

BETWEEN TERROR AND TOLERANCE: RELIGION, CONFLICT, AND PEACEMAKING

POLICY SUMMARY



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OVERVIEW

This policy report presents summary findings and conclusions emanating from a research project conducted at the Center for Sustainable Development and International Peace at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. The research will be published in a forthcoming book titled *Between Terror and Tolerance: Religious Leaders, Conflict, and Peacemaking* (Timothy D. Sisk, ed.; forthcoming, Georgetown University Press, 2011).

The book presents the research and findings of research and analysis on religious leaders' roles in exacerbating or mitigating conflict in thematic and case-study chapters. The volume explores the research question: *Under what conditions do religious leaders justify or catalyze violence along identity lines that divide contemporary societies, and under what conditions do they lay the foundation for, advocate, and sometimes mediate for peace?*

The book features thematic chapters on religion, nationalism, and intolerance, Shi'a-Sunni relations, and case studies by leading scholars on Egypt, Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Tajikistan. The concluding chapter presents integrated findings from the research and draws the implications for policies and programs of the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations in seeking to promote and enhance the capacity of religious leaders to promote tolerance and coexistence.

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POLICY SUMMARY

The civil wars of the 1990s and early 2000s – most of which are intrastate conflicts or civil wars – have spawned a new generation of literature on the underlying causes of the social strife and the patterns of escalation that lead to violence. In this research, it is clear that a pivotal factor in the escalation of social tensions in to violent strife along ethnic, religious, or sectarian lines is the critical role of *elite mobilization*: leaders who provide the ideological justification, moral reasoning, and call to action that create conditions for collective confrontation in deeply divided societies riven by ethnic, racial, or religious difference. Yet at other times, and in other conditions, these or other religious elites may well seek to ameliorate social conditions, call for tolerance and coexistence, and even directly mediate among difference and dispute.

This Policy Summary presents research findings on religious elites by a team of scholars on the roles of religious leaders in conflict and peacemaking.

- First, the critical question of religious factors in the “causes of conflict” debate is considered. The case studies tend to show that religion is deeply intertwined with the project of state and nation-building and a critical variable is the extent to which religion is defined as the basis of the state and the relationship between religious ethno-nationalism and intolerance. At the same time, global norms of religious tolerance and human rights on the protection of religious tradition has been effective in promoting tolerance and contributing to social cohesion.
- Second, the findings from the thematic chapters and case studies are presented. This section summarizes selected insights and perspectives from the case-study authors in the project and provides a synopsis of their contributions to the *Between Terror and Tolerance* book. The case studies reflect the complexity of context in which local, national, regional, and global forces interact and in which religion has at times been a detracting and contributing factor to peace.
- Third, the report presents integrated findings drawn from the case studies, and the summary findings of the project. The report emphasizes, particularly, the critical importance of understanding the dynamics of intra-religious relations and the ideological, material or “political economy,” and mobilization dynamics of religious elites. The emphasis on within-group analysis of religious or sectarian divisions reveals an appreciation that the relative ascendancy of moderate or more religiously nationalist or exclusive elites versus those who interpret the original religious tradition in inclusive ways and that articulate visions of social coexistence (sometimes called Tolerance II) that go beyond minimal notions of “tolerance” of religious minorities.
- The fourth section presents the principal policy-relevant recommendations emanating from the research. The recommendations are intended to guide the further evolution of practice in engagement with religious actors in efforts to prevent, manage, or build peace.

I. THE CONTEXT: RELIGION, ELITES, AND THE “CAUSES OF CONFLICT” DEBATE

Today, in a globalized world with interrelated conflict dynamics that link internal conflict conditions with threats of ostensibly religious-inspired terrorism has raised increasing interest about the linkages between religious elites, conflict and peacemaking. The focus on elites reflects their privileged role in leading theories of “causes of conflict” analysis. Indeed, in the context of international terrorism, the focus on religious elites and the essential motives for terrorism is a leading policy concern.

Since the period of rapid decolonization after the Second World War, a rich literature has developed on the nature of societies that are deeply divided: historically, these countries were considered “plural” or segmented societies in contrast to the either more putatively nation-state based countries of Western Europe and the complex integrated, immigrant-based societies such as the United States.¹ This literature and our understanding of deeply divided diverse societies have come a very long way since the early work, focusing for example in the early post-Cold War period on “ethnic conflict”² and more recently on the multidimensional challenges of diversity and difference.³

RELIGIOUS ELITES AND CONFLICT: A PARADOX

Within this literature, there is also a keen appreciation of the extensive role of elites – from analyses of how elites “play the communal card”⁴ to evaluation of the horizontal linkages between cultural, economic, and political elites and grass-roots.⁵

For example, following the horrific, coordinated terror bomb attacks on mass transit targets that rocked London during the morning rush hour of July 7, 2005 – killing 52 and injuring more than 770 – the government of then-Prime Minister Tony Blair reacted quickly to expel religious elites who were believed instigators of the attackers.⁶ Blair’s government moved to expel the most inflammatory religious leaders believed to have preached “glorification” of violence. This instance illustrates a broader concern in the contemporary world: situations in which religious leaders may either provide a *warrant* for violence by professing intolerance on the basis of religion or belief, or go further in articulating a specific *injunction to action* for violence against specific targets.⁷

Counterbalancing such situations are others in which religious leaders have played an opposite role: serving as an essential bridge between groups in conflict.⁸ In the midst of the violent and turbulent transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa, following a major upsurge in factional fighting in mid-1992, Church leaders through the South African Council of Churches (and involving leaders of the previously isolated Dutch Reformed Church), stepped in to directly mediate the political crisis that had developed between anti-apartheid fighter Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk. In Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani has played a critical role as a “quietest” cleric in at times directly mediating in the deep sectarian riff that opened in Iraq following the 2003 U.S.-led intervention (for example, in speaking against retaliation for attacks on Shi’a worshippers), while at other times has been seen as backing the sectarian political parties that divide Iraq.⁹

Thus, as Scott Appleby observes, religion presents an ambivalent set of relationships in terms of conflict and peace: “While the religious extremist is often integrated into a well-organized movement, armed to the teeth, expertly trained, lavishly financed, ideologically disciplined, and involved in a kind of ‘ecumenical’ collaboration with other violence-prone organizations, the nonviolent religious actor is relatively isolated, underfinanced, unskilled in the techniques of conflict transformation.”¹⁰

Thus there is a general paradox about elite roles in conflict dynamics. And, more specifically, a clearly perplexing set of puzzles exist surrounding religious elites in particular: religious leaders at times fan the flames of difference through their interpretation of canon, determination of doctrine, and in specific calls to action. At other times, religious leaders directly appeal for tolerance and coexistence, organizing interfaith dialogue,

and in some instances directly mediating peace. This policy summary presents the findings of research on this paradox in its exploration of the principal research question:

Under what conditions do religious leaders justify or catalyze violence along identity lines that divide contemporary societies, and under what conditions do they lay the foundation for, advocate, and sometimes mediate for peace?

RELIGION, NATIONALISM, AND INTOLERANCE

In addressing this question, the book's principal conceptual orientation is provided by David Little, who analyzes the critical question of the complex relationships between religion, ethno-nationalism, and intolerance. What religion can and does provide at times in divided societies is the "hateful motive" of intolerance manifested the mass violence – at the extreme end, indiscriminate acts such as terrorism and genocide.¹¹ While religion is instrumental and manipulable in the application of most leading faith traditions toward or away from conflict, it cannot be a "cause" of conflict as such. Religious belief, however, constructively shapes the terms of conflict and provides an ideational framework through which conflict is interpreted. While root causes of conflict are often found in injustice, indignity, marginalization, inequality, deficits of basic needs, or the greed of a few, the state can be captured to be complicit in such mass violence. In Little's view, the critical question is the degree and nature to which religious identity blurs with ethnic identity and is fused with conceptualizations of the "nation" and the state.

"...Violence potential rises as illiberal democracies, weak or predatory states combine with increasing degrees of national intolerance also applies to authoritarian states. Nazi Germany's combination of extreme authoritarianism and extreme national intolerance yielded exceedingly high levels of violence, at home and abroad, and thereby exemplified illiberal nationalism in its paradigmatic form, though there are other smaller scale examples such as Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic. While the connection needs to be explored empirically, authoritarian states appear to draw life from ethnic or religious intolerance as a way of justifying the degree of violence required to maintain power."

DAVID LITTLE

In sum, Little concludes that:

- First, nationalism is best understood as the coalescence of nation and state around the modern idea of political legitimacy. A nation, defined as a "people" espousing a distinctive common identity and aspiring to political autonomy on the basis of a sense of "deep, horizontal comradeship," presents itself as justifying a political authority intended to preside over the inhabitants of a sharply circumscribed territory.
- Second is that religion and ethnicity assumes prominence—variously, to be sure, and along with other important influences—in shaping the character and ideals of the nation and the organization of the state. At the same time, religion and ethnicity are themselves reciprocally influenced by the character and practice of the state.
- A third conclusion is that because religious and/or ethnic ideals play such a constitutive part in the dynamics of nationalism, the issue of religious and other forms of tolerance and intolerance become extremely salient in relation to the occurrence or mitigation of violence.
- Where effective constitutional democracies combine with a high degree of national tolerance—examples of "liberal nationalism"—a very low incidence of violence is predicted. Conversely, where illiberal democracies or weak, predatory, or authoritarian regimes, strongly lacking the characteristics of constitutional democracy, combine with a high degree of national intolerance—examples of "illiberal nationalism"—a high incidence of violence is predicted.

II. FINDINGS FROM THEMATIC AND CASE STUDY APPLICATIONS

Little's conceptual framework on the character of the regime and the enabling conditions for religious intolerance in illiberal regimes is well borne out in the case studies, in which the changing role of the conceptualization of the nation has been influenced in conflict by religious belief. *The implication of this research is that the role of the state in defining a liberal, tolerant religious character for the nation is, at the end of the day, pivotal.* It is the nationalistic setting of these conflicts that religion plays a direct role in defining the extent to which national identities are more exclusive or inclusive and to the connections among religion, state authority, and specific policies. The complex interplay between the articulation of the identity of the "nation" and "state" determines the ways in which the legitimacy of the nation and the terms of citizenship in the state are defined.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND THE SUNNI-SHI'A DIVIDE IN ISLAM

Nader Hashemi explores the complexity of the Sunni-Shi'a divide in Islam and its implications for conflict and coexistence in the Middle East. He underscores the importance of looking at the region in an integrated fashion and argues that, ironically, the social and political strife seen in the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and in Israel-Palestine have created new opportunities for reconciliation and dialogue among Muslim religious leaders.

THE VATICAN'S ROLE IN LEBANON'S CIVIL WAR

George Irani evaluates the role of the Vatican in its relationship with the Maronites in the context of the Lebanese civil war. With its 17 religious sects, the role of the Vatican in the conflict and into the post-Tai'f (1989) period sees its engagement in terms of efforts to secure the survival of Christianity in the Middle East.

GLOBALIZATION, RELIGION AND NATIONALISM IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Micheline Ishay explains the rise of extremism in Israel and in the Palestinian communities as a consequent of the uneven effects of globalization in recent years. She contends that "globalization, coinciding with the shift from an Israeli state-controlled economy to privatization of the Israeli economy in the mid-1980s, has in fact greatly exacerbated tensions within Israel and even more seriously within the Palestinian territories, and forged the conditions underlying increasing religious and nationalist radicalism, spurring an ideological backlash which is now undermining peace efforts."

RELIGION, WAR AND PEACEMAKING IN SUDAN

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban's chapter explores the role of religion in the conflict in Sudan in historical and contemporary terms, and the myriad debates that swirl around mantles of religious authority, Arab-Muslim and African identities, and the role of inter-religious councils in managing the still-unfolding process of defining a national identity in Sudan (and, potentially, in an independent South Sudan) in a region characterized by complexity, intra-religious conflict, and inter-religious interdependency.

NIGERIA'S RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Rosalind Hackett explores the mixed record of religious conflict and cooperation in Nigeria: while there are areas of accord (particularly on socio-economic welfare), there are deep divisions along Muslim and Christian lines and a history of religious-elite exacerbation of conflict. This mixed record is juxtaposed against a lively theater of inter-religious peacemaking and an active civil society. Still, Nigeria remains on the brink, at the religiously characterized violence in Jos, Plateau State, in 2010 attests.

RELIGION, WAR, AND TAJIKISTAN

The rise of the Islamic Renaissance Party in Tajikistan in the early 1990s is the subject of Karina Korostelina's contribution. She describes how the Islamic resistance to the infant secular, post-independence state evolved in troubled democratization process, the onset of the civil war, and the engagement of religious leaders in peace talks to end the conflict. In Tajikistan, the context of rapid democratization and civil war created the conditions for rapid mobilization along Islamist lines. The conflict itself eventually resulted in a peace agreement, however that agreement did not allow for sufficient redefinition of national identity that would allow for fully participation by Islamist orientations; there is still insufficient trust that an Islamist victory at the polls would not yield an Islamist state. As Korostelina notes, "Tolerance toward others was based on the willingness to preserve a negative peace and prevent further violence, and not on the readiness to peacefully exist and cooperate with the former enemy.... Tajikistan has a long way to go to achieve the second type of tolerance."

BUDDHISM AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN SRI LANKA

Susan Hayward explores the role of Sinhalese nationalism and Buddhist conceptualizations of homeland in the civil war in Sri Lanka, and in particular the role of the monks in the peace process in the cease-fire of 2005 and failed series of peace negotiations that fell to renewal of the conflict and a costly military end in 2009. In a case that is typically describe in terms of conflict, not peace, she shows how at the individual level various religious actors are working to buttress inter-religious coexistence on the blood-spilled island.

RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP AND THE CONFLICT IN KASHMIR

Sumit Ganguly and Praveen Swami explore the role of religion in Asia's longest-running conflict, Kashmir. They explore three episodes of crises over the history of the conflict and they draw common conclusions about the various roles of religion in the dispute over the Valley, particularly. The chapter argues that "political leadership in Jammu and Kashmir drew its legitimacy, at least in part, as a representative and champion of religious causes.... Secular political mobilization and religious chauvinism were closely, often inextricably, enmeshed. As such, politicians—not priests—held the keys to the resolution of religion-driven conflicts, and continue to do so."

RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mari Fitzduff explores the role of religion in Northern Ireland's 27 years of "Troubles" and into the peace process that produced a power-sharing outcome in the celebrated Belfast Agreement of 1998. She describes the deeply religious dimensions of a conflict that appears, on surface, not to be explicitly theological as such. The role of religious peacemaking has been limited, she argues, and her explanation focuses on social structures as an inhibiting factor in the ability of those religious leaders inclined toward peacemaking to be effective.

III. INTEGRATIVE FINDINGS

The ways in which religious actors define the parameters of the nation and the source of legitimacy and purpose of the state is critical. This nationalist construction of the state – and the ways in which some states, such as Nigeria, continue to wrestle with this construction during bouts of religiously described violence – is at the heart of religion's role in deeply divided societies.

FINDINGS ON RELIGION, NATIONALISM, AND THE STATE

What emerges most strikingly from these case studies is that conflict settings move over time across the spectrum of nationalism and extremism, and changes in domestic institutions of the state shape the ways in which religious and political elites find common cause in ways that contribute to conflict dynamics through a higher

justification of the nature of difference within society. Whether countries move toward greater tolerance and political inclusivity, as in Northern Ireland, or war and further entrenchment of ethnic hegemony, as in Sri Lanka, depends much on the ways in which religion and state authority have had mutually reinforcing influences – away from and toward peace – over time.

In many of the cases in this research, there was found to be a strong incentive by authoritarian political elites to define state authority in religious terms and to justify political legitimacy in appeal to higher justification. Religious diversity or tolerance is thus deemed a threat to the extant legitimacy and order.

Equally critical is the way in which state institutions allow for, or provide barriers to, the use of religious rhetoric as a vehicle for defining the boundaries of the nation. When the basic legitimacy and defining parameters of the nation and of state

is the subject of conflict, as is the case in divided societies, this political competition is often aided by a turn to religious belief and justification for the boundaries of the nation. That is because beliefs in religious/ethnic identity are so much at issue in defining political authority and power (as in Sudan, as described in Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban's account of the interplay between religion and essentially authoritarian politics in Sudan over the enforcement of Shari'a law in the South). "Weak leaders devolve to opportunism permitting their survival, while strong leaders fain their position and voice within authoritarian and increasingly illegitimate circles of power."

The religious dimensions of nationalist identity are often highly accentuated in the process of rapid democratization or ongoing crises and sequences of extended democratization processes where there is the absence of consolidation.

As Rosalind Hackett observes in tumultuous Nigeria, "decades of mistrust and interreligious tensions, plus the need to promote one's own religious organization in a highly competitive religious environment undermines the need to work together in the national interest."

At the same time, Nigeria's vibrant civil society arena does provide space for some manifestations of religious action that underscores the essential commitment to coexistence that is part of Nigeria's complicated efforts to promote inter-communal peace at national, regional, and local levels (especially in key areas such as Kaduna and Plateau states). Nigeria needs to move beyond religious balancing in its state-society relations and address more effectively the underlying causes of media insensitivities, marginalization, and managing disputes over resources and development.

The focus on leaders or elites in the exacerbation of inter-group conflict raises prior question of causality: Do elites shape attitudes of their publics, or are they "mirrors" of society and thus are not autonomous in justifying, providing injunctions, mobilizing, or sense-making when it comes to intergroup conflict? The case study of Kashmir in the volume would suggest the latter, in that religious leaders have had remarkably low profile roles in the conflict context despite the fact that many of the escalation incidences have been tied to religiously related precipitants.

The recent escalation of violence along the Sunn-Shi'a divide in Islam, as Nader Hashemi observes, is highly contextual and should be seen in part as a function of the contest over the state in a region in which state authority has been captured along ethno-religious lines. The close relationship between Muslim sectarian discourses is juxtaposed against secularist orientations; at the heart of these debates is the politics of group identity in a rapidly changing environment... religious sectarianism is about ethnic identity mobilization in the context of rapid economic, political, and regional Realpolitik shifts. He notes in concluding the analysis of these tensions across the region that "meaningful democratization is in short supply in the region, and is critically needed. The persistence of [non-democratic regimes] is the biggest contributing factor that perpetuates sectarian conflict and affects the behavior of religious leaders. Until it is tackled, meaningful peace and mitigating violence over the long term will be extremely difficult."

RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND CONFLICT

Religious elites have at times framed and shaped the terms of intergroup interaction in a way that has contributed to mass intolerance, as Susan Hayward's analysis of Buddhism in Sri Lanka reflects. Strikingly, she notes that the "very things that make the sangha and Sinhala Buddhist narrative a powerful force in propelling the conflict and shaping government politics and institutions also make it a powerfully important force to achieve peace... their greater involvement has the potential to greatly transform the ideologies that propel the violence and the increasingly centralized and authoritarian state system." One of the findings that emerge from this research is the need to have a clearer understanding of the wide range of types of religious leaders and the ways in which they interact with social conflict dynamics.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS ROLES IN DEEPLY DIVIDED SOCIETIES

These summary findings about the varieties and roles of religious leaders emerge in this research:

- Religious leaders cannot be defined narrowly on whether or not they are ordained clergy – there are many other avenues by which religiously-driven individuals have influence. There are religious academic scholars, for example, or religious leaders who are also parliamentarians. This suggests that a focus of analytical priority is on those religious elites who are directly politically active, and those political elites who are overtly religious in their orientation.
- There are both men and women clergy, and the case studies reveal both influential men and women religious actors. In Sri Lanka, as Susan Hayward's chapter finds, there are both Catholic and Buddhist nuns – so there are women clergy in this case. What makes someone a "religious leader" is not necessarily their title of reverend or Imam or mahanayeke, which would certainly limit the analysis to mostly men, but their influence and authority as a religiously-driven civil society (or political-social) actor.
- Political elites are often removed from the effects of the war and those at the grassroots who actually know and feel the situation-on-the-ground can bring that perspective and pressure to bear on them – not just in an effort to force them to be more moderate – to ensure the decisions made in peace agreements are fair and just and equitable and responsive to the suffering on-the-ground. In the religious realm, grassroots religious leadership can put pressure on the officials with regards to the conflict.
- Local religious actors who can marshal a great deal of public support and mobilize a great number of people may in the end be able to influence political elite just as much as religious elite – simply by bringing together a lot of people in a movement. For example, Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq, who at the time of his meteoric rise was studying to become an Ayatollah and whose religious ranking was fairly low, quickly emerged a powerful religious and political figure in the volatile democratization process following the 2003 multinational invasion.
- Leaders in faith-based development/relief/advocacy/peace non-governmental organizations are typically at the forefront of peacemaking. For example, in the Catholic Church in Colombia there is a Justice and Peace department in which many lay women and men lead and direct the Church's peace work. Religiously-driven civil society leaders who head secular peace organizations but are also very active in their religious communities, interact with their religious leadership, and are generally known to be religiously-driven in their work.

Several findings arise from the comparative research on the roles of the various religious leaders on conflict dynamics in divided societies.

- First, *it is critical to look within religious differences and consider that sectarian conflict can be as deadly as inter-religious tension.* In this book, the analysis on Northern Ireland, Shi'a-Sunni relations would argue for a better understanding of the manifestations of sectarianism and how these overlap with other critical variables, particularly economic opportunity. As well, it is struggles within religious discourse that define the extent of tolerance and the degree of extremism. *The key insights from this research reinforce the concern with vitriolic forms of speech that differentiate and inflame differences along religious lines: the chapters each present a concern with how religious leaders define a "hateful motive."*

This function, especially, is seen in the admonition in some religious orientations to terrorism as divinely justified through the articulation and defining of the "infidel." Extremist religious tendencies prone to violence tend to articulate that modern religious mainstream has deviated from a true, authentic path; such deviation from authenticity is heretical, leading to severe intra-religious tensions and ultimately to intolerance and the implicit or explicit justification of violence.

At least one critical difference among religious traditions with implications for the "autonomy" of elites is the extent to which religious organization is hierarchical (as in the Vatican role in the Lebanese civil war) or non-hierarchical, as in the case of the analysis of Sunni-Shi'a relations across the Middle East. Generally, those religious traditions with less hierarchy may be more susceptible to internal "outbidding" by alternative contenders claiming to be the authoritative voice of a "multi-vocal" religion.

- Second, there are today *global dynamics that have profound local effects, and vice versa.* The case studies in this book do not exist in a country-level vacuum, and as Micheline Ishay's chapter reveals, globalization and transnational patterns of economic flows and of ideas have had a profound effect on the emergence of extremism in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities. Saudi Arabia has had a significant influence on Sunni Muslims, the Vatican on Catholics, Iran on the Shi'a, and Israel on global Judaism. Likewise, Karina Kostelina's chapter on Tajikistan underscores the context of post-Soviet democratization as setting the state for the rise of an Islamist challenge to the state and eventually to civil war. And the analysis of Northern Ireland reveals how the changing nature of economic success in Ireland – which stemmed from globalization – made the calculus of passion during the Troubles change over time.
- Third, leadership – agency – matters in framing or defining the discourse of overall political culture regarding conflict or tolerance and coexistence. This is because *religious appeals are seen as a higher-order identity than those otherwise might be more inclusive* (such as a multiethnic national identity). Religious authority and religious leaders can define through their reference to the religious cannon or to interpretation and moral reasoning the terms of conflict, tolerance, or – more positively – coexistence. Much depends in some cases on the actual local-level relationships between religious elites and society; in sum, religious elites are more likely to reflect social forces than to shape them.

FINDINGS ON RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PEACEMAKING

During conflict, or in the wake of violent interactions, it is less likely that religious leaders will, or can, articulate the justification for peace unless or until the social, political, and economic conditions are permissive; *while there may be a few courageous clerics seeking to bridge intergroup divides, for the most part religious leaders are reflective of the broader context in which they exist.* Belief may prevent them from pursuing tolerance across lines of conflict, in addition to the practical incentives to articulate what their congregations want to hear.

The critical question with regard to human rights is often debated in terms of defamation of religion, as the

Nigeria case study by Rosalind Hackett shows. As well, debates swirl around the limits of free expression, for example in the Danish-published “Mohammed Cartoons” controversy or the denialist conference on the holocaust in Iran. What is the appropriate balance between free association, “defamation of religion,” and speech that incites hatred or provides direct incitement or injunctions to violence? The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights special rapporteurs on religious freedoms, expression, and racism together emphasize that the critical concern is in fact one of religious incitement:

Whereas the debate concerning the dissemination of expressions which may offend certain believers has throughout the last ten years evolved around the notion of “defamation of religions,” we welcome the fact that the debate seems to be shifting to the concept of “incitement to racial or religious hatred,” sometimes also referred to as “hate speech.” Indeed, the difficulties in providing an objective definition of the term “defamation of religions” at the international level make the whole concept open to abuse.... There are numerous examples of persecution of religious minorities or dissenters, but also of atheists and non-theists, as a result of legislation on religious offences or overzealous application of laws that are fairly neutral.¹²

Religious leaders clearly have a direct role in the movement of divided societies away from minimalist constructions of tolerance toward a deeper notion of coexistence. In Kashmir, for example, the chapter by Ganguly and Swami suggests that an essential part of the potential contribution of religion to management of this enduring conflict is the focus on a parity of esteem, or overarching identity, in the terms of *Kashmiriat*. How can a prior history of respect and coexistence be recreated after decades of conflict? Mari Fitzduff finds that those religious leaders who were successful in Northern Ireland in buttressing the peace process were able to leverage the status of the church and the continued community respect for religious institutions primarily through the pastoral roles. When religious leaders backed the politically reached cease-fire agreement, they provided the moral authority to allow political elites to pursue settlement through negotiation.

Mari Fitzduff shows in her analysis of Northern Ireland that often religious leaders were unable to get out in front of their congregations in support of cross-communal community relations work for fear that they would lose their own internal credibility. She writes that “The inability of the major churches to produce significant leadership among their ranks that was theologically and socially transformative and inclusive raises questions about the ability of large institutions to move at a pace that is significantly beyond that of their many followers, given that their power and influence is dependent upon the retention of such followers.”

The case studies reflect that in terms of rights-based discourses, social justice is often a cross-cutting value within and across religious traditions. The language of rights in terms of social justice may thus bridge various traditions and values and allow for a common language that emphasizes the imperative of tolerance in deeply divided societies. In turn, the focus on rights of religious freedom – articulated in critical global instruments such as the ICCPR can relate to the focus on national identities that transcend religious particularism through a focus on issues such as the plight of the poor. Practically, this means that the creation and sustaining of locally contextualized inter-religious councils is an important way to create structured bargaining across group lines and indeed for the international community to actively engage, and often (through development assistance) build the capacity of ongoing, structured religious dialogue.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

International organizations tend to insufficiently understand religious actors in societies in which they are engaged. Doing so would have special salience in understanding societies where religion is a key marker of identity and where it informs and shapes political behavior. Religious leaders in these areas of the globe have significant moral authority and understanding them can contribute to promoting strategies for peace and conflict resolution. Organizations like the Luce Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Aspen Institute and

the United States Institute for Peace have long established programs that invest money into research that involve religion. More recently, the United Nation's Alliance for Civilization initiative has continued in this vein.

While religion has been viewed for a long time as a sources of conflict and instability, religion properly understand and interpreted can play a constructive role in promoting international peace and security but doing so would require intimate knowledge of how religion manifests itself in and can be manipulated by social factors at the local, national, regional and international levels.

International actors can encourage this understanding and to perhaps utilize the regional organizations such as the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference to continue to place this issue on the agenda of their annual meetings. Specially, *expanding the conversation from interfaith to intrafaith dialogue would be beneficial as well tackling some of the more difficult issues surrounding basic religious freedom and equality for long persecuted religious communities like the Baha'i, Ismaili and Ahmadiyya Muslims.*

The international community should build on preexisting initiatives and strategies that have already begun and have emerged from within the Middle East on bridging internal religious divides. In recent years there have been several attempts by Muslim religious and political leaders to take this topic seriously and organize their resources to promote peaceful relations among different Muslims sects and members of different religious traditions.¹³ In December of the same year King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia, in a major speech during the Hajj pilgrimage, called for internal dialogue within the world of Islam and a common front in rejecting extremism and terrorism.¹⁴ In a similar vein the open letter by Muslim religious leaders to Christian leaders in 2007, "A Common Word between Us and You" further suggests an internal momentum, enthusiasm and energy coming from among Muslim leaders that the international community can seize upon.¹⁵

More study is needed in the terms of the local level and the role of religious leaders in affecting issues of peace and conflict. Specifically, an examination of the religious teachings and sermons of influential clergy who possess moral authority in their societies is required. *Research into this topic has revealed a shortage of empirical studies than reveal and document the precise role religious leaders are playing in their societies at the local level, both in small towns and villages but also in important urban centers and at major mosques in Karachi, Amman, Damascus, Tehran, Beirut, Basra, Cairo, Jakarta, Mecca, Decca and Kuala Lumpur.*

Similarly, greater study is needed in examining primary and secondary-level and university curriculum in state schools and in religious seminaries. How are Shi'a and Sunni Muslim communities being taught to view the other and how are they being taught to view non-Muslims? Obtaining this information based on a serious social scientific study will then better equip those in the policy community who want to devise strategies that can promote peace and reduce religiously inspired violence. A critical case which today requires urgency of understanding and action is Iraq. Precisely what role did mainstream Sunni and Shia religious leaders play in instigating or mitigating sectarian conflict? This is the most salient and politically relevant conflict in the region and a well funded and comprehensive study, based on extensive fieldwork inside Iraq, would yield important results that would have both cross-regional and international appeal. Therefore, greater investment in resources so that this topic could be more thoroughly researched and investigated is recommended.

Today, whether in Sri Lanka in focusing on the rights of the defeated Tamil minority, or in Sudan where the focus is on the applicability of Shari'a and the relationship between religion and the state, the language of rights focuses on critical linkages between the state and non-dominant religious communities. Exclusion, discrimination, denial of dignity and status, and direct repression in turn lead to frustrate, reaction, and violent responses by persecuted religious minorities. Unless and until states are above religious differences can be articulated in a minimal basis of respect for rights, the persistence of conflict is likely.

In framing the discourse, international advocates typically stress rights-based approaches in terms of hard international law – for example, in questions of abrogation of rights of freedom of belief – and in terms of soft law, such as common principles in running religious dialogues or in engaging religious leaders.

This approach appears well-founded. Monitoring of religious messages should indeed focus on identification of language that is condemning of other faiths, that sharpens ethnic divisions, or that glorifies violence as a duty of devotion.

However, a focus on rights and monitoring of inflammatory speech is only half of the peacemaking story. The other half is to consciously build a common identity that transcends religion and embraces a multi-religious view of the state. This suggests that further advances in democratization are essential, despite the ironic findings that democratization processes themselves can exacerbate religious tensions. Religiously divided societies are typically structured around “parallelism,” in which groups share the same national identity but rarely interact. This parallelism is often constitutionally enshrined in power-sharing arrangements (as the case study on Lebanon shows, often with the explicit help and interest of religious elites), with the consequence of perpetuating political coalition-making along religious lines and inhibiting the social integration needed to move from minimalist tolerance to a more affirmative principle of coexistence.

Power-sharing, while common as a settlement option for deeply divided societies, often lays the basis for future conflict when economic or social difference persists or the demographics of voting lead to political exclusion. How to move beyond this minimal state of tolerance to a more enduring form of coexistence remains a puzzle. As a start, however, it is essential that groups-in-conflict embrace symbolic politics and policy actions that affirm “parity of esteem” or the legal and operational existence of equality of dignity and coexistence contribute to successful conflict management in divided societies.

Critical for peace in divided societies, as these case studies affirm, is the evolution of an institutionally structured, integrated civil society that cuts across religious, sectarian, and doctrinal lines.¹⁶ When such integrated civil societies exist, the propensity for inter-group conflict diminishes. Another point of departure is to be aware of the conflict-inducing nature of proselytization and identification of ways to manage rapid transformation of religious demographics.

This means that *in terms of peacemaking, a focus on continuing, institutionalized forms of religious dialogue are critical in order to marginalize, more broadly, those who would articulate difference and division within communities and bolster a political culture of multi-religiosity.* Religious peacemaking – or mediation – should focus commensurately on the question of discussion on the meaning and boundaries of the ethnicity and the “nation,” of the role of the state in ensuring tolerance, and of the need for state and society to embrace a definition of tolerance that reflects a principle more contributing to peace of “coexistence.” ■

ENDNOTES

¹ For an evaluation of world attitudes on religion and politics, see Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); for an analysis of the conditions under which religious issues make the political agenda in democracies, see Alfred Stepan, "The World's Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the Twin Tolerations," in his book *Arguing Comparative Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press).

² See, as one example of this concern, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Pandemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³ Terminology is important. These terms (diversity and difference) are preferred because they do not prejudice the existence of "primordial" terms such as ethnic, racial, or even "sectarian" and they take into account gender and other salient sources of difference such as disability. Today, there is richer understanding that the notion of deeply divided societies still does capture the difficulties of coexistence in countries sharply or institutionally segmented such as Bosnia, Nigeria, Lebanon, South Africa, or Malaysia, there is no sharp distinction between those societies that are "plural" in their structure and the difficulties of coexistence that virtually all states face highly diverse societies today: from post-Soviet Russia, to post-colonial U.K., to post-immigration France, to multiethnic Australia, each of which has witnessed serious intergroup tensions and sometimes violent confrontations in recent years.

⁴ A 1995 Human Rights Watch report found: "The 'communal card' is frequently played, for example, when a government is losing popularity or legitimacy, and finds it convenient to wrap itself in the cloak of ethnic, racial, or religious rhetoric" (viii). See Human Rights Watch, *Playing the Communal Card: Communal Violence and Human Rights*, 1995.

⁵ In this genre, see John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.

⁶ See the "Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on July 7, 2005," Report to the House of Commons," 11 May 2006; posted on the BBC News website at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_05_06_narrative.pdf. Among the most closely watched cases is that of Abu Qatada, an Iman the Home Office has sought to deport to Jordan but who has challenged the deportation on the basis that he would be tortured if deported. In 2004, French Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy also pledged to deport Islamist clerics who preach support for violence.

⁷ The distinction between warrant and injunction to act has been advanced by David Little. As Little concluded in his study of religion and intolerance in Sri Lanka, "There can be little doubt that religious belief has, for several reasons functioned in an important way as a warrant for intolerance so far as the Sinhalese Buddhists are concerned. There is also evidence, although it is more controversial and perhaps less pronounced, that the same is true for the Tamils," in *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994): 104.

⁸ See Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also the rich essays in Howard G. Coward and Gordon S. Smith, *Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

⁹ Babak Rahimi, "Ayatollah Sistani and the Democratization of Post-Ba'athist Iraq," United States Institute of Peace Special Report 187, June 2007.

¹⁰ R. Scott Appleby, "Building Peace to Combat Religious Terror," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 28 September 2001. See his book *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Landham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 1999). For an additional recent analysis of religion and justification violence, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

¹¹ See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), for an evaluation of religious justification of terrorism across various religious traditions. See also Daniel Benjamin and Steve Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York Random House, 2002).

¹² Joint statement by Mr. Githu Muigai, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; Ms. Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and Mr. Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Geneva, 22 April 2009 (at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/religion/docs/SRJointstatement22April09.pdf>).

¹³ For example, in November 2008, Saudi Arabia organized a two day religious leader's conference in New York attended by more than 70 countries. This was similar to an earlier Saudi sponsored conference in July 2008 in Spain aimed at reducing conflict between religions and promoting ecumenical dialogue. Dan Eggen and Colum Lynch, "At U.N., Bush Says Faith Leads to 'Common Values'," *Washington Post*, 14 November 2008 and "Saudi King opens inter-faith conference with appeal for dialogue," *Agence France Presse*, 16 July 2008.

¹⁴ "Saudi King Abdullah Calls for Dialogue within Islam," *Al Sharq Alawsat*, 10 December 2008.

¹⁵ See the official website of the A Common Word initiative for the text of the original letter along with various Christian responses at: www.acommonword.com

¹⁶ Ashutosh Varshney's work on India's communal strife has affirmed this conclusion; see his *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

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