

## RELIGION AND RECONCILIATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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### 1. Introduction

Fourteen years after the Dayton Accords were signed, a “negative peace” hangs over BiH and the entire ex-Yugoslavian Balkan region. The peace-keeping mission of the United Nations has been able to implement central military aspects of the peace accords with the presence of the “Stabilization Force” (SFOR) and the command of NATO, such as re-establishing public security and creating a military balance between the conflicting parties, and to prevent open conflict from breaking out again. Yet a military stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter B&H) without SFOR troops has not been able to be guaranteed up to this point. Keeping the current status quo with the presence of troops, political control and financial support means it will be a long time before life in B&H has a modicum of normality.<sup>1</sup> – the ethnic tensions are too high and the Bosnian state is not consolidated enough.<sup>2</sup> While military aspects of the Dayton Accords have been successfully implemented, there are large deficits in the implementation of civil aspects in the Accords. These deficits arise from the inefficiency and corruption of political structures, insufficient development of the rule of law and the economy.<sup>3</sup> The people are still suffering from the destructive effects of war: economic depression, unemployment, discrimination, and fear and distrust color everyday life. Many vote for the old political cadre from fear of discrimination and betrayal, but they try to prevent integration in B&H with nationalist interest and blockade policies, preventing reform and demands for autonomy. The ethnic principle of equal public office distribution embodied in the Dayton Accords lends legitimacy to the ethno-nationalisms created before and during the war, and still guides the social discourse 14 years after the war ended.<sup>4</sup> A self-critical examination of the crimes from the recent past with the issue of culpability, penance, atonement and forgiveness is taking place in the wider public of the Bosnian society. How do religions, with their strong sense regarding guilt and forgiveness, suggest initiating a reconciliation process? In this context it is clear from the start that the installation of a truth and reconciliation commission based on the South African model would fail if it had to be supported by the traditional religious communities in B&H; just as the attempt by the president of the Jewish community in B&H failed due to divergent understandings of justice<sup>5</sup>.

Let us start with the postulate from John Paul Lederach that reconciliation is based on the recognition of truth, justice and peaceful coexistence.<sup>6</sup> In this paper empirical data from case studies in traditional religious communities from central Bosnia will be used in order to show the

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<sup>1</sup> Reiter 2005, 71.

<sup>2</sup> See Džihic 2005, 18ff.; Wnendt 1995, 79ff.

<sup>3</sup> See FAZ 13.8.2002, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> See Džihic 2005, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Interview Finci 2004, 23.

<sup>6</sup> See Lederach 2002, 24ff.

differences and objects of conflict under the aspect of these three guiding themes that block the path towards a process of reconciliation for the whole of society initiated by the religions.

## **2. The Interpretation of the Terms “Truth,” “Justice,” and “Coexistence” from Representatives of Traditional Religious Communities in B&H**

### *2.1 The Interpretations of the Islamic Religious Community*

#### 2.1.1 The Interpretation of the Term “Truth”

The representatives of the Muslim religious community in B&H related the term “truth” to the question of culpability for the war and thus to the victim/perpetrator designation. For the Muslim community there is no question that Serbia specifically planned the genocide of Bosnian Muslims for the creation of a Greater Serbia; to this end the Serbians began a war of aggression in 1993, in the terms of international law, against the autonomous Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to share the territory with Croatia.<sup>7</sup> The Muslim population of B&H is, according to the representative of the Islamic community interviewed, the victim of a genocide, comparable to the scope of the Shoah and the decimation of the European Jewry.<sup>8</sup>

Ah, and as we have in the Second World War the notion of Holocaust, ah, in this war, in B&H, you have this new phenomenon, which was not for the first time, but in B&H it became an issue which is ethnic cleansing. Bosnia or Ex-Yugoslavia became a symbol or an example, a bad example for ethnic cleansing, and those who were subject of ethnic cleansing were Bosnian Muslims, that is I would say, the general truth.<sup>9</sup>

The Muslim religious community considers itself primarily as the victim. The war crimes of their own military are euphemized, or reduced to isolated cases.<sup>10</sup>

. . . can swear that no one in the Islamic community had the thought of adopting anything like a ethnic cleansing policy or anything like that, that doesn't mean that Muslim soldiers never committed any kind of atrocities, or that we didn't make mistake, that we didn't allow building of mosques on a Serbian property or destroyed something, you know. Some people still allow it and so on. But I think that there is quite enough reason to believe that those have been really accidents like in traffic, where there are rules, where you know how to behave and so on, and still accidents will happen, but it was never a policy.<sup>11</sup>

The Bosnian army, or the militias fighting on their side, neither committed systematic war crimes, nor did they destroy sacred sites to any significant extent, according to many *imams* and Islamic scholars. With this self-image as the background, and the historical role of the Bosnian Muslims in the Bosnian War, the term “truth” is understood among the Muslim civil society as factual knowledge, as detailed knowledge about the identity of victim and perpetrator and the quantitative scope of ethnic cleansing, without recourse to religious explanatory connections<sup>12</sup>. As

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<sup>7</sup> See Interview Cerić 2003, 249; Interview 5 2004, 257f.; Interview 33 2004, 282f.; Interview 34 2004, 289; Interview 30 2004, 228; Interview 31 2004, 254; Interview 32 2004, 275.

<sup>8</sup> See Interview Cerić 2004, 240; Interview 5 2004, 254; Interview 8 2004, 308; Interview 29 2004, 213; Interview 30 2004, 238; Interview 35 2004, 317.

<sup>9</sup> Interview Cerić 2004, 240; See Interview 34 2004, 297f.

<sup>10</sup> See Interview 5 2004, 261; Interview 32 2004, 275; Interview 29 2004, 253; Interview 30 2004, 228; Interview 8 2004, 308.

<sup>11</sup> Interview 29 2004, 211.

<sup>12</sup> See Interview 29 2004, 253f.; Interview 36 2004, 327; Interview 29 2004, 215; Interview 35 2004, 317; Interview 5 2004, 257; Interview 21 2004, 222; Interview 6 2004, 254.

will be addressed in the following section, the individualization of the crimes, and thus the denial of collective recrimination, is the main interest of the Islamic community.

### 2.1.2 The Interpretation of the Term “Justice”

The majority of representatives from the Muslim religious community in BiH interpret the term “justice” in the political sense, as the punishment of individual perpetrators for the crimes they committed against civilians during the Bosnian War from 1992 to 1995.

They should answer for these crimes in court.<sup>13</sup> Especially the arrest of those politicians and military leaders from the Bosnian Serbs who were mainly responsible for the ethnic cleansing were named specifically: Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. A group of interviewees considered the punishment of war criminals the condition for society to reconcile and coexist:<sup>14</sup>

You see, it has been repeated in statements of several Muslim representatives here that reconciliation *should* be based on justice, justice at first should be based on punishment of those responsible for genocide. And the Muslim community did not ask for recomission, it just asked for the arrest of war criminals and sending them to Den Hague, for trial in Den Hague, so Islamic community has accepted the juridication of the international court for war crimes in Den Hague.”<sup>15</sup>

The majority of clergymen interviewed stressed the importance of the individualization of the crimes committed and the respective punishments. For many clergy this punishment of individual war criminals represents a condition for social reconciliation because is might then be possible to release, or at least weaken, collective recriminations by naming and punishing individuals. The large majority of the Muslim clergy recognize the prosecution and punishment of war criminals by the international criminal court in Den Haag and thus the observance of international law, even if some representatives are critical of how the ICTY [International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia] works, such as the dominance of the international community or the speed with which it works.<sup>16</sup>

The international criminal court is accepted as the highest judicial authority by a large group of interviewees, who are also the official representatives of the Muslim community. Reis-ul-Ulema, Dr. Mustafa Cerić and his representative Ismet Spahić accept the court with the argument that absolute justice will not be achieved on earth.<sup>17</sup>

The members of the Islamic community associate justice only secondarily with the legal principle of equal rights. All citizens in BiH should have the same rights and duties in all areas of the country, especially for questions of returning war refugees, religious education in schools and employment.<sup>18</sup> Only a small group mentions the political order of BiH and associates the issue of justice as equality with the demand of dismantling entities and creating autonomous regions<sup>19</sup>, since the Republika Srpska is a result of genocide against Muslims<sup>20</sup> and blocks the efforts at reform that are necessary to fulfill the criteria for EU candidacy. The perspective of EU membership offers

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<sup>13</sup> See Interview 36 2004, 326; Interview 33 2004, 280; Interview 6 2004, 269; Interview 34 2004, 298; Interview 32 2004, 273f.; Interview Cerić 2004, 241; Interview 8 2004, 310f.; Interview 30 2004, 238.

<sup>14</sup> See Interview 6 2004, 269; Interview Cerić 2004, 240; Interview 30 2004, 329.

<sup>15</sup> See Interview 33 2004, 280.

<sup>16</sup> See Interview 30 2004, 328; Interview Cerić 2004, 240f.

<sup>17</sup> See Interview Cerić 2004, 242; Interview 30 2004, 328; Interview 6 2004, 268, 270; Interview 32 2004, 273; Interview 8 2004, 312.

<sup>18</sup> Interview 33 2004, 280; Interview 6 2004, 267; Interview 34 2004, 297.

<sup>19</sup> See Interview 33 2004, 28; Interview 5 2004, 257; Interview 8 2004, 305.

<sup>20</sup> See Interview 5 2004, 257.

the majority of the Muslim community the most meaningful source of hope for a solution to the political and economic problems in B&H.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.1.3 Interpretation of the Term “Coexistence”

The majority of Muslim religious representatives in B&H understand the term coexistence as good neighborliness:<sup>22</sup>

We have a concept of neighborhood here which is very important and a concept of neighborhood was never conceptualized by religion. We have different identities, for example Muslims. We have duties towards other Muslims but we also have duties towards our neighbors, regardless of their religious affiliation and I think neighborhoods should play and should continue to play the same role. The fact that you live with someone in the same street means that you have obligations towards this person to live together, this is also our heritage and this heritage should be kept and further developed.<sup>23</sup>

In the opinion of those interviewed, this concept of good neighborliness is based on the condition that the various nations of B&H live together in one territory that is not organized on the basis of ethnic homogeneity, and that the state structures do not hinder coexistence between nations.<sup>24</sup> This understanding of coexistence implies the hope that the separation of B&H into two entities, and thus the attempt to divide Bosnia into a purely Serbian (Republika Srpska) and a Croatian (Herceg Bosna) or Muslim area, is doomed to failure, and so the boundaries between the entities agreed to by the warring parties in the Dayton Accords can be removed.<sup>25</sup> With the background of the Socialist past and the marginalization of religion experienced under Tito’s rule, the interviewees stressed the necessity of freedom of religion.<sup>26</sup> The right to religious freedom, and thus the free choice of religious membership, is connected to the necessity of a basic tolerance towards the religious “Other”.

This basic tolerance towards others in the sense of tolerating living alongside one another is not the ideal of coexistence, rather only the basis upon which good neighborly relations can take place. The concept advanced by the majority of Islamic clergy for good neighborliness is similar in many ways to concepts of conviviality<sup>27</sup>: the most important necessity is respect and honor for the other<sup>28</sup>. Many clergy also valued freedom from prejudice<sup>29</sup> and the attempt to know one another as well as to understand one’s own familiar world as foreign for someone else as part of the basis for coexistence<sup>30</sup>. For many, the ignorance about one’s own religion and the religion of others is a source of intolerance<sup>31</sup>. Approximately half of the interviewees consider the pre-war practice of

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<sup>21</sup> See Interview 32 2004, 276 Interview 31 2004, 253 Interview 5 2004, 261; Interview 6 2004, 265f.

<sup>22</sup> See Interview 36 2004, 325; Interview 33 2004, 283; Interview 6 2004, 270; Interview 8 2004, 309; Interview 29 2004, 218; Interview 30 2004, 234; Interview 32 2004, 272; Interview 5 2005, 258f.

<sup>23</sup> Interview 33 2004, 285.

<sup>24</sup> See Interview 31 2004, 253; Interview 33 2004, 281; Interview 32 2004, 243; Interview 30 2004, 229; Interview 34 2004, 287f., Interview 8 2004, 305; Interview 6 2004, 266.

<sup>25</sup> See Interview 34 2004, 287f.; Interview Cerić 2004, 243; Interview 33 2004, 281; Interview 5 2004, 260.

<sup>26</sup> See Interview 36 2004, 325; Interview 29 2004, 215; Interview 34 2004, 293; Interview 5 2004, 259; Interview 35 2004, 319; Interview 30 2004, 234; Interview Cerić 2004, 243.

<sup>27</sup> See Sundermeier 1996, 137f.

<sup>28</sup> See Interview 6 2004, 265f., 266; Interview 32 2004, 273; Interview 8 2004, 305; Interview 31 2004, 253; Interview 5 2004, 259; Interview 35 2004, 320; Interview 36 2004, 324.

<sup>29</sup> See Interview 36 2004, 326; Interview 6 2004, 268; Interview 29 2004, 221; Interview 30 2004, 231.

<sup>30</sup> See Interview 8 2004, 306; Interview 5 2004, 259; Interview 32 2004, 276; Interview 33 2004, 282; Interview 34 2004, 287f.; Interview 29 2004, 221.

<sup>31</sup> See Interview 8 2004, 305; Interview 5 2004, 259.

exchanging visits within the framework of religious holidays an important building block of coexistence<sup>32</sup>. The concept of neighborliness is not based solely on the pre-war practice of mutual visits for religious holidays, but also on the principle of mutual help<sup>33</sup>. Several representatives of the Muslim community extend this understanding of good neighborliness as a community of help to a community of protection<sup>34</sup>.

This understanding of neighborliness as a community of help and protection reflects the fear that the failure to coexist would mean a repetition of war experiences, and that the future of the Bosnian people hangs on the question of a successful coexistence in B&H.<sup>35</sup>

For us, we consider the dialogue, tolerance and coexistence as our destiny, our destiny, it is ours to be or not to be. I mean, we don't have a reserve, a second country to go, a second homeland to go, no.<sup>36</sup>

As regards inter-religious relationships, the majority of interviewees affirmed that the relationship of the Muslim religious community with the Catholic Church is better than the relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>37</sup> Particularly at higher institutional levels the relationship between the two ethnic or religious groups than it is at the grassroots level. Meetings such as large religious celebrations only had an official or symbolic character, for example, and did not arise from a serious motivation to improve relations with the Islamic community.<sup>38</sup> Half of those interviewed blame the Serbian Orthodox Church for being the vehicle of Serbian nationalism and the idea of a Greater Serbia, and for not having distanced itself from the Serbian nationalists or war criminals in their ranks.<sup>39</sup> As the quoted literature on inter-religious relations in B&H documents, the clergy interviewed, including the official representative of Bosnian Islam, demand that the Serbian Orthodox Church ask forgiveness in an official statement for its incorrect conduct regarding distancing itself from nationalism and war crimes. Several clergy consider this request for forgiveness as an additional condition for reconciliation:<sup>40</sup>

Reconciliation [...] assumes many things like truth and justice and also forgiveness if you like and also repentance – so all the four needs entirely. You say: 'I have done wrong, please forgive me!' And then I would say: 'Alright!' But I will not forgive, ah, you can't expect from me when you have done something wrong, that I will run after you to tell you: 'I forgive you' That is not possible. [...] You know the people for the people in the Balkans you know they are sometimes very stubborn to accept things. So we do have a certain resistance especially in the Serbian political and religious establishments to come out and to say: 'We did make a mistake in Srebrenica, this is a mistake. They didn't say that, we didn't hear that clearly. [...] But especially from the Orthodox church we didn't hear that clearly: 'This was wrong and a sin and we ask for forgiveness really and this will not happen again, and we ask for forgiveness.' Then the process of forgiveness and reconciliation will come out, so this is the process. [...] I think they have a

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<sup>32</sup> See Interview 6 2004, 268; Interview 29 2004, 218; Interview 8 2004, 305.

<sup>33</sup> Interview 36 2004, 327.

<sup>34</sup> Interview 8 2004, 307.

<sup>35</sup> See Interview Cerić 2004, 244; Interview Cerić 2003, 249; Interview 5 2004, 262.

<sup>36</sup> See Interview 29 2004, 211; Interview Cerić 2004, 244f.; Interview Cerić 2003, 244f.

<sup>37</sup> See Interview 36 2004, 323; Interview 5 2004, 258; Interview 33 2004, 283; Interview 29 2004, 210; Interview Cerić 2004, 240; Interview 7 2004, 294; Interview 8 2004, 308.

<sup>38</sup> See Interview 36 2004, 330; Interview 31 2004, 254f..

<sup>39</sup> See Interview 29 2004, 210; Interview 6 2004, 269; Interview 33 2004, 280; Interview Cerić 2004, 245; Interview 30 2004, 227.

<sup>40</sup> See Interview 32 2004, 275; Interview 8 2004, 313; Interview 36 2004, 326; Interview Cerić 2004, 245.

difficulty to face the truth. That will need some time.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.2 *The Interpretations of the Jewish Community*

### 2.2.1 The Interpretation of the Term “Truth”

The majority of representatives, employees and presidents of the individual Jewish communities in B&H define the term truth generally as the absence of lies and hypocrisy, distrust and manipulation.<sup>42</sup> Truth is connected to the virtue of honesty, which creates trust.

This interpretation of the term “truth” is arguably supported by a critique of the ruling political and religious elite. Many interviewees feel that the religious elite of the country are too involved in politics and that there is no clear separation of religion and politics in B&H.<sup>43</sup>

With the general criticism of religion interfering in politics, many representatives of the Jewish community criticize the attempted and actual influence on the state’s affairs of the Muslim religious community, especially on the part of their leader Reis Cerić. And they criticize the discrimination against the Jewish community consisting of hardly 1000 members, which does not act with a large lobby.

In connection to the Bosnian War, the majority of those interviewed interpret truth as factual knowledge, including the necessary determination of war criminal’s identities.<sup>44</sup> The representatives of the Jewish community take a neutral position towards the then parties to war, by stressing that every side has their own truth about what happened in the war.<sup>45</sup> For the majority of the interviewees it was an aggressive war undertaken by the Serbian military, which was joined by Croatia as it progressed. These representatives of the Jewish community opt for the recognition of a common truth in order to avoid nationalistic power politics:

I think that this fact is most connected with the truth because if I say that Serbs killed I don’t know how many Muslims, that this is the truth and that you are repeating that the whole time, it doesn’t help to forgive and it will keep that hate, instead of trying to calm it down, all the time. It depends on how you say it, but you can help people to forgive the past.<sup>46</sup>

The recognition of a single historical truth regarding the cause of war and the way the war developed is a basic precondition for interethnic and interreligious reconciliation, according to most of the interviewees, and this could deprive nationalistic propaganda of a central source of tension.

### 2.2.2. The Interpretation of the Term “Justice”

About half of those interviewed connect the term justice almost exclusively with the punishment of individual war criminals from the rank of all factions.<sup>47</sup> The punishment of war criminals is necessary in order to prevent collective recriminations:

To punish especially war criminals because they have to pay for what they did, if

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<sup>41</sup> See Interview Cerić 2004, 245.

<sup>42</sup> See Interview 15 2004, 32; Interview 16 2004, 43; Interview 1 2004, 59.

<sup>43</sup> See Interview 17 2004, 51; Interview 1 2004, 59; Interview 14 2004, 13; Interview 2 2004, 68; Interview 15 2004, 31.

<sup>44</sup> See Interview 14 2004, 15; Interview 16 2004, 43; Interview Finci 2004, 22; Interview 17 2004, 49; Interview 15 2004, 30.

<sup>45</sup> See Interview Finci 2004, 21; Interview 15 2004, 25, 32; Interview 16 2004, 43; Interview 2 2004, 69.

<sup>46</sup> Interview 17 2004, 52.

<sup>47</sup> See Interview 17 2004, 49; Interview 14 2004, 13; Interview Finci 2004, 21; Interview 16 2004, 40f.; Interview 2 2004, 67; Interview 15 2004, 27f..

you are Karadžić or Mladić, if you are in Srebrenica and are still walking free. They have to pay for what they did, because if they don't pay then the whole Serb nationality will be guilty but there is no such thing as a collective guilt, there is no such thing, it is a *personal thing* and it is really important that they pay. [...] If not, then the people here will not have a positive opinion about Serbs in general and this is not a good thing because not all Serbs are guilty. So, you have to identify and you have to bring to the court the people who are guilty. You know, not only Serbs, they did worse things here, but they are not the only one and you can not generalize.<sup>48</sup>

The demand to identify, deliver, and charge war criminals is just as impartial in the Jewish community as the demand to collect factual knowledge about the war crimes committed. The representatives of the Jewish religious community emphasize in this context that war crimes were committed by all sides<sup>49</sup> and that it is the task of every party to war to take care of their own,<sup>50</sup> meaning the naming and delivery of their own guilty parties. This interpretation demonstrates the interest for the Jewish community of making its neutrality in this conflict clear.<sup>51</sup>

Several interviewees also point to the fact that the creation of peaceful interreligious or inter-ethnic relationships is not enough to achieve justice in the form of punishing war criminals, but that the readiness to forgive and reconcile must be present<sup>52</sup>:

With reconciliation, we can reconcile those who understand the guilt, who accept the guilt, who are ready to admit the guilt, and who can say, I am sorry for what I did, at the same time we cannot take this excuse in the name of someone else.<sup>53</sup>

Justice as willingness to reconcile and thus as willingness to forgive and ask forgiveness is considered a basic precondition for a permanent peaceful coexistence from all three warring parties.

For the majority of the representatives interviewed, truth as information about crimes committed, justice in the form of individual punishment as well as penance and forgiveness all belong to a collective reconciliation process, which is the basic condition for a peaceful society.

This understanding of justice is explained by three interviewees with the Jewish understanding of justice as the practice of reconciliation to create societal peace; more specifically with the important religious celebration of Yom Kippur, the day of reconciliation.<sup>54</sup>

In the Jewish faith, you know, we have Yom Kippur, and we pray for forgiveness when we did something to somebody, we have to ask them to forgive so, it is *really* necessary to forgive if you want to go ahead, not to forget, but to forgive otherwise I do not know how Jews could live with all that happened in the Holocaust, so it is really necessary to forgive because you don't have peace if you are angry with someone, if you are angry with somebody or if you hate somebody, then you don't have peace in yourself and the other as well. And you need some

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<sup>48</sup> Interview 17 2004, 50.

<sup>49</sup> See Interview Finci 2004, 21; Interview 15 2004, 29f.

<sup>50</sup> See Interview 2 2004, 69; Interview 15 2004, 28f.

<sup>51</sup> See Interview 15 2004, 25, 33; Interview 16 2004, 42; Interview 17 2004, 46; Interview 1 2004, 54; Interview Finci 2004, 23f.

<sup>52</sup> See Interview 14 2004, 12; Interview 17 2004, 50; Interview 15 2004, 30; Interview 16 2004, 41.

<sup>53</sup> Interview Finci 2004, 24.

<sup>54</sup> See Interview Finci 2004, 22f.; Interview 1 2004, 58; Interview 17 2004, 50; Interview 14 2004, 13.

time for it, then it is much easier to forgive than when everything is so fresh.<sup>55</sup>

Besides the understanding of justice as individual punishment within the framework of a societal reconciliation process, the majority of the Jewish representatives associated justice with the equality of all ethnic and religious groups in B&H<sup>56</sup> and pointed to the fact that societal peace and coexistence is only possible on the basis of a fair political system – which will be shown in the interpretation of the term “coexistence.” The understanding of justice as equal rights implies a demand for the same rights and chances for each ethnic or religious minority in each region once dominated by a majority (Herzegovina, Central Bosnia, Republika Srpska). Particularly in the area of economy,<sup>57</sup> the restitution of property that was taken from religious communities,<sup>58</sup> and in questions of religious freedom or religious instruction in public schools<sup>59</sup> the Jewish representatives do not consider this equality to exist. In contrast to the traditional religious communities in B&H, they did not formulate this demand for equal rights only in relation to the members of the Jewish community, but in relation to the minorities living in each of the majority regions.

### 2.2.3 The Interpretation of the Term “Coexistence”

The interviewees understand coexistence as equality – analogous to their definition of justice – in coexistence with mutual respect and based on the state guarantee of religious freedom.<sup>60</sup> For the Jewish community celebrating the respective holidays together, as was done before the war, is vital practice of coexistence.<sup>61</sup>

One reason for this, which only a few of those interviewed associated with the term coexistence, may be that the Jewish community has considered mixed marriages, the most extreme form of coexistence, to be desirable, and this both before and after the war.<sup>62</sup> The majority of interviewees also stressed that coexistence in Bosnien-Herzegovina will only be possible if all inhabitants consider themselves Bosnians and the question of national and religious identity fades into the background.<sup>63</sup> The representatives of the Jewish community not only reject the existing Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian nationalisms, but also the recognition of these nationals as constitutive peoples of BiH as well as the recognition from constitutional regulations and institutions such as governmental positions that must be equally distributed,<sup>64</sup> or the existence of the entities.<sup>65</sup> The quality of interreligious relationships at the high clergy level is evaluated by the Jewish representatives in the majority as negative, whereby the interreligious relationships at the grassroots level is considered positive. In general we can conclude from the interviews analyzed here, that the interethnic and inter-religious relationships between the Jewish community and the Bosnian elites in religion and politics are significantly worse than those with the Serbian and Croatian elites.

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<sup>55</sup> Interview 17 2004, 51.

<sup>56</sup> See Interview 1 2004, 55,57; Interview 13 2004, 8; Interview 15 2004, 31; Interview 2 2004, 61, 68; Interview 17 2004, 50.

<sup>57</sup> See Interview 1 2004, 56ff.; Interview 2 2004, 68.

<sup>58</sup> See Interview 1 2004, 56, 57; Interview 2 2004, 63; Interview 13 2004, 5.

<sup>59</sup> See Interview 1 2004, 57; Interview 2 2004, 61, 67; Interview Prof. Dr. Francine Friedman, Sarajevo 26.6.2004.

<sup>60</sup> See Interview 17 2004, 47; Interview 1 2004, 55; Interview 14 2004, 12; Interview Finci 2004, 17f., 20, 16 2004: 37; Interview 15 2004, 29.

<sup>61</sup> See Interview 17 2004, 48; Interview 15 2004, 11; Interview 16 2004, 39; Interview 2 2004, 66.

<sup>62</sup> See Interview 15 2004: 28; Interview 2 2004: 66; Interview 16 2004: 39; Interview 1 2004: 54; Interview 14 2004, 11; Interview Finci 2004, 20.

<sup>63</sup> See Interview 15 2004, 29; Interview 2 2004, 62; Interview 13 2004, 4, Interview 17 2004, 46.

<sup>64</sup> See Interview 2 2004, 67.

<sup>65</sup> See Interview 16 2004, 41; Interview 15 2004, 26; Interview 17 2004,53.

### 2.3 *The Interpretations of the Catholic Religious Community in B&H*

#### 2.3.1 The Interpretation of the Term "Truth"

Most of the representatives from the Catholic Church in B&H interpret the term truth in consideration of culpability for the war. For them it is clear that the Bosnian war was not a religious war,<sup>66</sup> rather it was an aggression from Serbia.<sup>67</sup> "The war brought Serbia, together with the Bosnian Serbs, to Bosnia and the pure aggression was rewarded with 49% of Bosnia. [...] He who attacks is culpable."<sup>68</sup>

One interviewee from the Catholic Church puts this quote into perspective by stressing that the question of culpability for the war will be evaluated differently by every faction involved and that there can be no objectivity. The representatives of the Catholic clergy do not explain their interpretation of the term truth as Serbian's clear culpability for the war.

#### 2.3.2 The Interpretation of the Term "Justice"

The majority of the Catholic clergy define justice as equality.<sup>69</sup> This definition of justice as equality is primarily directed towards the Croatian people and the Catholic Church, although they argue that it embodies a general principle of justice. Such an understanding of justice is based mostly on the assessment and evaluation of the political institutions and state structures in B&H and the consequential "threat scenario" for the Croatian people and the Catholic Church. The representatives of the Catholic clergy interviewed see the discrimination of the Croatian minority in the domination of the Republika Srpska by Serbia and the Federation by Muslims.<sup>70</sup> According to the interviewees, the Croatian minority is discriminated against in the issues of restituting property taken,<sup>71</sup> employment opportunities,<sup>72</sup> the possibility for war refugees to return,<sup>73</sup> their own curriculum and Catholic religious education for Croatian students<sup>74</sup> and the construction of Catholic Churches.<sup>75</sup> The Catholic representatives explain this discrimination against the Croatian people primarily with the Dayton Accords and the state constitution created by the Accords.<sup>76</sup> They reject the current political structure in B&H and demand that the entities be done away with and cantons introduced according to the Swiss model, in order to guarantee each region as much autonomy as possible. This model implies that the representatives of the Catholic Church favor dividing B&H into three autonomous regions, and thus an ethnic homogenization of the country. "If living together after the war is not possible and we want to live in peace, we must separate ourselves."<sup>77</sup> This discrimination of the Croatian minority is amplified by the international community, in the eyes of the clergy interviewed, because it discriminates against the Croatian

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<sup>66</sup> See Interview Puljic 2004, 108; Interview 24 2004, 141.

<sup>67</sup> See Interview 24 2004, 146; Interview 25 2003, 169; Interview 25 2004, 170; Interview 4 2004, 194; Interview 23 2004, 122.

<sup>68</sup> Interview 23 2004, 124.

<sup>69</sup> See Interview 25 2003, 163; Interview 25 2004, 185; Interview 27 2004, 202; Interview 24 2004, 144f; Interview Puljic 2004, 111f.; Interview 23 2004, 132; Interview 22 2004, 117; Interview 3 2004, 160.

<sup>70</sup> See Interview 27 2004, 202; Interview Puljić 2004, 109, 111, 112; Interview 24 2004, 143; Interview 25 2004, 175, 178.

<sup>71</sup> See Interview 19 2004, 85; 27 2004, 201.

<sup>72</sup> See Interview 24 2004, 140, 143; Interview 27 2004, 202; Interview 22 2004, 116f.; Interview 19 2004, 84; Interview 18 2004, 79; Interview 20 2004, 102f.

<sup>73</sup> See Interview 24 2004, 143; Interview 25 2004, 178; Interview 25 2003, 169.

<sup>74</sup> See Interview 22 2004, 117; Interview 24 2004, 144; Interview Puljic 2004, 110; Interview 28 2004, 201f.

<sup>75</sup> See Interview Puljić 2004, 110.

<sup>76</sup> See Interview 25 2003, 163f., 170; Interview 25 2004, 175, 178; Interview 23 2004, 132f.; Interview Puljić 2004, 112; Interview 22 2004, 116; Interview 24 2004, 130, 142.

<sup>77</sup> Interview 24 2004, 142.

people and the Catholic Church.<sup>78</sup> In addition to this discrimination from the international community, the Catholic representatives feel abandoned by their international allies. In this context, several representatives of the Catholic clergy defend their understanding of the Catholic Church as the guardian of the Croatian nation.<sup>79</sup> This understanding of the function for the Catholic Church divides the majority of the Catholic clergy in the post-war Bosnia, since the Dayton Accords and political order of B&H guarantee neither the rights nor the freedom of the survivors among the Croatian people.<sup>80</sup> Cardinal Puljić in particular stresses that the fate of the Croatian people, and thus the fate of the Catholic Church in B&H is at risk.<sup>81</sup> Most of the Catholic clergy do not mention the topics of identifying, extraditing and punishing war criminals in connection with the term justice, rather they show a conscious neutrality in relation to the term justice without ethnic or religious justification.<sup>82</sup>

### 2.3.3 The interpretation of the Term “Coexistence”

The Catholic clergy – just like the Bosnian Franciscans – generally support the coexistence of nations and religions within B&H.<sup>83</sup> Several of those interviewed gave voice to their deep conviction of the beauty and appeal of coexistence, referring to the long tradition of multi-cultural coexistence in B&H.<sup>84</sup> The various ethnic groups and religious communities living together is only thinkable for the majority of the Catholic majority if there are fundamental political changes, as they described in connection with their interpretation of the term justice. The Catholic clergy makes their acceptance of a multiethnic and multi-religious Bosnia-Herzegovina dependent upon political conditions that would guarantee the equality, and thus the basis for the existence of the Croatian people in B&H. The understandings described indicate that most of the interviewees associate the terms “respect,” and “recognition of the other” as neighbors with the term coexistence in relation to their own ethnic or religious group and the political situation.<sup>85</sup> In connection with this interpretation, several interviewees mentioned the Bosnian saying: “Love your own, respect the Other.”<sup>86</sup> This allows a complex understanding of the Catholic clergy’s position on the question of coexistence in B&H. Since the representatives of the Catholic Church see the existing political order and the policies of the OHR and OSCE as a threat to Croatian identity, particularly in the area of education, the saying above reflects the rejection of secular pluralism implemented by the international community, which negates the cultural and religious differences in their view. They simultaneously stress the necessity of recognizing cultural and religious differences through the political system.<sup>87</sup> One’s own ethnic group and religious community as a minority in the Muslim-Croatian Federation is what is understood under “recognition of the Other” as neighbors, in particular in Central Bosnia and the core region of Sarajevo. The Catholic clergy interviewed

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<sup>78</sup> See Interview 24 2004, 139, 141; Interview 25 2004, 162, 179; Interview 22 2004, 118; Interview Puljić 2004, 112.

<sup>79</sup> See Interview 25 2004, 174, 182; Interview 24 2004, 138, 141; Interview 28 2004, 202; Interview Puljić 2003, Interview 22 2004, 115.

<sup>80</sup> See Interview 25 2003, 162; Interview 25 2004, 179; Interview 24 2004, 139, 141; Interview Puljić 2004, 111; Interview 22 2004, 117f.

<sup>81</sup> See Interview Puljić 2004, 111.

<sup>82</sup> See Interview 24 2004, 141; Interview 25 2004, 170, 182.

<sup>83</sup> See Interview 24 2004, 140; Interview 28 2004, 200; Interview 3 2004, 156; Interview 4 2004, 187; Interview Puljić 2004, 109, 114; Interview 19 2004, 84ff; Interview 18 2004, 73, 80; Interview 19 2004, 86; Interview 20 2004, 102f.

<sup>84</sup> See Interview 24 2004, f 140; Interview 23 2004, 125.

<sup>85</sup> See Interview Puljić 2004, 110; Interview 19 2004, 84; Interview 24 2004, 144; Interview 3 2004, 158; Interview 4 2004, 186.

<sup>86</sup> Interview Puljić 2004, 111, See Interview 19 2004, 86.

<sup>87</sup> See Interview Puljić 2004, 109; Interview 28 2004, 199, 202; Interview 22 2004, 116+; Interview 25 2004, 180f.

associated reconciliation with the term coexistence, yet during the course of the interview the political conditions under which they could imagine this societal process taking place came into play. The clergy connects reconciliation, as well as coexistence, of the ethnic groups and religious communities in B&H with the restructuring of the political order to the advantage of their own nation and religious community, such as might be achieved with a concordat of the Vatican with the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>88</sup> To strengthen and maintain the religious and ethnic identities under threat, the Catholic clergy sees itself forced to reject, or at least criticize, all practices of coexistence that would aim for such an evening out of cultural and religious identities.

## 2.4 *The Interpretations of the Serbian Orthodox Church of B&H*

### 2.4.1 The Interpretation of the Term "Truth"

Many representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church associate the term truth with "honesty"<sup>89</sup> in contrast to "propaganda" against the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people perpetrated by the international community, the domestic and foreign press<sup>90</sup> and the Muslims.<sup>91</sup> This "propaganda" is related to the question of culpability for the war and the war criminals, as well as the question of the role the Serbian Orthodox Church played in the Bosnian war, according to the interviewees. The Bosnian media, state institution and the international community are not non-partisan and free, rather they hold to a pro-Bosnian course.<sup>92</sup> For the majority of those interviewed it is a fact that, also in reference to what happened in WWII such as the Jasenovac concentration camp<sup>93</sup> and the Kosovo myth,<sup>94</sup> the Serbian people suffered the most in the Bosnian war and had more martyrs in history than Muslims and Croats.<sup>95</sup>

There is consensus among the Orthodox clergy about the question of culpability for the war, that they reject the idea of Serbia having sole responsibility for the outbreak of the Bosnian war. The majority of the clergy does not accept such a judgment of Serbia. Several clergy presented, besides a general judgment that all warring factions and the international community were responsible for this war,<sup>96</sup> a more complex position on this question. Approximately half of the clergy consider the Bosnian Muslims, the international community, Germany or the United States are responsible for the war.<sup>97 98 99</sup>

Several clergy put forth conspiracy theories about foreign powers that staged the Bosnian war in order to then take over power in Bosnia or prevent accession to the EU.<sup>100</sup> A number of the Orthodox clergy consider the Serbian people to be the losers of the war and the Bosnian or Croatian factions as the winners.<sup>101</sup> The majority of the clergy interviewed addressed the topic of the connection between the Serbian Orthodox Church and politics in general and its role in the Bosnian

<sup>88</sup> See Interview 22 2004, 115f.; Interview 24 2004, 139f.; Interview 25 2003, 168; Interview 25 2004, 200f.

<sup>89</sup> See Interview 38 2004, 362; Interview 40 2005, 403; Interview Jovanović 2004, 334.

<sup>90</sup> See Interview Jovanović 2004, 334; Interview 11 2005, 432; Interview 39 2005, 406; Interview 41 2005, 447f.

<sup>91</sup> See Interview 40 2005, 418f; Interview 37 2004, 360f.; Interview 41 2005, 447+

<sup>92</sup> See Interview 37 2004, 356; Interview 39 2005, 402; Interview 40 2005, 418f.; Interview Jovanović 2004, 334; Interview 11 2005, 432; Interview 12 2005, 444f.; Interview 2005, 393.

<sup>93</sup> See Interview 40 2005, 417f.; Interview 10 2004, 373.

<sup>94</sup> See Interview 11 2005, 431.

<sup>95</sup> See Interview 10 2004, 368; Interview Jovanović 2004, 336; Interview 37 2004, 358f.; Interview 39 2005, 408; Interview 40 2005, 418f.; Interview 11 2005, 426f.; Interview 42 2005, 453f.

<sup>96</sup> See Interview 39 2005, 407; Interview 40 2005, 419f.; Interview 12 2005, 443; Interview 42 2005, 453f.

<sup>97</sup> See Interview 38 2005, 391f.; Interview 40 2005, 420f.; Interview 11 2005, 429.

<sup>98</sup> See Interview 11 2005, 433.

<sup>99</sup> Interview 40 2005, 425.

<sup>100</sup> See Interview 42 2005, 451f.; Interview 40 2005, 41.

<sup>101</sup> See Interview 10 2004, 366f.; Interview 38 2005, 391f. ; Interview 39 2005, 407.

war with excuses. The Orthodox Church is an a-political institution,<sup>102</sup> which tries not to interfere in politics.<sup>103</sup>

L'église orthodoxe en général, ah, il y a des gens qui disent que l'église orthodoxe a été pendant la guerre sur le coté du peuple serbe contre les musulmans et les croates et qu'elle a participé à la guerre. Cela n'est pas la vérité, cela n'est pas la vérité, c'est faux, l'église orthodoxe a cherché toujours le bien pour tous les hommes, tous les hommes qui vivent en Bosnie maintenant. Elle n'est pas du tout pour la guerre, le chauvinisme entre les serbes en Bosnie, parce qu'il y avait toujours beaucoup de choses entre les politiciens en Bosnie quand on parlait de l'église orthodoxe, que l'on dit que l'église était contre les musulmans et les croates. Nous sommes pour l'amour dans le monde, pour l'amour et l'amitié. [...] L'église orthodoxe était obligée de rester avec son peuple c'est l'église dans le peuple, le peuple serbe, et elle était toujours avec nous, toujours avec nous, mais pas pour la guerre, pas du tout pour la guerre, mais avec nous, il faut faire la différence entre les serbes qui participent dans une guerre et l'église qui participe à la vie d'un peuple. Je pense qu'il faut faire cette différence, l'église a toujours participé à la vie du peuple et pendant la guerre également.<sup>104</sup>

As this quote shows, the Orthodox clergy object to the accusations that the Serbian Orthodox Church actively caused the Bosnian war or at least supported it. The use of military means is only legitimate in their eyes for a defensive war.<sup>105</sup> Since most of the interviewees consider the Bosnian war as an aggressive war,<sup>106</sup> we can assume that many clergy see the military actions of the Serbian army as legitimate defensive measures.

#### 2.4.2 The Interpretation of the Term "Justice"

Just like the Catholic clergy and the representatives from the Jewish community, the Orthodox clergy understand equality among all nations and religious communities living in the territory of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a part of the term justice.<sup>107</sup> Just as in the interpretation of the term truth, the understanding of justice is anchored in the self-image of the Serbian people and the Serbian Orthodox Church as a target for anti-Serbian or pro-Bosnian politics from the international community. This understanding of the term justice is based on the assumption that their own people or their own religious community is being discriminated against. The discrimination is seen as applicable as much for the Orthodox clergy from the international community, especially from OHR and ICTY, but also from the Muslim-Croatian Federation.<sup>108</sup>

#### 2.4.3 Definition of the Term "Coexistence"

The clergy from the Serbian Orthodox Church advocate co-existence of the national and

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<sup>102</sup> See Interview 37 2004, 356; Interview 38 2005, 391+; Interview Jovanović 2004, 338, Interview 39 2005, 403f.

<sup>103</sup> See Interview Jovanović 2004, 338f. Interview 12 2005, 440f.; Interview 39 2005, 407+; Interview 11 2005, 426; Interview 38 2005, 395.

<sup>104</sup> Interview 41 2005, 447.

<sup>105</sup> See Interview 40 2005, 419; Interview 38 2005, 391.

<sup>106</sup> See Interview 38 2005, 391; Interview 11 2005, 433; Interview 41 2005, 448f.; Interview 11 2005, 428.

<sup>107</sup> See Interview 38 2005, 390, 398; Interview 39 2005, 404 409; Interview 9 2004, 348; Interview 10 2004, 370; Interview 11 2005, 431, Interview 12 2005, 443.

<sup>108</sup> See Interview 39 2005, 403, 410f.; Interview 11 2005, 431; Interview 40 2005, 419f.; Interview Jovanović 2005, 337f.; Interview 37 2004, 358f. ; Interview 38 2005, 390, 394.

religious communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>109</sup> Nearly all of the clergy support cohabitation of the national and religious communities in one territory,<sup>110</sup> where the boundaries of the territory guarantee the freedom of belief<sup>111</sup> for all citizens. The practices of coexistence before the war are seen by many clergy as an ideal, which cannot be realized again quickly with conditions as they are, since sharing joys and sorrows means more than neighborly solidarity and the experiences in the war, the loss of mutual trust, individual and collective fears and feelings of being threatened, as well as the nationalistic propaganda campaigns described all work against it.<sup>112</sup> Not least of all, the fear of another war<sup>113</sup> or due to discrimination suffered by the Serbs from the political system, the Orthodox clergy see the necessity of maintaining the entities in B&H. Even though they feel that the political order instituted by the Dayton Accords needs to be reformed, for example the cantons of the federation or the executive filled with equal representation according to the constituting people of B&H.<sup>114</sup> Possible reform plans for these institutional regulations relating to police and army thus meet with rejection.

### 2.5 Summary of the Evaluation

Considering the interpretations of the terms “truth”, “justice” and “coexistence”, there are some agreements on content between the representatives interviewed from the Jewish and Muslim religious communities and between the Catholic and Serbian Orthodox Churches: the term truth is related by most of the representatives to the idea of culpability for the war. Catholics and Muslims agree that the Bosnian war can be interpreted as Serbian aggression, whereby the Serbian Orthodox clergy blame either Bosnian Muslims or the international community, in particular Germany, for the early recognition of Slovenia and Croatia.

The representatives of the Jewish and Muslim religious communities mention their demand for clarity on the war crimes committed under the term truth, and demonstrate their recognition of the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague (ICTY), although Serbian Orthodox clergy use this topic to explain the apologetic position of the Serbian Orthodox Church and to criticize the discriminating practices of the ICTY. Most of the Catholic clergy do not mention the topic of factual knowledge about war crimes committed, in contrast to the Bosnian Franciscans. The majority of Islamic clergy interviewed understand justice as the punishment of the culprits through global courts based on the rule of law. These interpretations are shared by half of the Jewish community representatives and the representatives from the Bosnian Franciscans, whereby the representatives of the Catholic and Serbian Orthodox Churches, as well as several from the Jewish community, prefer to name the problem of equality or equal opportunities for ethnicities and religious communities, especially in questions of restitution of property, religious education, employment, etc.

Catholic and Orthodox clergy interpret the term justice similarly in that in adherence to the Christian message of God’s love they address the necessity of forgiving guilt. Many Orthodox clergy mention the demand for non-partiality in the sense of choosing not to make a judgment,

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<sup>109</sup> See Interview 38 2005, 391; Interview 40 2004, 419; Interview 9 2004, 342; Interview 41 2005, 446; Interview 10 2004, 369; Interview 37 2004, 356f.

<sup>110</sup> See Interview Jovanović 2004, 335f. Interview 40 2005, 419f.; Interview 41 2005, 447f.; Interview 11 2005, 427; Interview 39 2005, 409; Interview 10 2004, 370; Interview 9 2004, 349.

<sup>111</sup> See Interview 39 2005, 410; Interview 40 2005, 419f.

<sup>112</sup> See Interview 37 2004, 358, 363; Interview 10 2004, 369f.; Interview 39 2005, 415f.; Interview 40 2005, 420f.; Interview 9 2004, 348.

<sup>113</sup> See Interview 41 2005, 449; Interview 38 2005, 391.

<sup>114</sup> See Interview 37 2005, 358; Interview 39 2005, 411.

which in this connection is taken from the Sermon on the Mount.

As a condition for successful coexistence, representatives of the Jewish and Muslim religious communities and most of the Bosnian Franciscans support dismantling the entities to create a unified state, as well as the principle of freedom of religion. Catholic and Orthodox clergy on the other hand, have the same opinion that dismantling the entities with the goal of creating autonomous regions or at least mostly autonomous cantons within the state territory. While Catholic clergy consider such a reform to be an unavoidable necessity for successful coexistence because of the Muslim-Bosnian majorities in the Croatian-Muslim Federation, Orthodox clergy prefer to keep the status quo with the option of a unified central state. This difference in interests between representatives from the religious traditions in B&H shows a historical continuity. Even before the Bosnian war broke out the ruling coalition of the three nationalistic parties collapsed under the question of whether B&H should remain a centralized state, as the Muslims wanted, or be divided into cantons or federations of the republic based on the constitutional system, as the Serbs and Croats preferred.<sup>115</sup> Even at the time it became clear that only the SDA [the Party of Democratic Action, a predominantly Muslim political party] was behind keeping B&H as a central state, Serbia and Croatia supported a cantonization or federalization however, which would make a later reunion of the respective settler regions with their “mother lands” of Croatia and Serbia easier, and which would lead to the disintegration of B&H.<sup>116</sup>

Interpretation of the main terms	Jews	Catholics	Franciscans	Muslims	Serbian Orthodoxy
Truth	Honesty, trust, clarification of war crimes	Culpability Aggression Serbians	Clarification of war crimes	Culpability Aggression Serbians	Culpability Muslims, International community, Germany
Justice	Punishment of war criminals equality + equal opportunity	Equality + equal opportunity Forgiving guilt	Equality of all constitutive peoples of BiH Forgiveness, Punishment of war criminals	Punishment of war criminals Acceptance of the ICTY	Neutrality Critique of ICTY Forgiving guilt Equality + equal opportunity
Coexistence	Dismantling entities/central state	Dismantling entities/canton model	Social justice Reconciliation	Dismantling entities/central state	Status quo /Dismantling entities/canton mode

**Table:** Summary of interview results

The analysis results also show that the interreligious relations are stressed by the various issues in conflict. These can be categorized as

- a. Inter-ethnic objects of conflict within the discretionary power of politics—without directly affecting religious communities. Among these are, for example, the question of culpability for the war, the political order of B&H and the topic of war criminals, with the connected issue of solidarity in the religious communities with nationalistic politicians and accused war criminals.
- b. Inter-ethnic objects of conflict within the discretionary power of politics—where the

<sup>115</sup> See Calic 1996, 86.

<sup>116</sup> See ebd.

religious communities are affected. The question of equality of nations and religious communities, the restitution of property, the legal status of religious groups, religious education and political agreements of the state B&H with individual religious communities such as the concordat of the government in B&H with the Vatican belong to this group.

- c. Inter-religious objects of conflict within the discretionary power of the religious communities themselves, such as the authorization of building places of worship on land in the possession of other religious communities.

As has been shown clearly here in the interview material quoted, the representatives of the Catholic, Serbian-Orthodox and Muslim religious communities see themselves as the main victims of the war, formed by ethno-clerical transfiguration and substitution of church members and nation.<sup>117</sup> Using the destruction of houses of worship and cemeteries, the official representatives of the religious institutions portray their own religious group as the main victims of the war. Responsible parties from their own ranks are either not discussed or the question of culpability for one's own group is completely ignored.<sup>118</sup> "A readiness for critical examinations of one's own history and the crimes that occurred does not exist. The question of culpability, if asked at all, is either individualized or generalized. This is especially true for the religious communities despite the religious wisdom regarding guilt and forgiveness."<sup>119</sup>

Where clergy have taken over the function of "proxy politicians" far away from the political power of jurisdiction of the international community, and presented themselves as guardians of the nation, the chances for a self-critical distancing from the nationalistic ideas, for political alliances, and the initiation of a reconciliation process from the ranks of religions so full of knowledge about guile and forgiveness are imaginably poor. The only path that remains to work through the objects of conflict as a chance at a reconciliation process is from the ranks of the clergy. The dialogue organizations already in existence in Bosnia, such as the Interreligious Council of B&H as an initiative of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), ABRAHAM, Oci and Oci or IMIC, as initiatives from Bosnian Franciscan monks, could build the basis for conflict resolution tasks if their local and supra-regional programs are mutually networked and supplemented by "conflict solving workshops," that address the virulent conflict issues in the individual communities. Since the official High Representative of the International Community, Dr. Christian Schwarz-Schilling has years of concrete experience in mediation within B&H, we may hope that such projects will be receive the financial and logistical support from the respective institutions of the OHR and the OSCE.

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<sup>117</sup> See Mojzes 1998, 81, Cohen 1998, 65, Perica 2002, 218+

<sup>118</sup> See Ziemer 2003, 73.

<sup>119</sup> Ziemer 2003, 75.