations over of ownership of oil-rich land and water bodies has fuelled ferocious fighting between and often within ethnic communities. For example,

conflict exists between Ijaw and Itsekiri, Ijaw and Ilaje, Urhobo and Itsekiri, Basambri-Nembe and Ogbologbomabri-Nembe and within communities such as Ozoro. Another factor precipitating inter- and intra-ethnic violence is the question of distribution and control of payments and compensations by the oil companies for appropriated and polluted land and water bodies. The most extensive and intense of these conflicts has been between Ijawn and Itsekiri in the Warri area. Ijaws claim that both the federal government and the oil companies have unduly favoured Itsekiris. Ijaws have targeted oil installation seeing it as the means of getting at the federal government which has disadvantaged them (Ikelegbe 2005). Itsekiris in their turn harbour ill-feeling towards Ijaws and other ethnic groups because large number of people from these groups have relocated from their rural homelands to the urbanised Warri region which is traditionally the preserve of Itsekiris. The cause of population movement is environmental degradation. Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta blamed mostly on oil spills is caused just as much by population pressure and overfishing. Due to the destruction of the local fishing industry — the main source of livelihood in the Delta — many rural families have moved to urban areas in search of employment. The arrival of newcomers in the Warri region has provoked the anger of the original population, the Itsekiris, setting the stage for interethnic strife. The violence involves killings, hostage taking, and sabotage. They are normally carried out by youth gangs. This has also led to a criminalised gang warfare in the Delta region (Campbell 2011).

4.1.3. *Role of the International Oil Companies*

In addition to the politics of local resistance spurred by marginalisation of the local communities and the concomitant upsurge in inter-ethnic strife, the third dimension of the conflict in the Niger Delta is the transnational politics in oil. The main international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta include Shell (Dutch-British), Chevron (American), Agip (Italian), Elf Petroleum (French), Texaco Overseas (American) and Mobil (American). Oil companies pay 90 percent of the profits from oil above a certain threshold to the federal government. Almost all oil company operating on land are joint or production-sharing ventures with the state-owned Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). In joint ventures, NNPC is supplies its share of capital for the oil production. Off-shore operations are usually production-sharing ventures between international oil company and NNPC. Under

this arrangement, oil companies bear all of the costs of exploitation and production. Once these costs are recovered by the company, production profits are shared with NNPC. Under both type of ventures, oil companies pay royalties and taxes. In other words the profit margins for international oil companies is fairly as compared to oil production in some other parts of the world with more difficult terrain but less political instability. Yet, despite the innumerable incidents of sabotage and vandalism by insurgents since 2005 and the poor profit margin from Nigerian oil, international oil companies have not only stayed in the Niger Delta but expanded their operations. Oil market analysts conjecture that the oil reserves in Nigeria are simply huge, and the amount of investment already made by the international oil companies in developing the oil fields makes it economically unfeasible for them to walk out now. They proceed to predict that this may change if security conditions deteriorate way too much (Campbell 2011).

The international oil companies are no doubt targets of militancy but they in turn have fuelled the militancy through some of their practices. As a response to the militancy that is affecting their business, oil companies have fostered close relations with both the federal and state governments and obtained security forces from the national army — the Joint Security Force — to guard their oil installations, protect their workers and intimidate the locals. They have also developed excellent intelligence networks. Some have even purchased arms. It is reported that oil companies assist the federal security forces with their intelligence and arms in repressing militants as well as local civilians. Prior to 2005, the oil companies tackled incidents of sabotage and kidnapping without the involvement of their respective embassies, offices in Nigeria or headquarters abroad, but as the security situation in the Delta deteriorated, they have started soliciting the assistance all of these. Some cases of kidnapping and killing have even provoked the interference of home governments. The security measures of the oil companies which has led to a de facto militarisation of the Niger Delta has enraged the locals and invoked the wrath of militants who have responded with more sabotage, kidnappings, killings and attacks on federal security forces. The securitisation of the oil business has also effectively internationalised the Niger Delta conflict.

While being in conflict with the locals, oil companies have also had to engage with them for appropriation of oil-rich land and water bodies, and protection of their oil facilities and

workers from militant activities. But in this too, they have been responsible for generating violence. Oil companies appropriate lands and water bodies from local communities by making lump-sum cash payments. This manner of land and water body appropriation through cash payments sparks intense inter-community violence over the ownership of oil-rich land and water bodies. Moreover, the payments are negotiated with the traditional elites of the community, who may — or may not — share the payments with other members of their community. This has led to the swelling up of the power of traditional elites and made their positions the focus of bloody infighting. Oil companies make cash payments to local communities also for ecological compensation, appeasement, pacification and compliance. These payments have also led to bloody communal and intra-communal squabbles. Oil companies award contracts to local youth gangs for protecting their installations, pipelines and workers. This has led to violence between the gangs for winning those contracts. It has also furnished the youths cash that are used for buying more arms, thereby preparing for more violence.

Despite all these practices that fuel conflict, oil companies have been loud in highlighting the their business setbacks and human resource losses. They have also been quick to blame them on local militancy against the federal government, inter- and intra-ethnic strife, and gang warfare among local youths. Consequently, they have mounted tremendous pressure on the federal government to be toughen its approach towards the Delta conflict (Ikelegbe 2005, Campbell 2011).

4.1.4. *Economy of the Conflict*

In addition to the presence of the transnational oil trade and the informal malpractices within it, the other of dimension of the Niger Delta conflict that has led to its internationalisation is the black economy that has emerged as a result of decades of conflict precipitated by oil politics. Theft and illegal trading in refined petroleum and crude oil existed in the late 1980s but since 1990s it has expanded to huge and extremely lucrative international black economy. Theft of refined petroleum happens in two ways. First, by smuggling syndicates who break into the distribution pipelines and siphon off the refined petroleum in very large wooden canoes through creeks and rivers or tanker trucks on land from where the petroleum are

smuggled further into neighbouring countries or sold in the high seas to smuggling syndicates from West Africa and abroad. Second, by authorised marketers in collusion with smuggling syndicates who divert purchased and allocated refined petroleum to the local black market and through illegal trade routes to neighbouring West African countries. The smuggling syndicates are heavily armed, well-organised and operation on a large scale. The industry of theft in crude oil which used to be operated by a few amateurs in the 1980s who extracted crude oil from pipelines through rudimentary methods has grown into an elaborate enterprise since the 1990s which uses advanced technology to tap crude oil and sophisticated communication equipment to navigate the stolen oil through the mesh of rivers, creeks, and rivulets in the Delta. Crude oil theft syndicates have also advanced from boats and barges to ships and large oil tankers in the high seas. The stolen crude oil is loaded into tankers for sale to refineries in Africa, Europe, Asia and North America. Stolen crude oil is also purchased by neighbouring Ivory Coast and Benin. Several oil companies from Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Switzerland, the United States and other countries are reported to be involved in trading stolen crude oil with foreign nationals acting as middlemen and linkages between the oil companies and the theft syndicates (Ikelegbe 2005: 221-222).

4.1.5. *State Response to Local Militancy and Conflict Economy*

The response of the federal government to the Niger Delta insurgency between 1999 and 2010 constituted of peace conferences, summits, and so-called stakeholder meetings, where government officials and a few militants negotiated ceasefires and amnesties. All initiatives however were undermined by lack of political will on the part of federal and state governments to address the core issue of the Delta insurgency — the socio-political and economic grievances of the local communities. Either the government failed to include all concerned parties in the dialogue initiatives or it did not make good of its commitments. From time to time the government announced arrests of insurgent leaders — to win public goodwill — but the arrests was followed by release or escape of the insurgents. The government also announced impending crackdowns on insurgents only to be followed by exchange of fire between insurgents and federal forces ending in significant casualties for the latter. In 2012, the government established a large military presence in the Niger Delta by deploying the Joint Task Force — a federal security force created specially to combat piracy,

pipeline vandalism, illegal oil bunkering, crude oil theft, illegal refining, kidnapping, and hostage-taking. The stories of the activities and effectiveness of the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta are mixed. On one hand, there is the swampy topography of the Delta and the significant protection received by insurgents from the local people that prevents the Task Force from getting hold of insurgents. On the other hand, there is talk that the individual officers are profiteers in oil theft, therefore, complicit in the insurgency which provides an effective cover-up for oil theft by everyone, ranging from military and political to insurgent and corporate leaders (Campbell 2011).

The federal government's approach to managing the economy of conflict has been to curtail the illegal trading through massive use of force. As mentioned earlier, the entire Niger Delta is militarised. Apart from the Joint Task Force, two other national contingents — the Operation Restore Hope and Amphibious Battalion — are deployed in the region. Oil installations on the land are manned by armed military and navy personnel. Offshore oil installations are guarded by naval ships and gunboats. Oil shipments are escorted by naval ships. Security in the high seas has been strengthened further by armed coastal guard ships given by the United States. Air surveillance is done by Italian-made Augusto helicopters. Huge number of check points are instated on the waterways and the roads. The military and navy forces have undertaken massive operations — combing the innumerable creeks and cordoning off and searching riverine communities suspected of being hideouts — against ethnic militias, youth gangs, oil smuggling syndicates, and illegal arms dealers.

The consequences of the state management of the militancy and economy of conflict has been terrible for the region. The federal forces are accused of excessive use of force. They are known to attack and shoot indiscriminately into towns and villages, set fire to houses, fields and cattle, and raze entire settlements to the ground. The federal forces are also accused of using criminal methods of violence. They are reported to rape, flog, torture and kill civilians and protesters (Human Rights Watch 1999a; 1999b as quoted in Ikelege 2005: 224). The brutal operations of the federal forces and their menace in general has forced and individuals and families to flee their homes, often simply at the news of arrival of the forces in the neighbourhood. In this way, the federal forces are responsible for more internal displacement. The situation on the high seas is no different. Naval patrols are reputed to harass travellers

and shoot at mere suspicion in their hunt for militants and smugglers. Many lay travellers have been victims of misidentification (Ikelegbe 2005).

The federal government's approach to the Niger Delta conflict shows a privileging of security measures — deployment of military and naval forces that have no unaccountability to higher authorities — over good governance — addressing the marginalisation of the local communities related to the politico-economic question of resource ownership and revenue allocation. This in turn reflects the federal government understanding of the Delta conflict as a law-and-order crisis created by armed criminals and smugglers which has to be combated by eliminating and subjugating the miscreants. The original and fundamental issue in the Niger Delta conflict, however, is the impoverishment and alienation of the local communities due to ruthless oil exploitation and accompanying environmental degradation by international oil companies on land and water bodies belonging to them (Ukiwo 2011: 26-27). The federal government, instead of showing sensitivity to the plight of local communities and attempting to redress the resource ownership and revenue allocation question, has partnered with the international oil companies in exploiting the region's oil further. The reason for this is clear: the federal government needs Niger Delta's oil for generating national revenue, and therefore, it must aid the international oil companies in every way it can. The question here is then whether the federal government actually needs all the revenue from the Delta oil, or is it a case of massive corruption, resource war, and power politics among the leaders of the federal government, military forces, Delta governments, local communities, and the international community in which the local militants, gangsters, and smugglers are only the visible culprits.

4.2. Boko Haram Violence

The second major security threat in Nigeria at present is the violence by the Islamist group known as Boko Haram.[30] The origin of Boko Haram is mired in controversy, but most

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[30] The name is formed out of two separate words *Boko* meaning Western education in Hausa language and *Haram* is an Arabic word meaning 'sin' or 'forbidden'. When these words are used together it denotes that western education is forbidden. However, the name Boko Haram is strongly rejected by the group who prefers to be officially called 'Jama 'atu Ahlis Sunna awati wal-jihad' ('People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad', or, more literally translated, 'Association of Sunnas for the Propagation of Islam and for 'Holy War') (Okoro 2014: 108).

scholars agree that in 2002, a Muslim cleric named Mohammed Yusuf established a religious complex with a mosque and an Islamic boarding school in Maiduguri, Borno State laying the foundation of the Boko Haram group. Yusuf and his followers believed that the introduction of Sharia in the northern states in 1999 was useless because the entire class of elites in the country including the Muslim northern leaders were steeped in corruption and 'western-style' politics. To them, implementation of Sharia meant a more transparent and just socio-political order. The Boko Haram has a varied membership including disaffected northern youth, professionals, unemployed graduates, Islamic clerics, ex-almajirai (children who constantly migrate for acquiring Islamic education in the Hausa language), university drop-outs, members of the Nigerian political elite, and members of the state security agencies. Boko Haram claims to have a total of over 40,000 members in Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Chad, Benin, and Niger. Members pay daily levies to their leaders for providing a financial base for Boko Haram in addition to loot from attacks on banks, ransoms from kidnapping, and donations from political sponsors and other organisations within and outside Nigeria. Since 2010, Boko Haram has increased the frequency of its attacks on both civilians and foreign nationals causing a nationwide security crisis. Boko Haram terrorism has also affected foreign investment in Nigeria (Obamwonyi and Owenvbiugie 2015).

There are widely divergent views on the emergence, growth and agenda of Boko Haram. A majority of scholar believe that the shift of political power in Nigeria from northern Muslim elites to southern Christian elites is the chief reason for the emergence and growth of Boko Haram. Some scholars believe that Boko Haram terrorism is an outgrowth of the Maitatsine riots[31] of the 1980s during which the first major uprisings of fundamentalist Islam occurred in Nigeria with the explicit goal of purifying Islam. The reason for this argument is that some of the key figures of the Maitatsine crisis were implicated in the formation of Boko Haram, thus creating a link between the objectives of the older Islamic uprising with that of the recent acts

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[31] The Maitatsine riots were a series of violent uprisings instigated by Islamist militants in northern Nigeria between 1980 and 1985 and represented northern Nigeria's first major wave of religiously-inspired violence. The riots prompted immense discord between Muslims and Christians.The Maitatsine movement was led by Muhammadu Marwa (died 1980), a Cameroonian residing in Kano who opposed the Nigerian state (*Maitatsine* is a Hausa term for "He who damns," referring to Marwa). He referred to himself as a prophet and a reformer (*mujaddid*). He was known for his vociferous condemnation of Western culture, education, and technology, and referred to anyone who sent their children to a state school as an "infidel," which is echoed in the contemporary Boko Haram movement (Hickey 1984).

of terrorism. Those who advocate a link between Maitatsine uprising and Boko Haram argue that the main trigger for Boko Haram creation was the incomplete implementation of Sharia by the twelve northern states, which many faithful Islamists have been trying to turn into complete implementation ever since the Maitatsine uprising. According to this view, Boko Haram's creation and growth is a means of venting out anger by the faithful Islamists regarding the way the federal government has responded to the implementation of the long awaited Sharia law. Consequently, the recent acts of violence carried out by Boko Haram have a fundamentalist jihadist aspect to them. Indeed, religion has played a very significant role in the emergence and growth of the Boko Haram. Members of the group use religion to justify violence and indoctrinate foot soldiers to fight for jihad. However, despite the role played by religion in the evolution of Boko Haram, the relationship between religion and the character of Boko Haram remains doubtful. Although it is true that Boko Haram insurgents have been religiously driven, especially in pursuit of jihadism to fully implement Sharia, the membership of the group indicates very strongly that poverty and economic deprivation are at its roots. In addition, although the group claims to be fighting for an all-encompassing Islamic State in Nigeria, it unleashes terror even on fellow Muslims. Another set of scholars place the cause of the emergence of Boko Haram on external factors. The thrust of this line of argument is hinged on the idea that foreign terrorist organisations are responsible for the recent terror attacks in the country. This is because of the fact that there is an increase in the involvement of illegal aliens from Chadians, Nigeriens, Malians in Boko Haram attacks. This argument too is weak because the major actors pointed out in the birth of Boko Haram were clearly identified as citizens of Nigeria, drawn primarily from the Kanuri ethnic group concentrated in the north-east region, especially Bauchi and Borno states, but also from the entire northern region of the country. Yet another set of scholars locate the core motive for the group's origin and growth in governance crisis, rampant corruption, rising unemployment, and mass poverty. It is a fact that a large percentage of the youth lacks access to quality education; employment opportunities are few; nepotism in the job market is widespread; healthcare systems are ineffective; water-borne diseases are common. Yet in the face of these deprivations, the political elites embezzle public funds in astronomical proportions. The failure of the government to provide basic needs for the people, the disillusionment of the youth, and the stark contrast between the privileged life of the elites and the hard life of

masses has resulted in violence (Okoro 2014). The violence has taken the forms of the bombing of churches, government buildings, police stations, and the United Nations building in Abuja; prison breaks, assassinations, shootings and hostage taking; whole villages have been attacked and several people killed. Recently, the group has started attacks on schools and abductions of girls (Onah 2014).

The government initially made some feeble attempts at combatting Boko Haram's violence, which did not yield much. It also made attempts at dialogue, and suggested granting amnesty to members of the group, in the hope that they would give up arms. When all these methods failed, the government finally took the offensive. In May 2013, a state of emergency was declared in the three most affected states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. A Joint Task Force of military personnel was also assembled to engage the Boko Haram in full combat. The Joint Task Force was very effective at first, driving out Boko Haram members from the cities. The group however subsequently took cover in the rural areas, from where they could not easily be dislodged (Onah 2014). Since 2013, the state (mis)management of Boko Haram violence has been the cause for increase in their violent activities. The federal and state security forces often resort to unconstitutional methods while dealing with perpetrators of terrorist acts. It is a fact that in its initial days Boko Haram conducted more or less peaceful campaigns. However, the brutal repression of Boko Haram members in the initial days caused outrage at government forces and swelling in the ranks of Boko Haram membership. In addition to managing terrorist badly, the state has also managed civilian victims poorly. Both insurgent and counter-insurgent activities have caused a significant displacement of citizens within Nigeria and from Nigeria to neighbouring countries. The security forces are also responsible for gross human rights abuses such as arbitrary executions, arresting and beating civilians, setting fire to houses and cars, illegally detaining civilians, and using torture during in prisons and during investigating (Okoro 2014).

The Boko Haram assault is a reflection of thwarted aspirations of the people, similar to case of marginalisation and deprivation in the Niger Delta which led to the rise of local armed resistance in the Delta region against the federal government. Like the Niger Delta crisis, Boko Haram terrorism has gone out of hand largely due to the callousness of the government. The most notable example is the abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok on 14-15 April 2014. The

Nigerian military apparently had intelligence of the impending kidnapping but did not mobilise itself to prevent the attack. Following the incident, the government initially misrepresented the number of girls abducted and it took President Jonathan Goodluck more than two weeks to mention of the kidnappings publicly. Furthermore, there were repeated sightings of the girls in the forests around Chibok and on the borders with Cameroon, still the government did not take any definitive step to rescue the abducted girls. Instead, the President blamed the parents for not providing adequate information of the missing girls to the police. About 21 girls were freed in October 2016 and another 82 in May 2017. More than a 100 girls are still missing.[32]

5. Prospects for Interreligious Dialogue

Nigerians are caught presently at the intersection of problems emanating from the political, economic and social spheres. State institutions are weak; relationship between the State and religious leaders and organisations are ambiguous and unstable; ethno-regional and religious groups compete for scarce natural resources and employment opportunities; marginalisation and discrimination based on ethno-regional and religious categorisation is widespread; dislike and mistrust between members of ethno-regional and religious communities run deep; Sharia law in northern states has challenged the secularity of the state; and finally, ascendency of Boko Haram has caused nationwide terror (Nolte *et al.* 2009). According to some analyses the situation in Nigeria is degenerating steadily; according to others, despite the multitude problems and a vastly diverse population, Nigeria is coping well with its situation. Notwithstanding these analyses, one thing is certain that peace and stability can be maintained within the country only if religious and ethnic communities improve their relations and learn to resolve their problems non-violently. Not many people are interested in dialogue, and those that are face resistance from the others and often lack of support from government authorities. However, looking at the way interreligious conflict is thickening in Nigeria, dialogue between religious communities is no more an option, but an imperative. Uchendu's (2004: 140-142) following remark captures the urgent need of interreligious dialogue in Nigeria:

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[32] [Online] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39833309. Accessed on 20 July 2017.

Disunity and disloyalty have compounded the problems of nation building in Nigeria. Using religion for political ends, or as means of ethnic expression, has limitations and is both lethal and suicidal … The wounds created by hatred and manifested through religious violence, rarely heals. What religious radicalism and militancy threaten is the stability of the Nigerian state. If this collapses, attempts at nation building might be suspended indefinitely. None of the developed nations of the world was bolt amidst a lingering atmosphere of confusion and chaos. Nigerians need to learn this lesson and implement it early. We cannot succeed by arrogance, but by humility and a genuine determination to match our actions with the ideals they are expected to serve. … Nigeria's attempt at nation-building will succeed when there is greater contact, conversation, and effective dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the country.

Interreligious dialogue has been going on in Nigeria since the 1970s. Muslim and Christian leaders have time to time engaged in the process of dialogue. However, considering the size of the nation and the seriousness of interreligious issues, the existing efforts at interreligious dialogue are rather minuscule. Moreover, interreligious dialogue is impeded by several challenges, more prominent among these are: less of grassroots and more of elite involvement; lack of participation of women; low awareness about other religions and religious communities leading to persistence of prejudices and stereotypes, and lack of respect for the religious other; presence of deep mistrust for the religious other causing fear of engaging with the religious other. The potential for interreligious dialogue to contribute to reconciliation between Muslim and Christian communities depends clearly on the willingness of the members of the two communities to open channels of communication, engage with one another, and extend the hand of friendship. Many scholars have delved with the difficult question of what can open up the space for dialogue and encourage and prepare Nigerians for reconciliation. They mark four agencies that needs to be tapped for prospective dialogue and reconciliation: family, women, religious leaders, and education.

In the Nigerian context, families assume a very important place in society. The family is an informal space where cultural, religious and community values are passed on from elders to youngsters to help them model their own identities. For children, the experience of living in a family is also the first exposure to diversity. Family, therefore, has an educating role in the life of individuals. With the degree of social unrest that exists in Nigerian society, families need to assume responsibility of imparting good values to the next generations. Values such as respect for others, love for neighbours, and sharing can go a long way in training children to accept diversity once they encounter the real world.

The role of women in Nigerian society is by and large restricted to the domestic sphere. Girl children are raised usually on principles of obedience and submissiveness, and expected to

look after their family and household after marriage. The relationship between female and male members of the family is also usually asymmetrical. Fathers, brothers and husbands play an important role, while mothers, sisters and wives remain secondary. However, when violence occurs, women are affected just as much, if not more, than men. Many Nigerian women have suffered atrocities and losses, and are now left to deal with their personal traumas. It is extremely important, that, women should be made a part of dialogue and reconciliation processes, even while dispensing their traditional role as nurturers and caregivers.

Religious leaders have traditionally played an important role in Nigerian society by conditioning the minds and sentiments of the people. Religious leaders wield moral authority and command the respect and obedience of their religious community. Hence religious leaders can be a valuable resource for peacebuilding. If religious leaders decide to engage with the opposite community, they can easily influence others members of their community to do likewise. Some Muslim and Christian leaders in the least two decades have come forward in collaborating with each other for addressing issues of common concern. However, more number of religious leaders need to be encouraged or trained by peacemakers to adopt the method of interreligious dialogue, not for addressing interreligious issues only, but in day-to-day living.

Awareness-generation and quality education is important for improving interreligious relations in Nigeria. Both Christian and Muslim communities lack knowledge, understanding and respect for the each other because their worldview is limited by historical prejudices and stereotyping identities. Religious leaders, intellectuals, parents and policy makers from each of the communities need to work together to develop a robust curriculum on religious and peace studies that includes learning about plurality of religion, conflict, dialogue and the need for peace while addressing questions of prejudice, stereotypes and biases that lead to conflict. The motive behind teaching this curriculum should be to create a positive understanding of different religions and faith traditions and counterbalance negative influences that produce fear and mistrust of others. The field of education has enormous potential for dismantling existing perceptions and structures that generate conflict (Umaru 2013).

Following a decade of controversies and conflicts over democratic governance and Sharia law in Nigeria, an entirely new dimension was added to Nigeria's crisis in 2009 with the mysterious, and yet spectacular, rise of Boko Haram. What started as a small Salafi movement has grown into a full-fledged terrorist organisation with traces of connection with the worldwide network of fundamentalist Islamic organisations. Boko Haram's immediate goal, according to its top leaders, is the displacement of the supposedly weak and secular implementation of Sharia with the purest form of Sharia law while its larger goal is the establishment of a full-blown Islamic state in Nigeria. Boko Haram's methodology of violence — kidnappings, suicide attacks on police stations, churches, and bars, and bombings on international installations — has directed the anger of the masses towards the Muslim elites of the North, who have so far seemed powerless — at times, even complicit — to prevent the violence. Some commentators argue that because of the ineptitude of political elites and security forces in curbing Boko Haram violence, a fundamental change has occurred in Muslim-Christian relations, characterised by growing radicalism among the masses and breakdown of law and order in the northern states. Growing popular radicalism, however, does not evidence popular support for Boko Haram. Neither does Boko Haram's quick ascendency indicate radicalised popular attitudes towards Sharia or weakening of popular support for the democracy. Kendhammer (2013) explains more elaborately that Boko Haram's agenda has a political and a religious component. The political component is the restoration of the pure form of Sharia law while the religious component is instating Islamic law and value system as the tool for rectifying political and moral depravity. This two-fold agenda has been founded on the frustration over the economic and political underdevelopment in the northern states areas despite the federal government's significant budgetary allotment to the North as compared to the South, and over the current patterns of Sharia implementation which have neither brought corrupt northern elites to accountability nor weeded out bad elements from society.

In the last few years, Boko Haram attacks have increased to the frequency of becoming a daily phenomenon. The federal government has resolved to the state security forces to hunt down and eliminate Boko Haram members to which end, it has also created the Joint Task Force (JTF). Agbiboa (2013) tells that in the name of countering terrorism, the Joint Task Force has engaged in house-to-house searches (at times, shooting young men in their homes),

dragnet arrests, intimidation of civilians, cordoning off areas and extrajudicial killings. Caught between state security forces repression and Boko Haram attacks, many civilians have lost their lives since the beginning of Boko Haram terror. Agbiboa argues that aggressive pursuit of Boko Haram members, instead of conducting intelligence-driven tactical operations, is spoiling the state's already diminished image before the citizens. Arrests of key Boko Haram members have the potential to weaken the organisation, but cannot fully erase unless its support base is weakened by addressing some of the wider socio-economic and political problems. Agbiboa asserts that to dismantle the support base of Boko Haram, the federal government must pay serious attention to the pervasive realities in the counrty, such as poverty, unemployment, poor education, corruption, and regionalism. An ever-increasing population that must survive on a steadily decreasing share of economic opportunity, can only create an environment in which recourse to fundamentalism and violence seem as the only option left.

With regard to Muslim-Christian relations, Paden (2005) writes that within the northern Sharia states, there have been pockets of localised religious conflict, sometimes between Muslims and Christians; however, the cause of conflict was usually related to ethnicity or land-use, which was mitigated against a religious interpretation. Indeed, religious conflict within the northern states has been more of an intrareligious than an interreligious phenomenon: there has been disagreements between sufi brotherhoods, or between the legalists and the sufis; there has been an equivalent amount of branching within the evangelical Christian communities in the northern states, and between many of the components of the Christian communities at the national level. And yet, Muslim-Christian relations in the northern states are also not eased. Due to the adoption of Sharia and with the spread of Boko Haram, interreligious relations have been deeply affected. Incidents, such as the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, and the later news of some of the Christian girls being converted to Islam and being given in marriage to Boko Haram members, further spoil the impression of religious coexistence. At certain times in the past couple of years, Christians and Muslims clashed on a daily basis over issues as petty as a drunken brawl between youngsters to as major as control over oil resources. With a national context of extreme ethno-religious diversity, a turbulent shift from militarism to democratic federalism, one half of the state under theocratic rule, and home grown terrorism, Nigeria's situation

today is not easy. Additionally, there is major international pressure on the federal government to maintain stability in Nigeria because of the current atmosphere of global concern with terrorism and growing interest of the United States and other major countries in Nigerian oil. Local and international peacemakers believe that if Nigerians at the grassroots can take charge of interreligious conflict resolution by exploring the civic culture for ideas and opportunities of contact, communication and dialogue, then other controversial such as economic development and political opportunities can be sorted out without resorting to violence and destruction.

The next chapter summarises the entire research and presents its key findings. It reflects on the three main themes of the research: first, the interrelatedness of religion, identity and conflict; second, the principal components of reconciliation process; and third, the potential of interreligious dialogue to contribute to reconciliation. It also recapitulates the findings and observations from the case studies of conflict, reconciliation and interreligious dialogue in Bosnia and Nigeria.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

International Relations discipline has acknowledged but paid lip service to the peace-promoting potential of religion. If it is true that religious identity, doctrines and ethics have the potential for peacebuilding — there is plenty of evidence of that — then the question is not whether religion should be incorporated in peacebuilding, but rather *how* it should be incorporated. So far scholars and practitioners of peacebuilding have approached this question rather simplistically: most of them believe that every religion contains peace-promoting motifs, which can be applied in conflict management and resolution for restoring stability and promoting peaceful coexistence.

In this regard, two points need to be understood. First, while religion is a corpus of doctrines and ethics, religion is manifested through personal religiosity, that is to say, through the thoughts and actions of individual believers. Ethics contained in religious texts are interpreted and acted upon by individuals, suggesting that evoking peace-promoting religious ethics cannot naturally and inevitably lead to peace. The outcome of evoking religious ethics depends on how individuals chose to interpret and act — or not act — on them. Second, societies are not homogenous in terms of religion. Although one religious community may predominate or constitute a majority, there is usually several religious communities living within a society. Within religious community too, there is diversity owing to individual religiosities. The presence of religious pluralism is a challenge which peacebuilding approaches must address.

This research was based on the observation that the subfield of religion and peacebuilding recognises religious tolerance but only superficially addresses the challenge posed by religious pluralism through interreligious contact, communication, and dialogue. This research is aimed at contributing to this knowledge deficit to argue that religion can be a bridge for reconciling groups involved in protracted conflicts; even those which are anchored on religious lines. It analysed interreligious dialogue as a process for reconciling relations between hostile religious communities.

Theorisation of interreligious dialogue in the field of International Relations began in the late 1990s because around this time a number of ethno-religious conflicts erupted across the world creating a sense of urgency among academicians to develop ideas for improving interreligious relations in conflict-ridden societies. The Western paradigms of interreligious dialogue explained it is as a process in which lay believers, theologians, clerics and religious leaders come together to exchange theological ideas and information with the aim of deepening understanding about each other and searching for doctrinal commonalities between religions. According to traditional theorisation, the process of interreligious dialogue is characterised by reciprocity — exchange of ideas and information — targeted towards the search of doctrinal commonalities between religions. This research highlighted two pitfalls in the traditional theorisation of interreligious dialogue. First, the emphasis on reciprocity levies a conditionality on the process of dialogue itself, thus constraining what can be done within a dialogue and what can be achieved. Dialogue which requires reciprocity naturally demands preparation on the part of those involved in order to arrive at the goal of finding doctrinal commonalities between religions. In other words, dialogue gets reduced to a premeditated activity with expected outcomes. Second, the goal of arriving at doctrinal commonalities between religions is based on the assumption that every religion contains good teachings and there is a similarity between these teachings. For instance, Christianity teaches love and forgiveness while Islam teaches mercy and compassion, therefore, both Christianity and Islam contain the message of doing good deeds. All religions no doubt contain kernels of truth, and there is also commonality between these truths; however, the meaning of religion is not contained solely in the linguistics of religious texts but manifested in the religiosity of individual believers. Hence when scholars derive morality from religious texts while neglecting the role of personal religiosity, they display an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon of religion. Moreover, every religion originated in a specific historical, cultural and social context. As a result, ethics derived from a religion is rooted in the particular context in which that religion originated. In other words, religious ethics are context-specific — they are different for different religions. Consequently, religious ethics cannot be equated or universalised. When scholars speak of interreligious dialogue as search for doctrinal commonalities between religions for deepening mutual understanding, they reveal an essentialised understanding of religion. They see religion as an ahistorical and unchangeable

phenomenon. Interreligious dialogue which is founded on an essentialised notion of religion is no more than ecumenical dialectics.

This research attempted to overcome the two major pitfalls of the traditional paradigms by developing an ethics-based theoretical framework of interreligious dialogue. According to this research, interreligious dialogue is a process which brings individuals of different religious communities together with the aim of reducing conflict and improving interreligious relations. The process of interreligious dialogue can vary from a momentary contact to a prolonged interaction. The emphasis in the process should be on spontaneity rather than reciprocity. The greater the spontaneity of the dialogical encounter, the more is the genuineness of the dialogue. In terms of participation, every person should be regarded as a potential participant in interreligious dialogue irrespective of their religious views. Interreligious dialogue that is undertaken to promote peace should strive to be as inclusive as possible because religion as a social phenomenon affects everybody in society and, more importantly, occurrence of violence affects everybody. In terms of goal, interreligious dialogue should seek personal change, where personal change refers to a threefold change involving transformation in perception of one's identity, loyalty to one's group, and relationship between oneself and the religious other. Real dialogue is not about changing the other or mutual change through consensus but personal change through encounter with the other.

Following the theorisation of interreligious dialogue, this research sought to explore the importance of interreligious dialogue in the process of post-conflict reconciliation. Reconciliation was originally a part of the transitional justice debate but as more and more scholars from varied fields joined in the debate, reconciliation expanded to a fully fledged theme. Reconciliation in post-conflict settings commonly refers to trauma healing and rebuilding broken relations between members of different ethno-religious communities. There are several components of reconciliation. This research dealt with four components: truth; justice; remembrance; and forgiveness. Truth is a highly sensitive issue in the aftermath of mass-scale violence. Truth consists of information about who committed crimes against whom as well as the nature of crimes — when, where and how crimes were committed.

Seeking information about crimes is one of the first steps towards reconciliation because without knowing what really happened, it is impossible for victims and survivors to cope with their trauma and move on. Uncovering truth about mass atrocities, however, does not directly and naturally lead to healing. The nature of truth uncovered is so disconcerting that after it is revealed, victims and survivors may not find closure to their trauma but instead experience the revival of painful memories and resurgence of trauma. The recovery of truth about mass atrocities usually has an unsettling effect on society. Recovery of truth needs to be followed therefore by mechanisms that would help in integrating the truth into personal and collective narratives.

Justice seeking after mass-scale atrocities is an equally problematic component of the recovery of truth. Sentences served by domestic and international legal institutions for war crimes do not necessarily satisfy the sense of injustice among victims and survivors. In the case of genocide particularly, survivors feel that justice can never be done to them. The heinousness of the crime precludes justice. However, since the dead cannot be brought back to life, survivors and relatives of the dead have to content themselves with trials, verdicts and punishments. The outrage at being wronged, however, never abates. According to international and local juridicial authorities, dispensing justice for war crimes is extremely complex because there are simply too many victims and too many perpetrators. It is hard to decide who to prosecute and which crimes to prosecute. For instance, paramilitary groups responsible for massacring civilians are never tried as a collective nor is mass scale rape tried as a crime against humanity. The legal and moral questions involved in prosecuting criminals and specific crimes are difficult and debates over prosecuting a specific crime or a particular person are often politicised. In the case of genocide, for instance, prosecutors intends to send the message to the world that such crimes will not be tolerated. Genocide trials are usually target political and military leaders at the highest levels to make an example out of them so that other leaders do not repeat the same. Since the weight of justice lies on punishing criminals rather than redressing victims' sense of being wronged, justice does not automatically lead to trauma healing and rebuilding of broken relations. Furthermore, justice is often inimical to truth. In several cases of mass-scale atrocities, justice delivered as punishment of the perpetrators has been compromised to recover the truth. In Truth and

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Reconciliation Commissions, for instance, truth is given priority over justice. The Commission elicited truth from perpetrators on the promise of granting amnesty.

Forgiveness, the third component of reconciliation, has its origins in Christian theology. Many Western scholars propose forgiveness as a universal ethic of reconciliation arguing that in the aftermath of communal violence, forgiveness by victims of perpetrators can lead to the healing of victim's trauma and rebuilding relations between victims and perpetrators. They proceed to argue that communal violence is cyclic in nature because of which the only means to break the cycle of violence is if victims offer unconditional forgiveness to perpetrators. Forgiveness is the foundation on which trust and relationship can be built between victims and perpetrators. In recent years, forgiveness have taken centre stage in the field of reconciliation ethics. There is little doubt that forgiveness is essential for reconciliation, however, the over-emphasis on forgiveness among Western scholars is unjustified. As mentioned earlier, religion is a context-specific category because of which, ethics derived from religion cannot be universalised. Forgiveness is after all a Christian ethic, therefore, promoting forgiveness as a universal ethic of reconciliation reflects a bias towards Christianity and the West: what is considered as generally ethical is actually Christian and Western in particular. By privileging Christianity and the West, scholars are reiterating the historical inequality between cultures and regions. Moreover, forgiveness is a voluntary act. It does not require admission of guilt by perpetrator. Promoting forgiveness as a universal ethic of reconciliation without emphasising equally on the acknowledgement of guilt downplays victims' suffering and sense of injustice.

This research argued that harnessing the peace-promoting potential of religion requires a critical shift from the forgiveness-centric reconciliation model to an interreligious dialogue approach. Through a review of the existing literature on reconciliation along with the citation of relevant examples, the research stressed that the idea of prescribing forgiveness as an ethic of reconciliation in multireligious societies that have experienced communal violence is a flawed and dangerous approach because it does not recognise religious pluralism. Societies contain multiple moral authorities because of which ethics of reconciliation must be negotiable depending on the background of the conflict and the orientation of the society.

Each reconciliation process, therefore, should have its own ethical anchoring. Alternatively, there cannot be a universal standard with regard to ethics of reconciliation. The research proceeded to argue that the preoccupation with Christian ethics in reconciliation should give way to an ethical model based on interreligious contact, communication and dialogue. An interreligious dialogue approach, which does not descend into the rhetoric of religious pluralism — every religion contains truth and there are similarities between these truths — but brings about interaction and engagement between religious communities in a non-institutionalised way contributes to social change because in such an interaction, the underlying strengths are spontaneity of the encounter, as opposed to premeditation and flexibility of ethics. Further, because the focus of interreligious dialogue lies on spontaneity and ethics, it can be seen as process-oriented rather than a goal-driven approach. In other words, what is important to the success of interreligious dialogue is how the dialogue is initiated and carried out rather whether on or not it achieves social change. This does not mean that interreligious dialogue is completely aimless. The process is directed towards social change where social change constitutes a threefold transformation of identity, solidarity and relationship. The goal of social change embedded in this approach, in effect contributes to trauma healing and rebuilding relations between members of hostile communities.

To substantiate the argument that interreligious dialogue contributes to reconciliation, the research examined interreligious dialogue initiatives in two countries, Bosnia and Nigeria, looking first at the background to the conflict, then how the process of reconciliation unfolded, and finally how interreligious dialogue initiatives facilitated reconciliation. Bosnia experienced war between 1992 and 1995 as part of its struggle to become independent from Yugoslavia. The extreme violence that characterised the war went beyond strategic killing to ethnic cleansing and religious violence. For the last two decades, Bosnian society has been trying hard to come to terms with the physical and psychological devastation caused by the mass atrocities in the war. Bosnia has been the ground for numerous experiments in post-conflict peacebuilding. It is teeming with national and international NGOs which work in varied fields, ranging from transitional justice, trauma healing, and inter-community dialogue to search for missing persons, mass-grave exhumation, and genocide documentation. The fact

that Bosnia has not relapsed into conflict ever since the last guns were silenced is probably a testimony to the influence of these NGOs on Bosnian society and political leaders. However, that most Bosnians live in ethnically and religiously exclusive towns, villages, and hamlets is evidence that the population is far from reconciled. In Bosnia, reconciliation is being attempted for the last twenty years between hostile ethno-religious communities, namely Bosnian Muslims, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. The results of the interventions at the societal and personal levels are slow but not discouraging. The country has not relapsed into violence though sporadic incidents such as attacks on places of worship, disrupting the work of activists and journalists are recorded from time to time. Reconciliation is hindered primarily by the institutionalisation of ethnic and religious differences in both politics and society. In this setting, a Catholic Croat priest named Fra Ivo Markovic has been contributing towards reconciliation for the last twenty years through an interreligious choir called the Pontanima which he founded in 1997. Fra Ivo lost his own father during the war at the hands of Muslim militias. His spontaneous desire was to avenge the death of his father. However, he experienced a spiritual catharsis which disinclined him to take revenge. Following this personal awakening, he felt impelled to help others in recovering from trauma. A priest and theologian by profession and a musician by hobby, Fra Ivo chose to employ religious music for trauma healing. He conducted a study on the effect of music on trauma healing which gave him the idea of creating an interreligious choir comprising of singers from different religious communities as well as atheists that would sing religious songs in places of worship. His idea met with opposition — primarily from his own community and only later from other communities. But even in the face of opposition, the choir continued to perform. Thy started by performing in churches from 1997 onwards and later were allowed entry in mosques and synagogues and as they gained popularity, they started performing on stage, radio and television. Fra Ivo saw the music of the interreligious choir as a way of personal healing for the singers and audiences.

In Nigeria, conflict between Christians and Muslims existed before the country gained independence as a result of the British colonial policy of north-south regionalism and ethnic and religious favouritism in distributing administrative and economic opportunities. Communal conflict continued to fester after independence as successive attempts at

establishing democracy failed, brining long periods of military rule. The establishment of democracy in 1999 did not lessen conflict either. The legacy of political and economic centralism under military rule concentrated power and wealth in the hands of military, political and religious elites leaving the majority of the population wanting for livelihood and representation. Elites who managed to capture power or resources helped their own ethnic and religious kinsmen to advance so much so that political and economic divisions assumed the appearance of ethnic and religious conflict. Ethnic and religious animosity deepened further because of the flaws in the federal structure of the state which did not give much scope for power-sharing or redistribution of national wealth. The result was concentration of power and resources in the three major ethnic groups that had traditionally enjoyed prominence in Nigeria — Hausa-Faluni, Yoruba and Igbo. The introduction of Sharia law in twelve of the northern states in 1999 brought religion to the forefront of socio-political conflict. Adoption of Sharia threw into question the neutrality of the state towards religions and constitutional right to religious freedom. In this climate, several civil society actors and some enlightened government officials and broad-minded religious leaders believe that improving interreligious relations was one the most important factor for ensuring stability in the country. Two persons sharing this view, Pastor James Wuye and Imam Mohammad Ashafa founded the Interfaith Mediation Centre in 1995 for promoting self-empowerment among the youth and encouraging Christian-Muslim contact and dialogue. Both James and Ashafa were at first religious militant leaders in their respective communities. Bitter enemies, they had even attempted to kill one another over a personal conflict. At the peak of communal violence in their state of Kaduna, they met for the first upon the insistence of a common friend who was a civil society leader. That meeting initiated conversations which led to a sustained dialogue between them. Engaging in dialogue dispelled mutual misconceptions paving the way for trust and friendship. Eventually, they decided to work together, leading by example, for reducing hostility between Christians and Muslims. The focus of their work is self-empowerment, trust-building and developing interpersonal contact.

In the two initiatives of interreligious dialogue discussed in this research, apart from occasional non-compliance and criticism from certain elements in society, dialogical encounter was mostly received positively. People had the opportunity to come together in a

real, inclusive and uncompetitive environment where they could interact freely, discover for themselves the truth about the other, and make contact and friendship. Such kind of engagement between persons of different religious backgrounds led to dismantling the identity stereotypes and mutual misconceptions created by political manoeuvrings, media sensationalism and incidents of violence. It also led to developing respect and appreciation among members of one religious community for the other. Many of the participants in these initiatives formed strong friendships and experienced inner change. All these effects are a part of the process of reconciliation. What was unique about these interreligious dialogue initiatives is that they did not deliberately emphasise on religion; the emphasis was on dialogical encounter where religion came into play spontaneously in the form of personal religiosity. This aspect — of drawing attention away from religion — distinguishes these initiatives from other religious peacebuilding activities which explicitly derive their force from religious ethics, leaders and settings. Furthermore, these interreligious dialogue initiatives compel rethinking on the process of reconciliation: instead of focusing on the conventional components of truth-seeking, justice-seeking, memory construction, and forgiveness, the interreligious dialogue approach stresses on the components of identity reconstruction and rebuilding broken relationships. Scholars in the field of reconciliation must pay due attention to the question of identity and relationship. Altering negative identity perceptions and forging interpersonal and social bonds is the basis for healing post-conflict societies.

The study of inter-religious dialogue initiatives also brought to light the challenges of reconciliation work. Challenges arise from different quarters of the society. Sometimes it is the people who are reluctant to participate or cooperate for a variety of reasons; sometimes it is the political parties and individual political and religious leaders who stand in the way of reconciliation for personal gain; sometimes it is external actors or the international community which prevent reconciliation because of vested interest in upholding religious and ethnic divisions; sometimes it is the presence of practical problems such as insufficiency of funds, dearth of innovate ideas, absence of convenient space for peacebuilding activities, slack in dedication of peace workers, having unrealistic goals or overwhelming expectations.

Based on an overview of these challenges, the research noticed two aspects of reconciliation where academic understanding needs to be strengthened: (1) the distinction between victims and perpetrators in the process of reconciliation; and (2) the degree to which affected population is interested in reconciling with former enemies. In mass-scale communal violence, the question of who is the victim and who the perpetrator is highly controversial because there are victims and perpetrators on all sides and every community feels victimised. As a result, scholars and practitioners of peacebuilding discourage the usage of the terms victim and perpetrator. Criticising the attitude of some to nurse the feeling of victimhood ('victim mentality'), they argue that all members of society are equally responsible for peacebuilding in the aftermath of mass-scale violence even if some suffered more than others because in the end victims and victimisers need to live together in the society. Since peace workers wish every community to join in the reconciliation process, they do not discriminate between victim and victimiser. Reconciliation scholars need to analyse this — how far is it fair to not distinguish between victim and victimiser — because those who consider themselves victims — many of them are actually victimised — feel deceived if their victimhood is not sufficiently recognised. They feel that without acknowledging their victimhood, expecting them to reconcile with former enemies, peace builders are perpetuating the injustice caused to them by their initial victimisation. The second issue, regarding the affected population's actual interest in reconciling, is another grey area in reconciliation studies. Societies affected by mass-scale violence suffer from a terrible sense of loss. For some it is a physical loss — losing a loved one or one's property — while for others it is the loss of something perceived as precious — losing one's identity or dignity. Those people are then often lacking in will and vigour to engage in dialogue because they consider it pointless to reconcile with former enemies. Some may simply be indifferent to the process of reconciliation: they would rather like to be left in peace while they are trying to cope with the painful memories of violence. Reconciliation scholars often do not take into consideration the factor of societal interest in understanding the process of reconciliation. Many scholars tend to assume that people in post-conflict societies are wanting — even waiting —to reconcile. That is not true, however. Scholars need to understand more deeply the reality of these societies and the challenges, dilemmas and desires of its people. Underestimating the level of physical, psychological, emotional and interpersonal damage

caused by mass-scale violence, reconciliation scholarship often border on sermonising about the need for coexistence, dialogue, cooperation and friendship. This countenance must change. Studies on reconciliation must proceed along with understanding the effects of violence and trauma on post-conflict societies.

The way by which the emotional needs of both the victims and the victimisers, according to Hicks, is through reworking the group identities. The first phase of reconciliation work should involve transformation of perceptions within the group. The higher power group would need to resolve that element of their identity which allowed them to commit offences against the lower power group. Since revealing the darker side of one's identity is extremely uncomfortable, a lot of dissension arises within groups over the issue of transforming perceptions within one's group. The lower power would need to address the humiliation they have suffered before they can let go off the memory of those traumatic experiences in favour of a mutually tolerable interpretation of what happened. For the lower power group to tell what happened to them, they need to be given the hope that the painful process of truth-telling will help in the recognition and acknowledgement of the injustice they have endured. For each group to revisit and remould their identity, the assistance of the third party is essential. For the lower power group, the third party should acknowledge the suffering; for the higher power group, it should adopt an understanding attitude so that they are able to expose themselves without the fear of being humiliated. Following the task of self-examination with the help of the third party, the lower and higher power groups can enter the second phase of reconciliation, which is face to face interaction with each other. Hicks thus argues that reconciliation, or restoration of humanity, requires identity transformation for both groups, and identity transformation entails a different process for each group. The role of the third party likewise differs for the lower and the higher power groups. Hicks advocates the importance of forgiveness in the process of reconciliation, but warns that placing too much burden on the victims by over-emphasising forgiveness can be detrimental to the process of reconciliation. She thinks that academicians and practitioners must advocate forgiveness insofar as it is accompanied by responsibility, that is, acknowledgement of crime by the higher power group. Discounting the purposeful blindness of the higher power group

towards their crimes, while urging forgiveness from the lower power group perpetuates the power asymmetry, which characterised the dynamics of the conflict in the first place.

Annexure I

Guiding Questionnaire for Interviews

1. Please tell about yourself and your organisation (or religious community) for which you work?

2. What according to you is the relationship between religion, ethnicity and politics? As a state and as a society, is Bosnia 'secular'? Does religion or religious community play a significant role for you?

3. What are the social and political roles played by religious communities (or your religious community) in the society and state respectively? What influence do religious leaders (your religious leaders) wield over their political constituencies at the community level? How do religious communities (or your religious community) influence policymaking at the governmental level?

4. How would you describe the relations between religious communities (your religious community with other religious communities)? What tensions between and within religious communities continue as a result of past conflict and political transition from former Yugoslavia? What is your opinion of the system of religious education in public schools?

5. What do you understand by reconciliation? What are the official positions of religious communities (your religious community) regarding reconciliation, dealing with the past and peace building more generally?

6. What efforts have been/are being undertaken by religious communities (your religious community) and other actors for working towards reconciliation? How effective have these efforts been? What lessons can be drawn from them?

7. What are the continuing challenges faced in the work of reconciliation? Which corners of society do the challenges arise from?

8. In what ways can religious communities (your religious community) play a part in rising to the challenges? In what ways can other initiatives or actors lend their support? What are potential obstacles to the efforts you propose?

Annexure II

Interview Consent Form

Institution Name: Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Thesis Title: Interreligious Dialogue and Reconciliation: Analysing the Bosnian and Nigerian Cases

1. I agree to be interviewed for the purpose of the above research project.
2. I certify that I have been told of the nature and the purpose of the interview.
3. I agree to participate in the electronically recorded interview. Please mark your answer:

   a) Yes or b) No

4. I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters.
5. Please choose and mark one of the following options: a), b) or c)

a) I agree to be identified by name in the project and related materials only, but not for publishing.

b) I understand that the information contained in the interviews may be used in materials to be published so my name may be used for that purpose.
c) I do not agree to be identified by name in any form in this project.

Full name of Interviewee _____

Signature of Interviewee _____

Date _____

6. I have explained the purpose of the project to the interviewee and in what manner the results of the interview will be used, therefore I believe that her/his agreement is free and conscious, and that the interviewee understands all implications of the given interview.

Full name of Interviewer _____

Signature of Interviewer _____

Date _____

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