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Mapping the Terrain
The Role of Religion in Peacemaking[*]

State of the Art Paper

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Summary

There is a renewed interest in the relationship between religion and peacemaking. This is partly a reflection of new attention to the role of religion in war, yet, the literature on religion and peacemaking is only loosely connected with the one on religion and war. This state of the art paper reviews a selection of recent publications on religion and peacemaking. Recognizing the immense variation between various religious traditions and conflict contexts, we suggest a number of general recommendations, which should be useful for peace brokers operating in religiously charged conflicts, as well as for peacemaking based on religion.

Religious peacemakers have a track record. In some cases – such as the contribution of Sant'Egidio to the 1992 peace accords in Mozambique - religious actors use their moral status and perceived neutrality as a foundation for engaging with multiple actors, including leaders of conflict parties. In other cases – as in seeking to prevent the reemergence of war in Angola in 1998 - religious actors engage their local and international networks to explore opportunities outside of a conventional diplomatic process. In neither of these cases did religious actors command the ground alone. Yet, it is exactly the potential for offering a different perspective on issues that may be at the root of the conflict, and to offer original spaces to meet, that bears promise for the involvement of religious actors in a range of conflict situations.

In conflicts that are heavily charged by religion, working conditions for the religious peacemaker are more difficult. Seeking to isolate the religious dimension is rarely viable, but is more likely to stimulate the creation of religiously based 'spoiler groups'. Even when religiously based groups appear unreceptive to conciliation, therefore, it is important to find ways of consulting with them. The exclusion of religiously based parties in the process that led to the 1993 Oslo Accords, for example, seems to have cemented opposition both from Hamas and the Israeli radical settlers. A dialogue with religiously based groups in settings such as these may be led by diplomats or by religious actors, depending on context. Importantly, however, parties in religiously charged conflict tend to emphasise the religious identity of the peace broker, even when the latter does not.

Religion is always part of a larger societal context, where it is both shaped by, and has an effect on, political, cultural and economic processes. Hence, religion alone is unlikely to create peace, just as it is unlikely to be the main cause factor of any armed conflict. In making the case for the salience of religion in peacemaking, the preparedness of religious communities to engage proactively in conflict resolution and transformation may have been exaggerated. Nonetheless, there is a need for diplomatic actors to strengthen the emphasis of religious dimensions in the context of peacemaking interventions. This presumes knowledge-building, capacity development, and ultimately a new level of religious awareness in peacemaking.

CONTENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a review of the literature on religion and peacemaking, we suggest a number of general recommendations. These are further elaborated and exemplified in the text that follows. The recommendations focus on four themes: Firstly an analytical framework for religion, secondly religious peacemaking; thirdly peacemaking in religiously charged conflicts, and finally strengthening competence and analysis.

Facets of Religion

Normative system: Religious norms derive strength from their reference to the transcendent, and lay the basis for the commitment of peacemakers and war parties alike. Religious normative systems vary on a continuum from dogmatic to open, which is essential for the will to engage in dialogue and identify commonalities with followers of other religious views. Although religious texts may be of importance, emphasis should be given to understanding current normative practices and codes.

Identity: Religion is a strong basis for identity, particularly when religious difference coincides with other demarcation lines such as ethnic, economic or geographic. Religious identities are more or less inclusive or exclusive in relation to outsiders. The more inclusive the religious identity, the more likely is genuine dialogue. Accordingly, outside intervention can easily be seen as a threat to identities, and ought to focus on mutually respectful coexistence rather than integration.

Organisational Structure: Religions have a social dimension, bringing together people of the same faith. The structure of religious organisation may vary enormously, from being strictly hierarchical with clear lines of authority to flat networks with no defined leadership. From the perspective of conventional diplomacy, hierarchical structures constitute clear counterparts which fit more easily into the modalities of modern organisational life.

Organisational Dependence: The extent to which religion overshadows all other aspects of life, or is seen as a distinct issue with little consequence for how one acts in other domains of life, varies greatly. The higher the degree of dependence, the less likely it is that members will commit to a political process not endorsed by their organisation. However, once endorsed, a high degree of dependence may include a stronger will to realise the goals also in the political process.

Change: Religious norms, identities, and organisations undergo constant change, both as a result of internal processes, and in response to developments in the conflict setting. Therefore, differences between adherents to the same overall religious worldview may be as intense as conflicts between various religions. Religion may emerge as a key factor in long-lived conflicts where it has earlier played a negligible role, and religious peacemakers may gain credibility among parties who have earlier opposed their involvement.

Goals: Groups identifying themselves primarily in religious terms aim at a broad variety of goals, some of which may be of a normative or transcendent kind, others of which may be worldly, at times even relatively trivial. Understanding the set of goals held by various actors, including religious ones, as well as seeking ways to accommodate them, is essential to peacemaking.

Religious Peacemakers

Impartiality: When conflict parties confide in religious peacemakers, this may be because they are seen as impartial (linked to neither conflict party or to involved states). As importantly, the credibility of religious peacemakers may be a consequence of moral commitment. Religious actors have few opportunities to introduce carrots or sticks in order to push negotiations forward, and if and when they do, there is always a risk that their fundamental credibility is undermined.

Openness: Religious organisations seem most effective when their approach is open and inclusive, or when they are associated with one or both of the conflicting parties. This is most easily achieved in conflicts *not* charged by religion. The extent to which religious organisations interact with people on a grassroots level, and do so in a context different from that of other actors, seem important for their results.

Multi-level organisation: Religious organisations tend to span multiple levels, from the local to the international. The ability to play on international organizational linkages is often a key resource, mobilizing resources for the peacemaking engagement, as well as serving to protect key individuals and local organisations.

Threats: The engagement of religious actors in peacemaking is unlikely to be welcomed by all actors concerned, and may become more controversial if the engagement is successful. Peacemaking engagements may result in physical threats to leaders as well as adherents, but may also become a threat to the religious organization as a whole, for example through a tightening of state control.

Division of labour: Religious organisations are unlikely to be the only actor involved in trying to settle a particular conflict. In general, religious actors seem best suited for Track Two diplomacy, particularly in early stages of peace processes, where the main challenge is to start establishing common ground and foster confidence among the parties. How to interact with other actors, without threatening the integrity of the religious organisation, is always a challenge.

Peacemaking in Religiously Charged Conflicts

Peacemakers and religion: In conflicts where religion plays an important part, religious peacemakers may have an advantage in understanding the main issues and identifying common ground. On the other hand, however, religious actors tend to find it difficult to gain sufficient confidence from both parties in religiously charged conflicts, often because the broker is somehow identified with one of the parties. It is paradoxical that when the need for religious peacemaking may be the greatest, the challenges also seem to be the largest.

Perceptions of peacemaker: Conflict parties who hold a clear religious identity are likely to also perceive the peacemaker in religious terms, even when the latter is a secular diplomatic actor. This may be particularly problematic in contexts where one conflict party considers itself religious, whereas the other does not. The parties' perception of the peacemaker needs to be monitored and actively worked on.

Excluding parties: In conflicts where religiously identified parties play a significant role, they ought to be engaged in the peace process, either directly, in the negotiations, or indirectly, by being consulted and given the possibility to influence specific issues. It is particularly important that conventional diplomatic actors develop the competence and the channels required for keeping religiously identified groups aboard.

The Need for Analysis

Studies: The literature on religion and peacemaking tends to focus on a narrow set of factors, and consists largely of case studies of successful interventions by Western religious actors. There is a need for studies that apply a wider analytical perspective while also drawing on less successful cases.

Background analysis: All peacemaking engagements need to take into account the religious dimension of a conflict, also where religion does not appear to be playing a significant role. While such analysis must draw on solid competence on the study of religion, it is important that the role of religion is not compartmentalized, but seen as an integral part of the wider conflict.

Monitoring: The analysis that underlies peacemaking interventions must be an integral part of the whole engagement, not a one-off event prior to getting involved. This is important for a number of reasons, most basically in order to identify opportunities for deepening the religious engagement as it arises, as well as to become swiftly aware of possible warning signs.

Competence: To be effective, any peace broker needs to be able to analyze the religious dimension and to interact constructively with religious representatives. Competence on religion is likely to be acquired through a combination of building the individual skills of diplomats; adding specialised religious competence to peacemaking teams, and coordinating and cooperating with actors whose main focus is on the religious dimension.

INTRODUCTION

What is the most sensible course of action when peacemakers intervene in religiously charged conflicts? What potential is there for religious actors to act as constructive peacemakers? What are the roles of diplomatic and religious actors in peacemaking, and what are astute modes of interaction? Those are large and difficult questions, Any peacemaking effort is necessarily faced with them, and they have subsequently been given increased emphasis within peacemaking practices as well as the academic sphere. Reflecting the increasing interest in the relationship between religion and peacemaking, there is a rapidly growing literature on the subject amongst peacemaking practitioners as well as within various religious communities. However, the literature on peacemaking and religion rarely aims towards presenting general conclusions or practical recommendations, in part due to respect for the extreme variation between various forms of religion as well as between various conflict situations. They therefore lack applicability. A majority of the contributors to these publications have their academic platform in the humanities, and many are active members of religious communities. One noteworthy voice is Marc Gopin. He is rabbi as well as an academic specializing in security issues. In his book *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (Gopin 2000), he ponders upon the multifaceted character of religion:

> There is an infinite set of possibilities associated with religious institutions and their behaviour in terms of peace and violence. I never cease to be amazed by how the seemingly most violent religious institutions or texts in history give way over time to the most exalted values and moral practices. At the same time, the most pacifist foundations of tradition can be turned toward the service of the most barbaric aims. It all seems to depend on the complex ways in which the psychological and sociological circumstances and the economic and cultural constructs of a particular group interact with the ceaseless human drive to hermeneutically develop religious meaning systems, texts, rituals, symbols, and laws (Gopin 2000: 11).

Gopin's book was published in 2000, at the time of the election of the first George W. Bush Administration, and pointed at the necessity of religious and cultural sensitivity in peacemaking processes. During the years that have passed since then, religion has re-entered the stage as a central dimension of statecraft. With a renewed recognition of the role of religion – for politics in general and for peace diplomacy in particular - there has been a significant proliferation of conferences, networks and books.

In contemporary Western societies there is a tendency to disregard religious beliefs, which are seen as mere opinions, or even as superstitions - in contrast to empirically based knowledge - which is regarded as factual. Such a distinction veils the fact that both positions appear as 'true' and 'factual' to the individual who holds them. Disregarding the intensity and sincerity of religious beliefs – to the believers – has

often proven counterproductive to conflict resolution. Relatedly, there is also a tendency to see strong religious convictions primarily as a negative force that feeds conflicts, undermines political and economic development, and prevents rational dialogue and conflict resolution.

R. Scott Appleby, a leading voice in research on religion and peacemaking, writes: "(…) religion is a source not only of intolerance, human rights violations, and extremist violence, but also of non-violent conflict transformation, the defence of human rights, integrity in government, and reconciliation and stability in divided societies" (Appleby 1996: 821). The challenge is to overcome one-sided perspectives on religion, acknowledging not only its darker sides, but also its potential for contributing positively to peacemaking. Albeit engaging with religion and religious actors does not represent a diplomatic silver bullet, religion is an important dimension of conflict – and of peacemaking - and needs to be taken seriously.

This State of the Art Paper has seven primary sections: Firstly, a delimitation of the phenomenon of religion for our purposes; secondly, reflections on the relationship between religion and conflict; thirdly, a passage of clarification on the concept of peacemaking; fourthly, an elaboration on the peacemaking potential of religion for diplomatic endeavours to succeed; fifthly, a typology of peace brokerage, in which three primary scenarios are presented; sixthly, remarks on the need for analysis in peace brokerage; and seventhly,   recommendations, formulating key insights for constructively working with religion and religious actors in peacemaking.

RELIGION

Despite its intensity, influence and magnitude worldwide, the concept of religion is multifaceted, and remains to be framed in a definition. How can one understand religion, and what is there to understand? Which approach is most functional for our purposes? How one defines religion shapes one's explanation of its very role in society, and the choice between kinds of definition is consequently a matter of strategy. Students of religion commonly distinguish between two basic perspectives: Firstly, substantive approaches, which focus on the different elements that constitute religion, on what religion *is*. Secondly, functionalist approaches emphasise the social and cultural consequences of religion: what religion *does* for a social group or an individual (see for example: Hamilton 1995: 1-20; McGuire 2002: 5-12). Our ultimate interest in this paper is on what religion potentially does, and we will elucidate some of the forces embedded in this phenomenon. However, in order to facilitate further analysis, we will in this section seek to delineate what religion *is* by focusing on three primary aspects: religion as normative system, as identity and as organisation.

Religion as Normative System

Religious faiths are comprised of a number of dogmas that constitute normative systems. Every religion rests on a normative basis, that, when accepted, serves as a directive for how each individual believer should live her or his life. The normative system of a religion relates each individual believer to the transcendent, to the ultimate meaning of existence. It defines objectives, and offers conceptual frameworks and narratives that inspire action. Religion is both explanatory, explaining why things are the way they *are*, and normative, prescribing how things *should be* (Haar and Busuttil 2003: 5-10; McGuire 2002: 13). This normative basis constitutes a *system of meaning* for its adherents, making sense of and legitimising a particular social order. By reference to a transcendent authority, religious legitimisations make particularly forceful claims for the bases of socio-cultural order. Thus, religions is considered more stable and real than a normative system which is simply the result of human practices (Berger 1967; McGuire 2002).

The normative dimension has been given considerable attention in the study of religion, as the enactment of a normative conviction has social, cultural and political consequences. Religious norms enlighten the adherent about what action is good and desirable, and what is bad and ought to be avoided. Consequently, religious norms also have cognitive implications, it that they may be shaping what how the adherent understands the world. Accordingly, people locate themselves and their actions in a larger social order by reference to the normative systems defined by their religion (Berger 1967; Hamilton 1995: 157-164; McGuire 2002). Through a process of socialisation, the communal meaning system informs the individual of the values and norms of the larger group of which it is part, and individuals come to share a particular normative meaning system.

Religious normative systems are – to varying degrees – *dogmatic* or *open* in character. To exemplify; Judaism rests on a vast scriptural material in which a number of normative commandments, the *mitzvot*, are spelled out as explicit and all-encompassing directives for the lives of each believing Jew. In contrast, the normative standards and consequent religious practices of Hinduism relate to the maintenance of the mythical divine universe of the Hindu tradition, rather than being a direct result of the rulings of a religious supremacy, and they are consequently more fluid in character. Within a specific religion, the degree of openness is reflected in the extent to which dogmas and their implications can be discussed and potentially reinterpreted. Between religions, the degree of openness is reflected in the ability to debate similarities and differences, and in the ability to identify opportunities for acting together. Importantly, the level of dogmatic rigidity is not a given, but may vary fundamentally between different time periods and between various branches of one religion.

Religious communities may apply both soft conviction and harsh control measures in socialising its adherents, largely coinciding with the character of the normative system: A flexible, open normative system is friendlier towards external impulses, than a dogmatic normative system, which appears relatively inflexible towards other belief systems. Nonetheless, irrespectively of the character of the normative system, religious socialisation is, as Pål Repstad has pointed out, most successful when it manages to create "a commitment in the hearts of people" (Repstad 2004: 35). In other words, the influence of religion over its believers is at its strongest when the cognitive framework is internalised into the morale of the individual, which is to say that it is integral to the identity of the individual.

Religion as Identity

Religious belief systems have a particular identity forming potential. Religion is *social*, offering the individual a belonging to an experienced or sensed community of fellow believers. With reference to a transcendent source of truth and the codification of shared norms, religion is a 'compass' for the individual as well as the religious community, locating all believers in an extended ontological setting. An identity with religious sources may therefore be exceptionally robust: Religion tells you where you belong and where to proceed.

On the one hand, religion merely constitutes one segment alongside a number of other identity indicators, such as ethnicity, language, territoriality, and economic status. On the other hand, the combination of offering a normative system laden with ontological meaning, and a sense of belonging, is particularly strong. When multiple identity indicators overlap, this may be the basis for particularly coherent group formations. An example is Afghanistan's *Hazara* ethnic minority, which also constitutes the bulk of the country's Shia Muslim population. The Hazara is historically an economic underclass, and originates from a particular geographic region. This has laid the basis for a strong identity, where 'hazaraness' and 'shiism' have alternated as the dominant form of demarcation.

Religion is not necessarily the most important element in identity formation. Religious identities interact with the socio-cultural and political setting, which may contribute to emphasising some identity levels, while downplaying others. For instance, most Muslim members of Hamas consider 'Palestinian' as their primary identity, *uniting* them also with Christian Palestinians. Conversely, most Muslim Tamils in Sri Lanka maintain 'Muslim' is their primary identity, which in consequence *separates* them from other Tamils. Most people have multiple identities, which are more or less relevant in different areas of life.

Nonetheless, the claims and pretensions of group religiosity are always to some degree *political*, for, as Jeff Haynes claims:

> [T]here is no such thing as religion without consequences for value systems. Group religiosity, like politics, is a matter of collective solidarities and, frequently, of inter-group tension and conflict, focusing either on shared or disagreed images of the sacred, or, on cultural and class, in short, political matter (Haynes 1998: 5).

In other words, religious identities are tied to how the religious belief systems deem the adherents' place in this world. Thus, religious identities are in principle *inclusive* or *exclusive*. Religious identities establish an 'Us', sharing common normative standards that are instructive for the value of their cultures, their social order and their very existence. This 'Us' is separate and distinct from 'Them'. A religion is meaningful to its insiders, to 'Us', and important dimensions of the religion and the religious community are not necessarily accessible to the outsider, to 'Them'. There is great variation in the exclusiveness of religious identities. While some religious worldviews encourage distinct boundaries between believers and others, there are other worldviews which are far more inclusive, even to the extent of allowing adherents to commit to several religions simultaneously. Yet, differences among religions generally establish a gulf between a group of believers and the outsiders. Apparently neutral descriptions are fundamentally based on interpretation and evaluation, and leads to difficulties in achieving a common platform of understanding.

Religion as Organisation

Religious belief systems are upheld by some form of organisation. While neither adherence to a normative system nor identification with a particular religion presumes a formal organisation, both normative commitment and identity are greatly strengthened by it, as organisational arrangements strengthen the ability of the religious community to express and spread its worldview.

The building of formal organisations serves external purposes in that it facilitates interaction with other organisations, whether it is religious organisations, states or other entities. Participation in national or international networks adds to the influence of religious organisations. In the context of the Guatemalan peace process, the Catholic Church in Guatemala actively used its cooperation with international church networks, including the Norwegian church, to increase its influence. Interaction with states, for example, is difficult if the religion is not formally organized with clear hierarchies and appointed spokespersons. The Catholic Church, with its unique status in the system of states is in a favourable position here. In contrast, for loose religious networks with no clear authority, commonly found in Buddhism and Hinduism, interaction with states (and other formal organisations) is far more difficult.

The forms of religious organisations do in other words vary greatly, but can analytically be categorised on the basis of two dimensions of particular importance:. One dimension is the *structure* of the organisation. Religious organisation may vary

from exceedingly hierarchical to entirely flat structures. While hierarchical structures define clear leaderships and roles within the organisation, flat structures have more diffuse definition of roles and a leadership with limited authority over its believers (and at the extreme, no leadership at all). A second dimension is the degree of *dependence* of the individual believer on the religious organisation; the extent to which religion becomes all-encompassing to the members, overshadowing all other aspects of their lives, or whether it is seen as separate from other aspects of life, which tends to moderate the role of religious commitment. Based on the two dimensions of structure and degree of dependence, one may differentiate between four organisational types:

1. *Sectarian* organisations, characterised by normative virtuosity and diffusion of the religious role. Sectarian organisations are based on voluntary association and membership is restricted to those qualifying for membership. Sectarian organisations are exclusive, based on dissent in which the rest of society is deemed imperfect. High degree of dependence, structure may vary from flat to subordination under one influential leader.

2. *Cultic* organisations, characterised by separation of religious roles, whereby participation is not diffused with other aspects of life. While seeking a high level of spirituality and high dependence similar to that of sects, cultic organisations are pluralist and do not imply exclusive participation. Cults do not assert unique legitimacy. Members' degree of dependence is limited. Structure may vary from flat to subordination under one influential leader.

3. *Denominational* organisations, characterised by a separation of the religious role and other aspects of life, combined with an individual commitment and dependence. Denominational organisations are pluralist and inclusive. In contrast to sectarian and cultic organisations, denominational organisations are well integrated in society. Normally entails a prominent hierarchical structure.

4. *Churchly* organisations, characterised by 'mass' standard religiosity, and a religious role diffused throughout everyday life, with low degrees of dependence. Normally with a prominent hierarchical structure. Religious commitment is general, sustained by the whole fabric of society.

The sectarian orientation implies that religion plays a dominant role in the lives of the adherents, pervading all other aspects of their lives on the background of a deep and personal conviction. The denominational orientation, on the other hand, is segmented with the religious role as separate from other aspects of life, making the religious commitment moderate (McGuire 2002: 123). The three former types – sectarian, cultic and denominational - may all occur within a churchly organisation. Hence, even amongst the believers of one religion, there are a number of various interpretations and congregations with different types of organisational structure and varying degrees of dependence. Hence, each religion at large is comprised of a number of distinct religious

organisations with their own belief systems and identities that may deviate from each other to varying degrees.

RELIGION AND WAR

The relationship between religion and armed conflict is multifaceted. While religion at times figures as a major cause of conflict, religion itself is also transformed as a result of conflict. In other words, religions are constantly changing and their relationship with politics varies over time (Haynes 1998: 5). This variable relationship is a challenge to the formulation of generalised models for the role of religion in war, with decisive implications for the analysis of its peacemaking potential.

Religion as a Cause of War

In the aftermath of 9/11 and as an effect of the 'War on Terror', religion has re-entered the political vocabulary of many Western states (above all the US), where it is increasingly argued that religion is a major cause of armed conflict. Such views, however, have fallen on fertile ground, following the massive debates about Samuel P. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, and the increased analytical attention to the interface between religion and conflict throughout most of the 1990s. Although few analysts will argue that religion is a more prominent factor in conflict now than before, the *alteration of awareness* is in itself a significant change. This reflects, as Oliver McTernan points out, the "opinion of a number of academics that have recognized in the midst of social, historical, political, cultural and economic factors the salience of religion also" (McTernan 2003: 87-88).

Religion may feed conflict when its *normative system* is considered to legitimise the use of violence. As Elise Boulding has pointed out, however, there is a duality in religious cultures as they entail notions of the "holy war" as well as the "peaceable kingdom" (Boulding 1986). We could add that in most religions there is a real tension between the two (see: Appleby 1996: 823). Hence, any attempt to explain the outbreak of violence exclusively with reference to the normative foundations of religion is deemed to failure, simply because the interpretation of these foundations is essentially contested. Nonetheless, the scriptures, narratives and rituals of a religion are often drawn upon to find legitimacy for warfare and the use of violence within a system of meaning of a higher order. The application of these resources may at times be dogmatic, and while dogmatism can in part serve as a vaccine against manipulation and misuse, it also feeds uncompromising attitudes once religion is drawn into the conflict. To illustrate, the major differences between Protestants and Catholics in Northern

Ireland when it comes to their interpretations of Christian dogmas have had enormous social and political repercussions. Fronts are hardened by the fact that in Protestant circles there is a strong conviction that republican violence has at least the tacit blessing of the Catholic Church (McTernan 2003: 88-89).

Religion may also lead to conflict because it defines unambiguous *identities*, hence marking fault lines between various groups of people. The credibility of this view is reinforced by the extent to which conflicts in the post Cold War era have seemed to follow identity boundaries that are ethnic or religious, or a combination of both. Exclusive religious identity is expressed in an absence of intermarriages, such as between Muslim Serbs and Christian Croats, between Shiite and Sunni Iraqis, or between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Reinforced by a logic of war, a cessation of intermarriages reflects increased segregation, hostility and scepticism between conflicting groups. It is when religiously defined boundaries for inclusion and exclusion coincide with other identity markers, that the dividing line between 'Us' and 'Them' becomes most clear-cut. This is what the Norwegian theologians Sturla Stålset and Oddbjørn Leirvik touch upon when discussing the relationship between religion and politics:

> That adherents of all religion have always differed among themselves in political matters, is a truism. But in times when religious identity politics increasingly asserts itself around the globe, we need to remind ourselves that the dividing lines in ethics and politics do in fact not coincide with religious differences (Stålsett, Leirvik and Beyer 2004: 10-11).

If we focus on the dividing lines between world religions, it may be true that those rarely coincide with political fault lines. However, the assertion by Stålsett and associates becomes more problematic if we move our focus to the level of denominations, sects and cults. In these cases, the fault lines towards other believers within the same religion are essential to the members' self-understanding, although their other important identity markers may coincide with other significant boundaries of the overall churchly organisation. Relations between groups that stand close may often be more conflictual than between groups without contiguity. This is also applicable in the case of religion; relations between interrelated religious groups have often proven to be more conflictual than between world religions. While many religious identities are fundamentally inclusive and welcoming of the 'other', it remains a fact that some of the world's most exclusionary identities are religiously founded.

The *organisational basis* of religion can also feed into conflict. In its own right, religions may contain organisational set-ups or networks of followers that may be recruited *en bloc* for the war effort. In modern inter-state war, this was largely unthinkable; in the intra-state wars of today, it is not uncommon. For the Taliban, for instance, the Sunni Islamic networks rooted in the *madrasas*, the religious training institutions (in this case in Afghanistan and Pakistan), served as the organizational

backbone. Somewhat counter intuitively, the Taliban was successful in pulling together those networks, which are both loosely organized and fragmentary, under a joint command. Religious organisations may also contribute to war through its cooperation with other organisations, most prominently the state. They may offer not only normative legitimisation of action, the organisation may also be used to provide leadership and a ground for recruitment. The potential of religious organisations as focal points for recruitment and mobilisation cannot be over-estimated. The Islamist terror attacks in the US, Spain and the UK illustrates how it is not the number of adherents that is decisive, but rather the organisation of activities within a religious framework. Organised religion, with scriptures and standardised procedures, limits and restricts individual freedom of action, but does therefore have a decisive potential for altering the behavioural patterns of its adherents through its control over the normative and ethical foundations of action.

Ultimately, however, it remains a question whether religion is a dominant cause of conflict, or if it only serves to reinforce (or potentially moderate) other causes. Douglas M. Johnston and Jonathon Eastvold provide an example from the Bosnian conflict on the ambivalent effect of religion (Johnston and Eastvold 2004). While they argue that religion was anything but a root cause of the Balkan war, the authors show how religion served in various ways and in varying degrees to reinforce the nationalist fervour that divided the Serbs, Croatians and Bosnians, primarily by reinforcing national identities with religiously rooted fault lines, drawing religious organisations into the conflict as representative of the opposing parties. This in consequence fragmented the normative consensus of society. While this is only a singular example, it captures the widely held sentiment that religion is playing a limited role in initiating conflict, but an important role in perpetuating it once under way.

Impact of War on Religion

Most of today's wars are civil wars of a protracted nature, which often cause dramatic societal change. The transformations brought about by war define opportunities and constraints on the potential for religion to play a constructive role in conflict resolution. These opportunities and constraints vary with the degree to which religion is itself a central dimension of the conflict. The potential of religion in peacemaking will differ between a situation where religion is a prominent factor of the conflict, and a situation where religion is not directly part of it. Regardless, however, of whether or not religion was part of the complex of causes starting a war, religion will be altered as a result of war, and its potential for peacemaking will change accordingly.

It is a general tendency that the room for open and nuanced dialogue between groups adhering to different *normative systems* is seriously constrained by war. Even fairly open normative systems, representing tolerant expressions, may be transformed into

dogmatic ones when finding their fundamental values challenged, as may occur when faced with a situation of war. Religion is ultimately about coping with our existence, meeting the human need for meaning. Consequently, in a situation of prolonged conflict, the meaning of war may ultimately be integrated into the religious framework. This also implies that the fundamental ambiguity of most religious traditions is easily skewed, as normative justifications for conducting war is in demand. In Afghanistan, for example, key Islamic concepts such as *jihad* has lost much of its traditional significance, as people realize how they have been misused by successive rulers. If, however, religious normative foundations are not corrupted through being used to legitimise war, they can be tremendously important for formulating alternatives.

War tends to reinforce boundaries between various *identities*. For example, the radical Jewish settlers have gradually demonised the Palestinians throughout the course of the *al-Aqsa Intifada*. Additionally, the perception of themselves as pioneers for God is reinforced by the opposition they face from secular Jewish Israelis. This example also shows how at times, war even creates boundaries where they did not exist. When religion is a prime identity marker for the belligerent groups, this often leads to extreme pressure on people who do not identify with either group. This is why, for example, Bosnians living in mixed marriages by some were considered legitimate targets during the war in the early 1990s. When religious identities, on the other hand, do not coincide with the identities defining the conflict, religion is in an ideal position to cultivate contact between people who otherwise are under pressure to see each other as enemies. The role that the South African church played in the deconstruction of apartheid is one example.

War may threaten to weaken religious *organisational structures*, particularly if they are closely associated with the state or other parties to the conflict. When religious organizations and their leaders stand outside of the conflict, they may come to have considerable room for manoeuver, exactly because other sources of order are undermined and the demand for alternatives is on the rise. Furthermore, like other types of organization, religious organizations risk becoming more hierarchical and authoritarian in war. The demands on members' loyalty may be aggravated, with the result that people have either to engage fully and become relatively dependent, or loosen or even cut their connection.

PEACEMAKING

An early attempt to develop a conceptual framework for peace engagements is the paper 'An Agenda for Peace', prepared in 1992 by then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Gali. The paper identified four types of measures : *preventive diplomacy*, involving diplomatic action; *peacekeeping*, involving the deployment of a UN mandated armed presence in the field; *peacebuilding*, referring to strategies aimed at ensuring that disputes and armed conflicts do not arise or reoccur; and, finally, *peacemaking*, meaning the action taken to bring hostile parties to agreement through peaceful means (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 11).

The concept of peacemaking hence focuses on the amelioration of situations of conflict through assistance from a third party. It consequently differs from the other measures that aim at fostering peace, as it emphasises mediation and negotiation among parties in conflict. Negotiations occur overall on two primary levels:

- Track-One Diplomacy: This is the official level of traditional diplomacy, including official state relations, intergovernmental organisations (e.g. UN, OSCE) and/or authorisation from the top-level of the groups in conflict. Track-One negotiations have a high level of formality, aimed at producing an officially recognised agreement and/or a comprehensive settlement of the conflict (see for example: Agha et al. 2003: 188-193). The broker in Track-One is officially appointed (see: Chigas 2005: 127; Rasmussen 1997: 43).

- Track-Two Diplomacy: This is the unofficial intermediation and/or negotiations by non-officials linked to conflicting parties, adversial groups or states. Track-Two diplomacy aims at developing strategies, influencing public opinions, and organising human and material resources in an attempt to clarify outstanding disputes and explore options for resolving them (Agha et al. 2003: 1-9; Chigas 2005: 126-127). Track-Two intermediation is a supplement to Track-One, with the potential of making significant contributions in opening channels of communication between parties across conflict lines (Chigas 2005:126-141). The broker in Track-Two is not appointed by a government or a multi-lateral organisation (Starkey, Boyer and Wilkenfeld 2005: 60).

Hence, Track-Two diplomacy differs from Track-One both in its informality and lower level of transparency. In Track-One, the participants are diplomats and state representatives, and the broker is formally appointed and thus part of the same milieu. As formal representatives of conflicting parties, participants in Track-One often have a significant stake in the conflict and its outcome, and this may potentially be obstructing constructive dialogue. In contrast, Track-Two negotiation participants are not appointed by the parties, and they negotiate in an unofficial capacity, facilitated by a broker that is

not a formal state actor. This has the consequence that they "have more room to manoeuvre in that they are not directly in the limelight" (Lederach 2000: 147). The relatively informal standing of Track-Two allows for the initiation of talks on sensitive issues that cannot be dealt with in formal settings. Unofficial parties have no resources or leverage to bring to the table and therefore generally take on a more facilitating or educational role. Successful Track-Two Diplomacy can consequently pave the way for Track-One.

Religious organisations may acquire a particular position in this larger negotiation context. In Track-Two, religious organisations act on the basis of the normative system and identity of their believers, with a constructive potential: (Villumstad nd)

> Religious leaders have direct access both to the grassroots level and to the top leadership level. Their access to the grassroots is through their own religious communities, or 'constituencies'. Their access to the top leadership is through their representative mandate from smaller or larger constituencies within the larger community. Their strategic potential to make a difference in conflicts is considerable, and transcends different levels in national and international contexts (Villumstad nd:14).

For example, The World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches mediated a peace accord for the Sudan in 1972, and the mediation by the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone contributed to the peace accord for the country in 1999. In other words, as religious organisations cut through numerous levels in society, they can successfully play intermediary roles.

THE PEACEMAKING POTENTIAL OF RELIGION

The intractability of armed conflicts may be exacerbated by religiously based historical perceptions, theological or quasi-theological judgements, or by popular myths. Whether it is a direct or indirect dimension of the conflict, religion is part of the cultural matrix, and must be taken into consideration by brokers of peace. Bringing in religious actors or addressing religious questions is rarely sufficient for addressing the entire conflict picture. Yet, engaging religion may have considerable potential when it opens up a new path to discuss fundamental assumptions held by conflicting groups, and as one out of several components in a peace process. In this section we will focus on the potentials of religious actors in peacemaking, by examining the primary features of religion described above.

The Normative System in Peacemaking

Although religions in their dogmas and manifestations may appear to be fundamentally different, all established religions have experience with ethics, politics and social relations. As Marc Gopin puts it: "[W]orld religions have a reservoir of pro-social values of profound subtlety and effectiveness that, if utilized well, could form the basis of an alternative to violence in coping with conflict or coping with devastating injury" (Gopin 2000: 10). Resting on normative systems, religions depend upon its adherents experiencing a certain level of dependence on their normative systems; of feeling a certain degree of commitment. This implies a direct relationship between the *willingness* of the members to contribute to maintaining the religion, and their sensed *dependence* upon it, and is illustrated by the simple fact that if the religious adherents lack faith in the normative system, the religion will eventually cease to exist. A peacemaking effort is in need of similar mechanisms; the parties in conflict must be *willing* to resolve the conflict: Without a certain level of dependence and commitment from the parties to achieve peace, peacemaking will not succeed.

As with all aspects of religion, also the religious normative system is fundamentally ambiguous, with a *con*structive as well as a *de*structive potential. Possibilities and potentials for engagement in a peacemaking process, is subsequently related to the form of the normative systems. Dogmatic normative systems are more rigid than open normative systems, reducing the space that can be devoted to communication, compromise and dialogue. Many aspects of religious normative traditions are directly relevant for central elements in peacemaking, such as social justice, reestablishment of honour for members of society, and visions for a peaceful future.

Dogmatic normative systems, however, are not necessarily more prone to instigating conflict than open ones. To illustrate, strict adherence to the Hindu sect that considers the dogma of *ahimsa* - non-violence - as the highest virtue, is categorically opposing violent behaviour. Analytically, however, one may differ between dogmatic and open normative systems by identifying to what extent the adherents claim to administer *the* ultimate truth or *a* rightful way of living. By identifying the constructive dimensions, normative religious values can potentially provide a common platform for peacemaking, which may potentially foster the establishment of moral relationships between parties in a conflict resolution process (McMaster 2002: 82).

For the *peace broker*, religions represent decisive sources – and *re*sources - for restraining war or bringing armed conflict to an end through its normative rationales for restraint that exceed the bounds of traditional diplomacy. By identifying and bolstering a normative commitment embraced in a transcendent framework that implies long-term commitment, religious normative systems entail the possibility to buttress and foster a shared framework for peacemaking.

Additionally, peace brokering founded on a sincere normative commitment may increase the broker's capacities as well as credibility among the parties. In Mozambique, the Catholic community Sant'Egidio became a key mediator in the conflict in the mid-1970s. The successful involvement of Sant'Egidio is commonly considered as, on the one hand, a consequence of the community's neutrality in the conflict, while on the other hand, as a result of the shared normative ground the community's ethos offered to the parties (Appleby 1996: 829). This illustrates nicely the peacemaking potential of religious normative systems, both as a key quality of the potential broker, and as a common ground for the parties to the conflict.

Religious Identities – Identifying Common Ground?

Peaceful coexistence rests on a notion of mutual recognition by groups in conflict. Accordingly, peacemaking has an essential human dimension, involving core issues of identity of those engaged in the conflict. Religious traditions explicitly or implicitly underlie collective ways of life in numerous cultures, and religion is in many cases the main identity foundation among parties to the conflict, intertwined with other elements such as ethnicity, economic dividing lines. Consequently, the peace broker is compelled to relate negotiations to core aspects of the identities of the conflicting parties. However, identities exist in relation to others, and in a negotiating setting, parts of the identity can become highly politicised. Conflicting parties may exacerbate some elements of the identity in contrast to the identity of the conflicting party, increasing the exclusivity of the identity. Accordingly, 'identity' is difficult to negotiate, and may even appear to be beyond the scope of negotiation (see: Starkey, Boyer and Wilkenfeld 2005: 73-75). Parallel to the ways in which dogmatic normative systems are less open towards amendments, religious identities resting on a notion of exclusivity and particularity are less open towards negotiation. As seen above, in cases where religious identities overlap with other forms of identity, the excluding process of 'othering' may find fertile soil.

Exclusive identity formation is particularly prominent in religious groups that deviate from mass religion or from society at large. In such settings, the identity of the members of such religious organisations is – in its most radical form – based on the perception of exclusive selectiveness which also implies the dimension of restrictedness. This form of identity stands in contrast to more inclusive, pluralistic identities, which have a broader basis. Moving beyond differences to engage in a joint process may meet serious obstacles:

> When racial, ethnic, and religious differences are involved, contrasting appearances, roles, and rituals often block the abilities of negotiators and the broader societies they represent to find what they share – some common values in addition to their competing ones (Starkey, Boyer and Wilkenfeld 2005: 75).

When it comes to the fundamental opportunities for dialogue, there is a wealth of difference between religions which consider its leadership and the holy source of truth as one and the same, and those that draw a clear line of separation between the two.

The fault lines between the conflicting parties, and between the broker and the conflicting parties are acute in a peacemaking setting. For the broker, full awareness regarding his or her identity is necessary in order to limit challenges and maximise the potential for peacemaking. The divide between believers and non-believers is a divide in the cognitive foundations for how to understand life. Religious representatives express themselves differently from actors that operate on a secular basis. A secular diplomatic jargon of communication may therefore not 'reach through' to religious actors, nor is it necessarily able to address core aspects of the conflict appropriately.

The diplomatic modus operandi of peacemaking has mainly been based on secular premises, relying to a large extent on distributive or positional bargaining strategies, on the assumption that negotiations is a zero-sum game. Furthermore, the culture of diplomacy is largely cosmopolitan and secular, with little reflection of the extent to which this represents a worldview of its own. Accordingly 'traditional' diplomacy is always at risk of ignoring religious differences.

When religious groups in conflict both have faith-based identities, religion has the potential of pointing out common values among conflicting parties;. 'Being religious' can itself be a shared value which can alter the premises for cooperation and pave the way for a negotiation relationship based on the mundane conflict issues and not transcendent identity issues. This is the case in Albania, a conflict-ridden country with multiple religions. Conflict rarely occurs between the religious communities, as religious leaders and the secular leadership have recognised and respected internal differences in religious beliefs, while emphasising other non-religious, unifying elements in the Albanian national identity.

In a parallel to the Albanian example, individual religious beliefs may be superseded by a common language, a *Language of the Second Order* that overcomes the pressing and continuous challenge in finding the appropriate level and manner of communication. This implies emphasising the inclusive parts of the identities. Addressing this challenge, David Little and R. Scott Appleby write in their article 'A Moment of Opportunity' about the necessary qualifications for an agent of reconciliation (Little and Appleby 2004):

> [They] must be able to speak a second-order language that transcends religious and ethnic boundaries and fosters collaboration with secular and governmental agencies and representatives. Discernment – a spiritual discipline as well as political skill – is perhaps the most crucial quality in this arena of conflict transformation, for it is not difficult to miscalculate the situation and seek to promise the wrong things at the wrong time (Little and Appleby 2004: 15).

Language of the Second Order therefore refers to a level of communication that supersedes the barriers of communication created by specific religious-confessional (or secular-diplomatic) boundaries, based on issues, themes or narratives that are expressed differently in each tradition, yet reflect certain commonalities. Generally, obstacles to proper communication - and the opportunities for creating an appropriate 'Language of the Second Order' - appear to be issues of pressing importance and ought to be treated highly consciously by the broker of peace.

Role of Religious Organisation

As discussed above, religions are organised differently. The organisational structure has a decisive impact on the role that religion plays in the lives of the believers, and therefore also for its potential for being a constructive force in peacemaking. A core variable in the categorisation of organised religion is the level of *dependence*, referring to the individual orientation of the members, and the degree to which religion constitutes a foundation for all aspects of life.

Churchly and denominational organisations represent mass religiosity, and have heterogeneous orientations. Additionally, these organisations traditionally have a hierarchical structure, with clearly defined boundaries and a leadership relatively distant from its members. *Churchly and denominational orientations* are generally respected and integrated organisations of society. Churchly organisations, however, often seek a dominant role in society, whereas denominational organisations do not have similar ambitions. The societal integration of organised religion was decisive when the Church in Colombia became the grassroots' arena to express opposition to the state and to continued warfare. Similarly, in the early 1980s the Church of Poland became an important channel for the voice of the people against state oppression by the state, advocating democratic change.

Cultic and sectarian organisations represent a more 'virtuous' religiosity, as relatively loose associations of persons with a private, eclectic religiosity. Striving for religious perfection, these forms of religious organisations are at large maintained due to the individual intensity and willingness to invest in the realisation of the group's ultimate goals. Cults and sects also have more rigidly defined boundaries. With a membership joining on the basis of conscious choice and effort, the members of these organisations generally tend to be limited in number, more inter-dependant and with a clergy that stands closer to the common members.

Conceptualising religious collectivities cannot be done without paying respect to the cultural and social reality within which they exist. Consequently, any conceptualisation must be open to finding deviations from the expected patterns, such as denominational organisations with flat structures, or sects with a clear hierarchical structure. At the same time, the various classifications may have different applicability and relevance.

For example, the dominance of churchly religious orientations is diminishing, and the existence of one dominant religious organisation with a political role, such as the Norwegian State Church, is rare. Conversely, multiple religious organisations exist within the various states. It is nonetheless worthwhile to conceptualise the different patterns of religious collectivities in order to facilitate understanding of how they have come into being, how they are maintained and how they may impact upon society. The conceptual distinctions may enable the peace broker to understand the larger role of the religious collectivity, be it in terms of its members' dependence on the organisation or the structure of the very organisation. Knowledge of the form of organisation and level of commitment is essential when including religious organisations in peacemaking processes (McGuire 2002:154).

All forms of religious organisations conventionally include a clergy: a leadership that is given the moral power to direct the membership and to act on its behalf. Who are placed in leadership positions and what qualities they have are therefore immensely important. Religious leaders may potentially have significant resources for influence: They have a well-established and pervasive influence in the community; a reputation as an apolitical force for change based on a respected set of values; unique leverage for reconciling conflicting parties; and the capability to mobilize local, national, and international support for a peace process (Johnston and Cox 2003: 14).

Leaders of religious organisations derive potential legitimacy from their larger ritual role in society. By virtue of the organisation and normative system they represent, religious authorities may have a credibility that it is difficult for an irreligious peace broker to acquire. Consequently, religious organisations may root their various engagements, such as involvement in a peacemaking process, in a fundamental legitimacy. Religious organisations are well positioned to serve as agents of conflict transformation, with a potential for communication with their own grassroots and with the broader public. Leaders of religious organisations are in a position to negotiate with reference to the normative system of the religious group, and may at the same time be in a position to issue altered theological interpretations of the normative system. To the extent that religious leaders are not closely connected to any of the conflict parties, their credibility as well as their freedom of action may be great. This is one reason why religious leaders who do their utmost not to be linked to any of the conflict parties may be at grave risk. Furthermore, with the capacity of the state weakening as a result of war, people may be drawn towards alternative networks, such as religious ones, which further strengthens the relevance of religious organisation.

Accordingly, religious authorities are in a unique position to reach out to the wide network constituted by their adherents. Churchly and denominational organisations, with their member masses, are here in a particular position to communicate and reach through to an extended audience. Most official religions are to some extent part of *intra*-confessional and *inter*-religious networks of religious organisations. These

networks are based on cooperation and dialogue among religions, and among various groups within the same overall religion. Inter-religious networks may serve as a strong basis for dialogue in conflict contexts where the parties hold different religious identities. Intra-confessional networks are based on cooperation within groups of the same faith, and commonly transcend state borders. In such intra-confessional, international networks, the very element of 'being religious' is as a common feature that for many unites across borders. In practice, drawing upon these intra-confessional or inter-religious *networks* can give more force to an initiative, combining influence across multiple levels. In Angola in 1998, the Catholic Church used a combination of direct contact and public protest in order to put pressure on the parties not to resume violence. The church engaged its grassroots followership as well as its international networks, but also had critical support both locally, among the country's traditional local leadership (the *sobas*) and internationally, via non-governmental organisations and donor governments (Cain 2001; Harpviken and Kjellman 2004: 11)

Yet, as shown above, it is not necessarily the number of members that is decisive, but the degree of dependence that the individual members express. Therefore, despite the vast number of members in churchly and denominational organisations, the devotedness and dependence of the members may be limited, and restricted to only segregated periods of life. As a consequence, the leaders of these organisations may face problems when seeking to reach out with their message to the members of these types of religious organisations. Conversely, although the members of cultic and sectarian organisations may be limited in number, their dependence is strong. This has the potential to make these forms of religious organisations particularly robust; while their leaders have a particular opportunity to reach out to their members, the members are in turn particularly determined to realise the goals of their organisations. In other words, the degree of members' dependence may be a crucial factor for the organisation's impact.

In his celebrated article on spoilers in peace processes, Stephen John Stedman argues convincingly that the exclusion of parties that have normative systems which initially favours only themselves may have severe consequences (Stedman 1997). Rather, such situations are particularly demanding, and require conscious and timely policy arrangements – in order to keep potential 'spoilers' aboard in a peace process. Many religions are independent, in relative terms, of the state within which they exist. A lack of official status, however, is not the same as lack of relevance. Neglecting religiously based actors may prove detrimental. Norway's involvement as a peace broker between Israel and the Palestinians, which resulted in the Oslo Accords, is an example of this. Despite the role of radical and religiously based groups such as Hamas and radical Jewish settlers in the development of the conflict, negotiations were conducted amongst secular parties, whereas the religious parties were neither involved nor consulted. These

groups have, since the Agreement became public, both opposed and violated the Oslo Accords, with reference to their exclusion from the process.

RELIGION AND THE PEACE BROKER

We have now examined the role of religion in the pursuit of making peace, an elusive enterprise in its own right. Religion is multifaceted, reaching far beyond theology, and has different social and political consequences in different cultural settings. For example, secular Western diplomats operating in deeply religious societies may be surprised to find that they are perceived primarily as Christians, rather than by their occupation or nationality. It is hard to formulate applicable models that embrace all forms and all distinct cases. However, by moving the focus to the role of the broker, one can start to delineate various scenarios for mediation in conflicts where religion is a factor, or where the mediator is religious.

The identity of the broker as well as the identities of the conflicting parties are essential in the analysis of the foundations for negotiations. The identities in question may be religious, non-religious, or a mix where religion is only one component. Focusing on the identities of the broker and two parties, hence also on the relationship between the broker and the conflicting parties, we suggest a typology of three templates. These three templates, in which the identity of the broker (B) as well as of the conflicting parties (X, Y) may be either religious or not, provides a starting point for analysing the respective strengths and weaknesses of a specific broker under different conflict settings.

The Liaison

The conflicting parties – X and Y - are rooted in distinctly different identities. The broker – B – is an outsider to both, and acts as a go-between.

In this situation, the broker approaches the conflict with a normative system that diverges fundamentally from that of the conflicting parties (and the parties also have divergent identities and normative foundations). The different identity and worldview of the broker potentially leads the parties to perceive him or her as neutral. The broker then have an opportunity to offer alternative approaches to resolving the conflict.

This model implies several possible scenarios depending on whether the various actors are religious or not. At the one extreme, *the broker is religious*, acting in a conflict not charged by religion. Here, the broker's different identity and normative foundations may serve as a basis to help the conflicting parties establish a common ground which is

partially delinked from the conflict dynamics. An interesting example is the mediation of the catholic order of Sant'Egidio in Mozambique. In this setting, Sant'Egidio was an organization from the outside, which used its religious identity to demonstrate moral integrity, long-term commitment and an open-ended attitude to the conflict, over time gaining the confidence of both parties (Appleby 1996: 835). The Sant'Egidio representatives saw their role as that of a mediator and facilitator, and became personally familiar with leaders of both warring parties and other external actors implicitly or explicitly involved in trying to bridge across conflict lines. Consequently, by establishing common ground distinctly different from that of the conflicting parties, Sant'Egidio played a vital role as a broker in bridging and coordinating between the parties in conflict at crucial stages of the peacemaking process.

At the other extreme, *the broker is non-religious*, in a conflict between groups defined by different religions. Here the broker represents a different approach by representing a secular, normative system. This model describes the traditional modus operandi of secular diplomacy, where the broker plays a mundane, political role. On the one hand, this implies that the broker may represent a normative system that makes no reference to the transcendental, and thus offers a neutral, and possibly common, ground on which the conflict parties may start to approach issues from new angles. On the other hand, however, a categorical non-religious approach to peacemaking is at risk of ignoring the fact that most cultures, and thus most conflict parties, are influenced by religion. Bypassing this may lead to the ignorance of decisive identity constituents. This may have been the case with Norway's mediation between Israel and the Palestinians, discussed above. The US involvement in Iraq has also been of a secular, Western character, and has related primarily to non-religious, Iraqi actors, who in consequence have contributed to strengthening the fault lines between the intervening party, seen as the secularised diplomatic West, and the religious cultures of Iraq. This has given the conflict an extra dimension; as a conflict also over the rightfulness of religious worldviews.

The Representative

The conflicting parties – X and Y – have distinctly different identities. The identity of the broker – B - is shared with one of the conflict parties.

The close ties between the broker and one of the conflict parties in this scenario, implies that the identity of the broker entails a similar religious normative system to that of one conflicting party – X - as opposed to that of Y.

An example of this scenario is the mediation of Abdul Ghaffar Khan between the British colonialists and the local population in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of present day Pakistan, then British India. Ghaffar Khan rooted his principal non-violent stance against the British colonial power in Islamic (religious) and Pashtun

(ethnic/tribal) traditions. Nicknamed the 'Frontier Gandhi' after his inspiration and associate, Ghaffar Khan mobilized a massive non-violent army within the Pashtun population, which is otherwise perceived to hold on to a traditional normative system that upholds the use of violence, in the form of blood-revenge and tribal feuds (Johansen 1997).

The Ghaffar Khan example may appear as relatively exceptional. In principle, the credibility of the broker seems vulnerable when the religious platform is associated with that of *one* conflicting party. How can a broker be effective when seemingly identifying with the interests of one conflicting party? The close affiliation with one conflicting party may have critical consequences for the freedom of action of the broker, constraining and limiting opportunities for mediation. A broker whose identity is the same as that of one conflicting party, but who is at the same time obliged to stand at the fringes of the conflict and forward understanding of the 'Other', faces the risk of being seen as a traitor amongst his or her group of belonging and consequently lose credibility, while at the same time the broker may potentially have problems in gaining the necessary confidence of the opposing conflict party.

However, as the Ghaffar Khan example illustrates, the problems of credibility for the broker may be reduced when he or she is identified with the weaker party in a highly asymmetrical conflict. Vice versa, if the broker is identified with the stronger party, it is likely to be difficult to build confidence within the weaker party, hence it may be better to identify a broker who is either neutral or associated with the weaker party. Similarly, the broker may be at an advantage when he or she is being approached by the opposing group, since this would indicate both confidence in the broker and a commitment to the process.

The Coordinator

The conflicting parties – X and Y – and the broker – B – all share the same identity.

The shared identity between X, Y and B in this scenario, implies that the broker has a religious normative system similar to that of both conflicting parties, and that the three share a number of identity indicators. In other words, the broker is in a position to communicate with the conflicting parties within a shared framework of understanding; the broker and the conflict parties have a shared language that may facilitate dialogue and increase the potential for successful mediation.

However, one may demur that in a conflict setting where all parties, including the broker, emerge from the same religious group, the form and structure of the religion as organisation is decisive for the outcome of the peace brokering. For example, if the religion is churchly organised with a hierarchical structure, it may be of relevance which level in the hierarchy the broker represents. Additionally, the position of the

broker in intra-confessional debates concerning theological quandaries may have direct impact upon the potential of the broker to succeed as a mediator. In other words, fault lines may be just as deep between followers of the same religion as it is between different religions.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban and the so-called Northern Alliance tried to tap their joint reference to Sunni Islam when they set up a commission of religious scholars (*ulama*) in 1998. Each side appointed 20 representatives to the joint committee, which was to come up with a framework for negotiations, based on their knowledge of the sharia and Islamic norms of warfare (Appleby 1996: 835). Gradual confidence between the parties was built through the successful facilitation of prisoner exchange. Whereas the two groups perceived themselves as distinctly different – in terms of political ideology as well as ethnicity – this was an attempt to play on their common religion – Sunni Islam - as a basis for conflict resolution. Although both parties were explicitly Sunni Islamic, there were significant differences. The Taliban were rooted in the traditional religious networks, making it difficult to distinguish between religious leaders and Taliban policy. The *ulama* did not hold similar influence within the Northern Alliance. Overall, however, the brokering potential of the commission was compromised by the fact that the Taliban representatives were closely associated with the movement's leadership, whereas the Alliance representatives were more independent. On a more positive note, however, when the religious organisations stand in a similar relation with each of the two sides to the conflict, there is considerable potential for the committed coordinator to succeed.

ANALYSIS

There is no blueprint for brokerage by religious actors or for brokerage in religious conflicts. Any broker, however, depends on solid competence about the conflict setting. When entering a conflict setting in which religion is part, the broker is in need for knowledge of the phenomenon of religion as such, and of the particular religion(s) in question, in order to be able to identify a platform that pays respect to the religions involved. The need for deep seated understanding, however, may vary. In some conflict settings where two different religious traditions clash, it may be most appropriate with a low-key ecumenical approach where much of the initiative in identifying common ground in left to the parties themselves. Hence, there are cases where the broker may benefit from downplaying the competence on the conflict, acting as a 'naïve outsider'.

There is an abundance of religious systems around the globe. Religions are intimately related to the cultures and political systems within which they exist. The features of one

Mahayana Buddhist community in India may differ greatly from those of a Mahayana community in Sri Lanka. Religions stand in a dialectical relationship with their socio-cultural surroundings, as portrayed in the simple fact that Islam of Riyad is different from that of Berlin, Istanbul or Jakarta. Similarly, religious traditions in areas of armed conflict are transformed by war. Therefore, in prolonged conflict situations, the possible roles played, as well as the worldviews held, by religious actors, change over time. This has a direct impact on their peacemaking potential.

Knowledge of the local features of religion is decisive for the outcome of peace brokering. As a minimum standard, studies of peacemaking processes point to the necessity of cultural and religious sensitivity (see for example: Little and Appleby 2004: 9). Religion is, in other words, an inevitable socio-cultural element that demands appropriate awareness and analysis in peace brokering. Yet, to what extent should religion be mainstreamed into standard conflict analysis; to what extent does the analysis of religion require specialized competence and analysis?

All religions, cultures, and conflicts, have particular aspects that are distinctive to them, and finding applicable standardised models for peacemaking in settings in which religion and conflict are intertwined may be asking too much. The religious traditions of the world offer norms, narratives and rituals that may be conducive to the promotion of peace. Religious and secular wisdom are often in tension, and may even seem incommensurable on important points. For example, in the industrialised world, an individualist culture is increasingly dominant. This contrasts sharply with more collectivistic cultures found elsewhere, resulting in different stances towards the very organisation and ideals of society. It is therefore a challenge to traditional diplomacy to take religious beliefs into account (see: Carter and Smith 2004: 279). The cultural and religious dimensions of conflict pose a challenge to a narrow rational-actor model of decision-making which is influential in traditional diplomacy (Johnston 2003: 7). In other words, there is an inherent tension between features of religions and the orientation of traditional diplomacy which may be difficult to overcome, and which may ultimately limit the possibilities of brokering a viable peace.

The demand for appropriate and timely analysis of the religious dimensions of a conflict raises a pressing question for the broker: Can one acquire the necessary knowledge and understanding when being an *outsider* to the community in question? Scholars have argued along two different paths. Whereas some hold up as an ideal the attempt to fully grasp the insider's position normatively, others would promote the possibility to organise a system of meaning accessible to the outsider. However, it remains clear that the broker cannot bridge the gap in self-perception between the 'Us' and 'Them', nor is it necessarily the task of the broker to do so. The principal aim of the peace broker is not to sympathise with, promote, or protect religion. In Bruce Lincoln's words, "reverence is a religious, and not a scholarly virtue"(Lincoln 1999: 396). Rather, the objective must be to approach the conflict equipped with a basic

understanding of its religious dimensions. Religions are in constant change, and the various normative systems stand in a close relation to the culture within which they appear. A religion is consequently highly dynamic, making the need for timely, culturally sensitive analysis apparent. For, as Scott Appleby writes:

> Each religious community constantly rediscovers, and partially remakes, itself and its religious tradition within a concrete situation. It is this internal evolution of the great religious traditions that commands our attention, for these traditions spawn the most significant religio-political movements of our time, from the violent extremist cadres to the organizations of militant peacemakers. Thus it behoves us to understand how change occurs within these religions, how spin-off movements form to advocate and embody different elements within these internally plural and ambiguous traditions, and how external actors and circumstances influence both processes. (Appleby 2002: 4-5)

In practical terms, this implies a need not to root peacemaking interventions in a one-off analysis, but to be continuously monitoring the role of religion in the conflict. Only an ongoing engagement to understand the religious dynamics will enable the mediator to see and grasp opportunities as they arise.

Ultimately, no conflict is only a question of religion. While the analysis of religion is often crucial, and may require specialized competence in religious studies, it is important that the analysis of religion is integrated with the general conflict analysis. Religion needs to be understood in the context of the larger social and political dynamics of the conflict, not as an isolated sphere. As stated above, religious awareness is no silver bullet to peacemaking, but to ignore the religious dimension may be detrimental to any peacemaking engagement.

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