

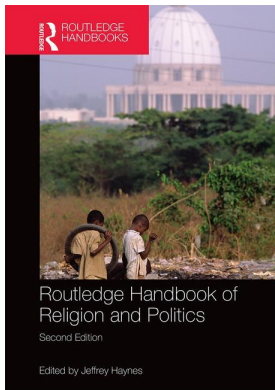
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23

THE RISE OF RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING

Paul Ilo

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, UK

Introduction

Peacebuilding sets out to do three cardinal things: *to resolve conflicts that already exist, to find ways to prevent new ones in the future and to manage what cannot be fully resolved.*¹ To achieve these goals, Ramsbotham *et al.*² contend that peacebuilding must be:

- *Multilevel*: Analysis and resolution must embrace all layers of conflict: interpersonal, intra-personal, inter-group (families, neighbourhoods, affiliations), international, regional and global, and the complex interplays between them.
- *Multidisciplinary*: In order to learn how to address complex conflict systems adequately, peacebuilding must draw on many disciplines, including: development studies, politics, international relations, strategic studies, and individual and social psychology.
- *Analytic and normative*: The foundation of the study of conflict must involve a systematic analysis and interpretation of the ‘statistics of deadly quarrels’, but this must be combined from the outset with the normative aim of learning how better thereby to transform actually or potentially violent conflict into non-violent actions of social, political and other forms of change.
- *Theoretical and practical*: Peacebuilding must be constituted by a constant mutual interplay between theory and practice. Only when theoretical understanding and practical experience of what works and what does not work are connected can properly informed experience develop.

Beyond these generic goals of peacebuilding, there are also several specialised forms of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, including: religious peacebuilding, international peacebuilding and youth peacebuilding. In addition, there are various dimensions of peacebuilding efforts, such as: peacekeeping, trauma counselling, gender empowerment and youth education. This chapter outlines the rise of a specialised form of peacebuilding called religious peacebuilding and explains its rise due to a number of reasons. These perspectives are presented here for two main reasons – first, because they are becoming increasingly used and, second, because many religious leaders now engage more with peacebuilding issues and associated frameworks of conflict resolution.

‘Secular’ peacebuilding

To understand what religious peacebuilding entails, it is important to understand what its ‘non-religious’ or ‘secular’ counterpart is and how it operates. The term ‘peacebuilding’ first emerged in the 1970s in the works of Johan Galtung, who called for the creation of peacebuilding structures in order to aid sustainable peace by addressing the ‘root causes’ of violent conflict and supporting local capacities for conflict resolution and peace management. From that time, the generic term peacebuilding has expanded to cover multi-dimensional spheres and assignments ranging from the disarming of warring factions to the reconstruction of political, judicial, economic and civil society organisations.³

For Boutros Boutros Ghali, then the United Nations Secretary General, peacebuilding described ‘actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’.⁴ In 1995, the term was broadened to include any substantive preventive work seeking to avert the outbreak of violent conflict.⁵ Some of the techniques used for peacebuilding are mediation, community dialogue, negotiation, sensitisation and awareness workshops, counselling and gender empowerment, among others. However, my analysis in this study is informed by the comprehensive and normative definition of peacebuilding provided by Spence.⁶ She defined peacebuilding as:

those activities and processes that focus on the root causes of . . . conflict, rather than just the effects; support the rebuilding and rehabilitation of all sectors of the . . . society; encourage and support interaction between all sectors of society in order to repair damaged relations and start the process of restoring dignity and trust; recognize the specifics of each . . . conflict situation; encourage and support the participation of indigenous resources in the design, implementation and sustainment of activities and processes; and promote processes that will endure (over time).

This definition suggests that ‘secular’ peacebuilding (otherwise called peacebuilding or non-religious peacebuilding) usually occurs in a political context, and is affected by processes and practices within that very context. Stefan Wolff⁷ asserts that at the heart of peacebuilding is, along with other actors, ‘the state and its relationship to peace’. This suggests that the success or failure of peacebuilding will often depend on crucial institutional choices, including how to incorporate a range of different actors in to peacebuilding efforts.

Agents of peacebuilding

Generally at the heart of peacebuilding is the idea of ‘meeting needs and building trust’ through the help of various actors and peacebuilders. Several actors contribute to peacebuilding. These include:

- *Humanitarian and development agencies*: They may be in a country before, during and after the conflict. There are several humanitarian and development agencies with strong focus on peacebuilding, including: inter alia, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, World Vision and Islamic Relief. Active on the ground, as the conflict draws to an end, such actors can lay important foundations for the peacebuilding process (by helping to provide, through their mediation between warring factions, early peace dividends).

- *Peacekeeping operations*: They may play a significant role as early peacebuilders. The mandates of multi-dimensional operations include disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) and support to electoral processes.
- *Special political missions (SPMs)*: SPMs include integrated peacebuilding missions given the mandate to cover a wide range of peacebuilding tasks by states and/or agencies of international organisations.⁸

Transformation and ripeness in peacebuilding

As stated by Ramsbotham *et al.*, it is essential that agents of peacebuilding/peacebuilders intervene at the right time. The right time in peacebuilding is also known as ‘ripeness’. Haass defines ripeness as the ‘prerequisites for diplomatic progress, that is, particular circumstances . . . conducive for negotiated solution or even progress’.⁹ Ripeness occurs when transformations in relationships or conflicts happen and thus make the situation likely to result in successful peacebuilding. The following transformations are essential for successful peacebuilding:

Context transformation

Ramsbotham *et al.* also note that in the contexts of social, international, or regional issues, ‘local conflicts may not be resolvable at the local level without changes’. Typically, context transformation involves significant – and significantly ameliorative – changes in the local, regional, or international contexts. For instance, transformation in a region could mean a series of successful peacebuilding works in that region. The transformation could lead more generally to more successful peacebuilding works in that region.

Issue transformation

Issue transformation appears when actors in a conflict ‘change their positions, or when issues lose salience or new ones arise’.¹⁰ For instance, the contemporaneous civil conflict in Burundi was transformed by the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda. The whole Great Lakes region was outraged and devastated by the huge number of deaths that occurred in Rwanda in a matter of days. Having seen the evil that conflict could cause, the actors in the civil conflict in Burundi were humbled and agreed to work together so what had occurred in Rwanda could not happen in Burundi. Vayrynen asserts that ‘issue transformation’¹¹ also happens through events that alter ‘the trend of the conflicts’. In Burundi, the constant relocation of Burundians to neighbouring states like Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo helped to calm down the protagonists and encouraged them to understand the importance of embracing peace.

Personal and group transformation

This is the integral part of the transformation. This occurs when the ‘former guerilla leader becomes the unifying leader, offering reconciliation’.¹² At that point, it is important that someone intervenes to bring the warring factions to the bargaining table as they are more likely to listen to each other and cooperate during this phase. For example, in July 1996, a coup was organised by the Tutsis in Burundi which placed a Tutsi, Major Buyoya, in the presidency. However, when Buyoya came into power, he announced a partnership between the government

and the Hutu-dominated National Assembly. That singular act transformed the conflict as it signaled to the Hutus that the Tutsis were willing to form a partnership with them. However, these transformations occurred because the Tutsis and Hutus saw a ‘low level and decreasing probability of attaining conflict goals through violent struggle’. This is a major pre-condition for negotiations¹³ – ‘peace and peacefulness’.¹⁴

It has been argued that for peacebuilding to be successful, it must involve *a wide range of actors*, to ‘support the participation of indigenous resources’ and must be ‘localised – owned by the people’.¹⁵ Many scholars have stated the importance of localising peacebuilding. Gizelis and Kosek¹⁶ argue that the ‘extent of local participation exerts a strong effect on the prospects for successful peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts’. In addition to this, it has also been argued that lack of willingness of the peacebuilders to pay significant costs usually lead to half-baked efforts at peacebuilding. These factors underlie the fact that for peacebuilding to be successful there must be a commitment on the part of the agents of peacebuilding, an active participation of locals and a strong trust in the peacebuilders.

Religious leaders become involved in peacebuilding for various reasons. However, they may share three characteristics. They are usually (1) committed to a belief in peace as a result of their religious doctrines; (2) fundamentally connected to local communities, often trusted and respected by many; and (3) potential agents of change and peace in their local communities. For these reasons, it is likely that religious leaders will be called upon by several individuals and organisations to take part in peacebuilding efforts. This has birthed a specialised form of peacebuilding known as religious peacebuilding.

Religious peacebuilding

Over the years, several organisations and individuals have advocated for governments to begin to take more seriously the social and political role of religion, including in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As a result, many now pursue engagement with religious leaders and institutions as part of a government’s work to promote security, nation-building, peace, and international development. The adoption in the USA of the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, which created the Office of International Religious Freedom within the Department of State, was one response to this call. The US government’s response, through a more sophisticated and concerted effort to understand and engage religion, has accelerated in recent years. This was especially the case after the traumatic events of September 11, 2001, spurred by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s *The Mighty and the Almighty*,¹⁷ which called for increased diplomatic engagement with the religious sector. In 2009, the Obama administration initiated an exercise across government agencies and bureaus to determine how, why and when religious actors and communities were being engaged to advance peacebuilding. These efforts alongside several others have given birth to and strengthened the brand of peacebuilding called religious peacebuilding.¹⁸

Having said that, what then is religious peacebuilding, how did it emerge and is it something different qualitatively from secular peacebuilding?

Religious peacebuilding can be defined as ‘actions taken by people acting with an expressed religious mandate (individuals or representatives of organisations) to constructively and non-violently prevent, reduce or transform inter-group conflict’.¹⁹ Religious peacebuilding is centred on efforts of religious actors in peacebuilding. Such efforts may include but not be limited to dialogue, negotiation and mediation, and peace messages, among others. Religious peacebuilding is used in conflict situations where religion is the main identifier of difference as well as in other conflict situations. As Appleby states:

Religious actors build peace when they act religiously, that is, when they draw on the deep wells of their traditions, and extract from those depths the spiritual instincts and moral imperatives for recognizing and embracing the humanity of the other; and, when they employ the distinctive ritual and symbolic and psychological resources of religion for transforming the dream of a common humanity into a tangible, felt reality. They exhibit greater capacity for peace when they form alliances and spend the social capital they have gained through years and decades of confidence-building service to the local community.²⁰

Gordon Smith and Harold Coward in their wide-ranging and interdisciplinary set of essays entitled *Religion and Peacebuilding* have attempted to take seriously Scott Appleby's claims. They seek to demonstrate, through an examination of the 'spiritual resources' of seven religious traditions and five case studies, the ways that religion contributes to both peace and violence. They describe religious peacebuilding as 'the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence'.²¹

As highlighted above by Neufeldt,²² and Smith and Coward,²³ the key focus of religious peacebuilding is to 'prevent', 'reduce', 'transform', or 'resolve' inter-group conflicts. These concerns also suggest that religious peacebuilding is carried out by religious peacebuilders – religious leaders such as Muslim clerics, pastors, bishops, monks, etc. It is their involvement in this type of peacebuilding that makes it religious peacebuilding. In fact, religious peacebuilding cannot be done without religious peacebuilders. Religious peacebuilders are religious leaders or representatives of faith-based organisations that attempt to help resolve inter-group conflicts and build peace.²⁴ They are likely to carry out successful peacebuilding work when they: (1) have an international or transnational reach; (2) consistently emphasise peace and avoidance of the use of force in resolving conflict; and (3) have good relations between different religions in a conflict situation, as this will be the key to a positive input from them.²⁵

Religious peacebuilding is becoming prominent in different parts of the world. Several religious traditions now venture into peacebuilding. For example, The International Network of Engaged Buddhists, founded by Thai lay Buddhist leader Sulak Sivaraksa, was inspired by the non-violent peace work of Thich Nhat Hanh, Maha Ghosananda and the Dalai Lama; and they have since ventured into many peacebuilding works. Other examples include the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the American Jewish World Service, the Jewish Peace Fellowship, the Mennonite Central Committee, Hindu organisations influenced by Gandhian principles, such as the Brahma Kumaris, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Quaker Church's American Friends Service Committee.²⁶

Recent events suggest that religious peacebuilding will continue to be relevant in the future. The post-Arab Spring unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, for example, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, reflects ongoing opportunities and challenges for the religious peacebuilders, while many scholars are now interested in why and how religion can be a force for good and at the same time drive violence.²⁷ Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), agencies in countries like the USA, and international organisations – that once held religious issues at a distance or depicted religion largely as a harbinger of violence – now engage religious actors and organisations as partners in peacebuilding.²⁸ As a result, a regular engagement with the relationship between religion and conflict has birthed a 'concomitant booming of religious peacebuilding'.²⁹

Religious peacebuilding is now becoming increasingly classified as a form of intervention in conflict-ridden situations. Many religious actors, including religious NGOs, are active in peacebuilding. They include: the World Conference on Religion and Peace, World Vision, the Catholic Relief Services, the American Jewish World Service, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Sant'Egidio and the All Africa Conference of Churches. In addition, there are active interfaith networks, such as: Interfaith Mediation Centre (Nigeria), Nigeria Inter-Religious Council and Uganda's Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative.

In the past few years, religious peacebuilding efforts have been widely funded, lauded and applauded by international organisations, governments and policy makers in, inter alia, Mozambique, Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Cambodia, Haiti and several countries in the Balkans.³⁰ However, different countries where religious peacebuilding occurs, like the ones stated above, have unique challenges and needs, thus the shape and structure of the peacebuilding is largely affected by the context of operation. In the same vein, the nature and type of religious leaders (as religious peacebuilders) can vary from place to place, but what they all have in common is recourse to faith for peacebuilding.

As religious conflicts gain prominence through the outbreak of several religious conflicts in different parts of the world, Religious Peacebuilders offer in many contexts a glimpse of hope. This is because they offer activities that are diverse but generally supportive of conflict resolution and the building of peace, ranging from high-level mediation to training and peacebuilding-through-development at the grassroots.³¹ In addition, they may offer 'emotional and spiritual support to conflict-affected communities'; offer effective mobilisation for 'communities and others for peace';³² and provide a conduit in pursuit of 'reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration'.³³

The rise of religious peacebuilding

In the past, religious peacebuilding was not as prominent as it is today. The rise of religious peacebuilding is traceable to the impact of three factors: (1) the Iranian Revolution; (2) the contributions of religious leaders to national and international development; and (3) trust and respect for religious leaders. Let us look at each factor next.

The Iranian Revolution

Appleby³⁴ traces the importance of religious leaders and the emergence of religious peacebuilding to the 1980s, in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979, a period which also coincided with the emergence of the third wave of democracy. The Iranian revolution refers to events involving the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Pahlavi, who was supported by the United States, and the eventual dislocation of his regime and replacement with an Islamist government. The post-revolution government was headed by Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, and strongly supported by many Islamic leaders.³⁵ The victory of the Grand Ayatollah was seen as a strong message and appeared as the 'victory of religious leaders' as it proclaimed their names because they were heavily involved in the revolution.

The months of strikes and demonstrations that convulsed Iran in 1978–9 reached a dramatic culmination in the first eleven days of February 1979, when an epic tide of revolutionary fervour brought the return to Iran from exile of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and overthrew the hitherto powerful regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In the following weeks, the victorious leaders of the popular wave formed a new regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran; this was proclaimed on the April 1 and its constitution ratified in a national referendum on December 2,

1979. In consolidating power, as in executing their enemies, *the religious priests (the mullahs)* and their political allies did not waste time.³⁶

To capture effectively what happened during the revolution, three key factors are itemised next. First, a large number of opposition forces, including Islamic leaders, came together to overthrow a dictatorial regime, proclaiming long-standing social grievances while also fueling nationalist sentiment against a state and ruler seen as too compliant with foreign interests, especially the ‘God-less’ government of the USA. The coalition mobilised under Ayatollah Khomeini’s leadership ranged from liberals and Marxists to conservative and religious forces: in effect a ‘classic populist alliance’. Second, the revolution had the quality that distinguishes mere *coups d’état* or rebellions from major revolutions: namely, it was not just political ‘in the sense of changing the political elite and the constitution or legitimating system of the country’³⁷ but had huge and ongoing economic and social consequences. Iran today has a new social order and a new set of social values because of it. Third, this was a revolution that was well organised, through a network of mosque and local committees – yet had no revolutionary party.

Above all, the Islamic revolutionaries of 1979 did what all revolutionaries do – ‘namely overthrow an oppressive government, seize power for themselves and their allies, crush not only their opponents but all dissidents within the regime, and then impose a new and even more exacting’ regime.³⁸ Overall, the Iranian revolution featured a situation where religious leaders were for the first time principally and actually involved in the social re-engineering process, nation-building and correctional procedures. It showed the world that religious leaders can come out of the ‘box’ of places of worship to take part in nation-building and contribute to other ‘good’ causes.

Appleby asserts that prior to 1979; there was ‘secular myopia’³⁹ – a kind of blindness to the importance of religious leaders and the positive role they could play in nation-building and peacebuilding. He posits that from 1980 onwards, following the revolution in Iran, the role of religious actors generally gained more prominence, while many questioned the validity of the claim that to modernise is to secularise. This shift and awareness happened in part because there was renewed awareness of the social and political importance of many religious leaders and what they represent; while many people expressed trust in such people, respecting their opinions and utterances, including the virtues of peace over conflict.

Prior to the 1980s, religious leaders were not given the kind of voice and attention they have today. The roles and leadership of religious actors were ‘restricted’ to places of worship and excluded from the ‘secular’ parlance. This exclusion is most often expressed as ‘privatisation’, a situation where religious leaders are meant to deal with ‘private affairs’ with little direct relevance in the ‘public sphere’.⁴⁰ It was basically ‘treaties and the state’ which belonged to the ‘public sphere’ – that formed the centre stage in world politics.

However, after the involvement of religious actors in the Iranian revolution, religious leaders emerged in many contexts to occupy important places in the ‘public sphere’, including in the context and content of peacebuilding, to lead to a new nomenclature: religious peacebuilding. Some scholars describe this rise of religious actors in peacebuilding as a key component of a wider ‘religious resurgence’,⁴¹ involving ‘desecularisation’⁴² and leading to a general era of ‘post-secularisation’.⁴³

The contributions of religious leaders/groups to national and international development

The rise of religious peacebuilding is also traceable to the facts that religious actors in different parts of the world have made positive contributions to human development, for instance,

Maha Ghosananda (Cambodia), Thich Nhat Han (Vietnam), Desmond Tutu (South Africa), Archbishop John Onaiyekan (Nigeria), among others. Religious leaders who are the main actors in religious peacebuilding are generally regarded as agents of social change and messengers of peace.

Sant'Egidio is a notable example of a religious group active in religious peacebuilding. Sant'Egidio is an international Catholic NGO that takes part in efforts at peacebuilding in several conflicts in many parts of the world. Founded in Italy in 1968, it has since grown to include over 50,000 members in 70 countries. Haynes states that Sant'Egidio is a church-based public lay association, formally recognised by the Catholic Church but with an autonomous statute. This means that its membership is 'lay' – that is, not professionally religious – although its adherents have a clear religious persuasion, which is an important part of its negotiation activities.⁴⁴ Appleby explains that Sant'Egidio started its activities with humanitarian actions, charity and development cooperation uppermost in its thinking, concerns moulded by spirituality and shared principles, including communicating the gospel, prayer, solidarity with the poor and dialogue with other religions.⁴⁵ However, despite its strong religious orientation, Sant'Egidio's peacebuilding projects and efforts have focused more on 'non-religious' conflicts than on 'religious' conflicts, and more on the international level than on the national or local level.

In addition, in Nigeria James Wuye, a Christian priest, and Muhammed Ashafa, a Muslim cleric, founded the Interfaith Mediation Centre, a charity to foster Christian–Muslim dialogue. It was the result of the combined efforts of these two former enemies – a Christian pastor and Muslim cleric, both esteemed members of their religious communities. But, rather than continuing their personal conflict, instead, 'they embraced non-violence, reconciliation and the advocacy of peaceful relations between their communities, and sought to encourage others to join them in this goal'.⁴⁶ Today, they jointly head the Interfaith Mediation Centre and have been invited by the Nigerian government several times to intervene in local conflicts. Their works have also been recognised internationally by agencies such as the United States Institute of Peace.

Trust and respect for religious leaders

Many scholars believe that since religious peacebuilding is usually done by religious actors and leaders who are largely respected by their followers and the community as a whole, it offers wider prospects for successful peacebuilding projects. For example, during the Juba talks for peace in northern Uganda, especially when the two parties finally came back to the table to talk in 2006, the religious leaders played a role in advising and observing the talks. As trusted individuals, religious leaders in Uganda have been called upon by the leadership of the rebel group The Lord's Resistance Army numerous times to clarify certain issues pertaining to the agreements over the last two years. While recent talks have been wracked with challenges which have prevented the signing of the final agreement, it has largely been seen by the representative Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative as a success – for it has led to a period of relative peace in the whole of northern Uganda.⁴⁷ This situation depicts that the trust reposed in religious leaders can help to make a huge difference in the outcomes of peacebuilding efforts they take part in.

The sociological assumption supporting this is that religious actors may have a high level of 'believability' within the society and/or religious organisations that can provide ready-made networks to encourage attitudinal shifts, in the same manner that some of them are supposedly available for the recruitment of radical violent warriors.⁴⁸

The trust people repose in religious leaders is therefore often greater than the trust they repose in the other types of leader (including political leaders). This is because religious actors

may be considered as role models who typically practise what they preach. Moreover, the rise of religious peacebuilding can also be considered as linked to increasing distrust in government in many countries. The rise of religious peacebuilding can also be seen more generally as reflecting increased prominence of many religious leaders. Finally, the rise of religious leaders suggests that they have what many other secular leaders lack: respect, trust, charisma and strong belief in their capacities. This situation can be aptly described as a situation where there is strong belief in the authority of religious leaders and declining belief in the authority of the state.

Religious leaders and peacebuilding: opportunities

There are many other ways in which religious leaders and faith-based organisations contribute to peacebuilding, including by conducting training on peace, directly mediating between parties in conflict, engaging in conflict prevention, promoting human rights and democratic governance, and organising post-conflict reconciliation.⁴⁹ Other potential roles for religious peacebuilders have been identified as negotiators, facilitators, mediators, advocates, observers, educators and ‘prophets’ or ‘heralds’ acting as an early warning mechanism for conflict, among others.⁵⁰

Basically, religious leaders can contribute positively at all stages and levels of conflict and peacebuilding processes through a wide range of resources that they possess.⁵¹ These resources can include: scriptural and theological resources; inner spiritual inspiration and transformation; religious ritual; empowerment and equality; the use of established networks and hierarchies for enhancing advocacy, the mobilisation of practical and financial resources for supporting reconciliation and peacebuilding work.⁵²

In 1997, Professor John Paul Lederach offered an insightful analysis on the opportunities embedded in religious peacebuilding. Famous for his work on reconciliation, consociationalism and religious peacebuilding, Lederach writes about the opportunities and potential role of leaders and actors in peacebuilding processes. Lederach’s triangle with three levels of leadership – grassroots leadership at the bottom, middle-range leadership in the middle and top leadership at the apex of the pyramid, is very useful in understanding the opportunities embedded in the contributions of religious leaders and actors in peacebuilding.⁵³

Lederach posits that these three levels of leaders have different roles in peacebuilding. In religious peacebuilding, these levels of leadership exist and each level features opportunities and prospects for peace. He concludes that religious leaders are well positioned to embark upon successful peacebuilding projects. As potential change agents, religious leaders are well positioned for successful peacebuilding projects – they are respected; they are trusted; they are regarded as agents of social change; they are regarded as role models and the doctrines of most religions supports peacebuilding. For instance, Christians believe in the principle of ‘following peace with all men’ and Islam preaches the concept of ‘Salam’ which means, simply, peace. Therefore, the major thing that religious peacebuilding has going for it is the trust that people have in religious leaders. Governments have seen that religious actors can play a role that they cannot easily or consistently play. The resultant effect is that they now invite religious leaders to take part in peacebuilding efforts orchestrated by them.

Future development: religious peacebuilding

Peacebuilding and in turn religious peacebuilding have become well known among practitioners, professionals and researchers in international development and other fields, featuring sustained cooperation. Many universities and institutions now offer programmes and schemes

on peace and conflict studies. In addition, a number of reports, essays, books, conferences and programmes have been offered during the last two decades. To conclude, I would like to offer some recommendations for the future of religious peacebuilding.

Going forward, religious leaders and actors in peacebuilding should aim to conduct more peacebuilding works through inter-religious networks. This would hopefully encourage wider participation and success. According to the Centre for International Studies and Research, the main element that should be in most religious peacebuilding initiatives is this inter-religious make-up. Inter-religious networks are networks of people from different religions. Typically, they come together to work together for interrelated goals: peace and human development. Inter-religious networks offer a platform for 'Inter-religious Dialogue for Peacebuilding', an integral part of religious peacebuilding. Inter-religious Dialogue for Peacebuilding is a significant approach that places the practice of dialogue at the heart of peacebuilding. It nurtures the (re)building of trust relations and enhances social cohesion. It heightens awareness about how to improve human interactions, both locally and globally, by recognising the importance of integrating religious identities into inter-group dialogue. Such dialogues can be a useful and important way of preventing conflict by strengthening relationships between communities in order to decrease the potential for communal divides to become fault lines of violence. When conflict breaks out between the communities, 'such dialogues can help build bridges to resolve the conflict before it breaks into violence'.⁵⁴ Inter-religious networks are active in a few countries such as Uganda, Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Ghana.

In addition, as stated earlier, scholars like Lederach and Appleby have recognised the quality of 'localising' religious peacebuilding in relation to specific political contexts. With respect to other indicators of success, several peacebuilding efforts tend to leave local actors feeling marginalised and inactive in peacebuilding endeavours.⁵⁵ Religious leaders should note this and devise a means to actively involve locals when intervening in conflicts.

In addition, the field of peacebuilding should pay more attention to case studies and not just theoretical arguments. Case studies can be 'selective'. The selective case study may focus on a particular issue or aspect of behaviour with the objective of refining knowledge in a particular area, to provide a better understanding of causal processes. The selective case study may lead to questions about 'how' and 'why' issues or behaviour conspired to produce the resulting outcomes. This leads into explanatory evaluation.⁵⁶

Case studies can also be exploratory. A more rigorous application of the explanatory case study may try to isolate selected social factors or processes within the real-life context to provide a test of the existing explanations. The explanatory case study approach could be used to test the 'how' and 'why' questions.⁵⁷ These perspectives could be very useful for the progress of religious peacebuilding. Case studies could also help to proffer more situations and solutions to similar contexts. In sum, case studies are essential for religious peacebuilding because they tell a story, focus on people, demonstrate success or failure and teach lessons.

Notes

- 1 Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman, 'Introduction: The Nature of Conflict and Conflict Resolution'.
- 2 Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 8.
- 3 United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 'Peacebuilding and the United Nations'.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 6 Spence, 'Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Who Determines the Peace? Rethinking Humanitarianism Conference Proceedings'.

- 7 Wolff, 'One Challenge or Two? Peacebuilding and State building in Post-Secession Sudan'.
- 8 United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 'Peacebuilding and the United Nations'.
- 9 Haass, *Conflicts Unending: The United States and Regional Disputes*.
- 10 Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 176.
- 11 Vayrynen, 'To Settle or to Transform? Perspectives on the Resolution of National and International Conflicts', 4.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Stephens, 'Acceptance of Mediation Initiatives: A Preliminary Framework', 5.
- 14 Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 66, 176–7.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Gizelis and Kosek, 'Why Humanitarian Interventions Succeed or Fail', 363–83; see also Mueller, 'The Banality of Ethnic War', 42–70.
- 17 Albright, *The Mighty and the Almighty*.
- 18 Hayward, 'Religion and Peacebuilding: Reflections on Current Challenges and Future Prospects'.
- 19 Neufeldt, 'Interfaith Dialogue: Assessing Theories of Change', 346.
- 20 Comments by R. Scott Appleby at 'Religion and Peacemaking: Reflections on Current Challenges and Future Prospects', USIP Public event, Washington, DC, November 9, 2011.
- 21 Smith and Coward, *Religion and Peacebuilding*, 5.
- 22 Neufeldt, 'Interfaith Dialogue: Assessing Theories of Change', 346.
- 23 Smith and Coward, *Religion and Peacebuilding*, 5.
- 24 Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*; Appleby, 'Building Sustainable Peace: The Roles of Local and Transnational Religious Actors'; Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*; Gopin, 'World Religions, Violence, and Myths of Peace in International Relations'.
- 25 Appleby, 'Building Sustainable Peace: The Roles of Local and Transnational Religious Actors', 1–2.
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