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Religion in Conflict Transformation

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Introduction and Overview
Religion in Conflict Transformation in a Nutshell

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Aim, Background, and Structure

The aim of the following issue of Politorbis is to help policy-makers and practitioners deal with the religions dimensions of conflict and its non-violent transformation.While religion has always played a role in politics, and sometimes in conflict, and the non-violent transformation of conflict, insufficient attention has been given to this theme until quite recently. In Western politics, for a long time, secularism seemed to be the answer, where religion was delegated to the private sphere and politics was "freed" from religion. In certain academic spheres, such as political science, modernization theories argued that the role of religion was in the demise as people become more educated and economically developed. Never-theless, a more careful analysis would have shown that religion was always a factor in politics, in some conflicts and in peace promotion. It was with us all along, it is still with us, and will be with us also in the future. The use of religious discourse by actors such as Osama bin Laden, legitimizing the violent acts of 11 September 2001, or George W. Bush's proclamation of the so-called "Global War on Terror" have helped bring the theme of religion back to the su face for policy-makers, academics, and conflict transformation practitioners.

Ten years after 9/11, it is timely to take a closer look at the relationship between religion, conflict, and peace in this issue of Politorbis. This issue does not pretend to provide a comprehensive coverage of this vast topic, yet it is intended as a useful contribution to the discussion that highlights some of the policy dilemmas, gives insights into some of the competing academic perspectives, and then above all gives concrete inspiration for practitioners. This is done by presenting innovative conflict transformation methods and illustrating some of these in specific case studies.

The four questions that make up the four parts of this issue of Politorbis are therefore:

Part A – Policy Relevance: Why is it important to focus on the role of religion in political conflicts?

Part B – Conceptualizations: What are some of the academic perspectives on the role of religion in conflict, and how far are these useful if the aim is to minimize violence?

Part C – Methods: What methods of conflict transformation and mediation can be used to deal with conflicts with religious dimensions?

Part D – Case Studies: How are conflicts with religious dimensions actually dealt with in the real world; what can we learn from concrete cases?

Policy Relevance

In the first part on policy relevance, the speeches of Peter Maurer, State Secretary of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), and of Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, are succinct wake-up calls to take the topic of religion and politics seriously. These speeches were held on 14 October 2010 at the annual conference of the Peace Policy Division of the Swiss FDFA, entitled "When Religion and Worldviews Meet". A central policy challenge comes about as globalization leads to people from different cultural backgrounds meeting and more closely interacting with each other. Living in a world that has become a village has benefits, but also possess dilemmas as to how to adequately deal with the increased diversity of value systems, worldviews, and religions. The increase in many far-right, anti-immigration parties in various elections in European countries is indicative of how existing policy responses have failed. The

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solution is not to give up our own values, but also not to impose our values on other people. The way forward is through dialog, seeking to find mutually acceptable solutions to the practical aspects of living together. The terms "worldview" and "belief" are useful in this dialog process, as it avoids piting one truth against another. The question of absolute truth becomes void when looking at various systems of beliefs and worldviews, as absolute truths cannot be proven, yet diversity of beliefs and worldviews can be accepted, thus paving the path for constructive dialog over practical questions of co-existence.

Conceptualizing the Role of Religion in Conflict Transformation

The second part on the conceptualization of the role of religion in conflict highlights the lack of consensus in academia on this topic, as values also shape academic "objectivity" much more than we would like. There is no value-free academic discourse. The way we view and conceptualize the world is shaped by our values, whether in academia, in the media, or in small talk with our neighbor. Furthermore, and of greater practical importance, the way we conceptualize the role of religion in conflict often has practical implications. We need to become ore aware of how our concepts affect our actions and those of others, if we are to find ways for different cultural and religious groups to co-exist. Sabina Stein introduces three political science perspectives: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. Of the three, constructivism does not contain pre-determined solutions to conflict, and thus seems the most useful and flexible from a conflict transformation perspective. In the larger constructivist family of aproaches, Jean-Nicolas Bitter introduces us to the cultural linguistic approach, which seems particularly useful for dealing with conflicts with religious dimensions, as it seeks to understand each specific religious framework on its own terms, according to the religious framework's own internal "grammar" as a firm and flexible matrix, rather than measuring all religious frameworks according to some universal measuring stick. This frame of reading religions allows for the creative development of practical solutions.

Methods for Dealing with Conflicts with Religious Dimensions

The third part of this issue of Politorbis is the largest section, and the heart of the entire publication. If we accept that religion is of great policy relevance (part 1), and if we become increasingly aware that the way we conceptualize reality shapes the way we approach it (part 2), what can we then do in concrete terms when we engage in conflict transformation processes? Most mediation, conflict resolution, or conflict transformation practitioners have a rich set of skills and techniques for dealing with conflict. Are these methods sufficient, however, to deal with conflicts with cultural and religious dimensions, or do we need to enrich our skill-set? The third part argues that we do need to enrich our skill-set. To contribute to this enrichment, we present various methods as sources of inspiration:

Anne Isabel Kraus develops a model for designing dialog and negotiation processes in a culturally sensitive manner. As our norms also affect how we shape a process, we cannot argue that the classical mediation dictum of separating content and process is sufficient whedealing with intercultural conflicts. The model she develops entails three steps: Starting with a presupposing hypothesis, eliciting and integrating feedback during the process, and periodically engaging in retrospective legitimization. She thereby provides a meta-framework for all the other methods that follow in this issue, helping mediation and facilitation practitioners navigate uncharted waters, yet without imposing any rigid normative framework. Abbas Aroua grapples with the challenge of how religious and political goals, interests, and positions are intermixed. By mapping the possible interactions and arguing that they must be decoded and recoded in the mediation process, he provides an innovative approach on how to deal with religious-political conflicts. Sometimes the language and symbols used in a conflict are religious, but the goals and interests are very political.

Michelle LeBaron's contribution on arts-based approaches indicates that oral dialog is often not enough to create understanding and trust between actors with different worldviews. She shows how the arts can help actors go beyond the rational and analytical. Conflicts with strong religious

or cultural dimensions are often intractable due to the depth of emotions, intuitions, and myths at play. If we ignore them, we do so at our own peril. Arts-based approaches do not happen in a vacuum, but have their own structure, and this can be used in adapted forms even in more classical, formal mediation processes. Further exploring how to shift dialog beyond the oral, Lissi Rasmussen and Jean-Nicolas Bitter introduce us to diapraxis, short for "dialog through practice". Jointly agreed action carried out jointly by the involved actors is often more powerful than oral dialog, following the intuitive experience that "I trust what you do more than what you say". In some cases, this can focus on the individual and move participants towards a joint understanding of citizenship, while in other cases, diapraxis can be used to test co-existence between social groups from different worlds. Many of the case studies presented in the last section of this issue use the diapraxis approach, highlighting its flexible and wide-ranging applicability.

Moving on from the focus on process – be it oral, arts-based, or practical – to the question of who mediates or facilitates a process, Simon Mason and Sabrin Kassam argue that in some cases, culturally balanced co-mediation is a useful set-up for combining cultural proximity to the parties, with impartiality across the co-mediation team. In all of the processes explored in the case study section of this issue, facilitators from different cultural backgrounds worked together, illustrating the idea of culturally balanced co-mediation.

These methods are not mutually exclusive, nor are they incompatible with other already existing mediation and conflict transformation approaches. No serious practitioners will let themselves become slaves to only one method. Training, personality, and experience are essential for applying, adapting, and mixing methods in the way that is most appropriate to the conflict at hand.

Case Studies

In the fourth part of this issue, we move to the real world. What can we learn from case studies where policy relevance, concepts, methods, and the reality on the ground all interact? In this section, we highlight the personal experience and insights of the conflict transformation practitioner. Bob Roberts, evangelical pastor from Texas, shows how he became engaged in collaborating with conservative Muslims in numerous social projects. The idea is not to give up speaking about ones values and beliefs, but primacy is given to shaping a new type of relationship that puts the "building of the world of God" center stage. Once relationships and trust are formed through joint action, discussions over religion can occur, often leading to a deepening of one's own faith.

Jean-Nicolas Bitter and Dieter von Blarer then elaborate on the experience of the Swiss FDFA's support of dialog in Tajikistan between Islamic actors and the post-Soviet secular government. This shows what diapraxis can look like in concrete terms. The focus is less on the classical sequence of pre-negotiation, negotiation, and implementation, and rather on an incremental approach where trust is built through step-by-step implementation while the negotiation process is still ongoing. Corinne Henchoz Pignani then examines how the Swiss FDFA supported dialog between an Egyptian Islamic NGO and a Swiss Protestant NGO using the diapraxis method. Clarifying and testing how they wanted to interact with each other helped both NGOs in their interactions with other actors. The two cases illustrate how the aim of diapraxis is to start working together on practical issues of concern to both sides of a conflict.

The final case study presents a unique jewel in this issue: the experiences of an Islamic center in the UK after 9/11. It highlights the characteristics of a constructive dialog between the state and Islamic communities in Europe. If non-violent co-existence is the goal, it is vital for European states to respect and give space to these communities, rather than infiltrating, over-regulating, and suppressing them. Abdulfatah Said Mohamed's compelling argument is that communities defeat terrorism, but counterterrorism defeats communities, so counterterrorism leads to more terrorism. The rich lessons from this case are pertinent for all European states seeking to find ways to engage constructively with Muslim communities in Europe.

In a Nutshell

This issue of Politorbis shows the importance of looking at the role of religion in conflict and its peaceful transformation. Beyond highlighting the policy relevance of the topic, it provides conceptual and practical suggestions on how to deal with such conflicts. Concepts of the role of religion in

conflict are useful to the degree that they do not pre-determine our response, but provide us more with a "neutral" map to move in unknown territory. There are numerous mediation and conflict transformation methods that have been developed and adapted to working on conflicts with religious and cultural dimensions. The primary challenge is how to shape this in a cultural sensitive manner and how to work with the often hidden links between political and religious goals and positions. Arts-based approaches and diapraxis shift our focus away from only using oral dialog approaches. Besides the nature of the process, who shapes the process is also pivotal, culturally balanced co-mediation provides some ideas on responding to this challenge. Case studies show us that in real life, things are often more messy than when articulated in concepts and methods. At the same time, however, the case studies are carriers of credible good news: Conflicts where values and worldviews meet are not necessarily intractable; actors of very diverse religious backgrounds can learn to co-exist in peace.

Thanks

As guest editors and coordinators of this issue, our greatest thanks and appreciation goes to the authors of the following contributions, who provided their rich insights and experiences on this topic in such a clear and concise manner. We greatly enjoyed working with these authors, and hope you equally enjoy reading their fascinating articles. Special thanks to Jean-Nicolas Bitter and Corina Berger Megahed from the "Religion, Politics, Conflict" sector of activity of the Swiss FDFA, their dedicated guidance was vital to the success of this publication. Thanks also to Chris Findlay for proofreading, and Marlene Stefania for the clarity of overall layout. We would also like to thank the Swiss FDFA for the financial support that made this publication possible.

Part A

Policy Relevance

In the following section, Peter Maurer, State Secretary of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), and Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, explore the policy relevance of religion in conflict and conflict transformation. They highlight key challenges we are faced by in a globalized world, and provide food for thought on how to approach these challenges both conceptually and through concrete activities.

When religions and worldviews meet: Swiss experiences and contributions

Peter Maurer[1]

High Representative of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilisations, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

Many of us grew up with the idea that the religious dimension would be increasingly confined to the private sphere. We did not think that it would be relevant to diplomacy, peace promotion or international cooperation. Not long ago, at least in the West, one had the impression that religions, including those deriving from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, had been losing their normative power and their moral authority; congregations were dwindling and secularisation seemed to be inevitable. On top of this, because of the separation of church and state, religious symbols tended to be rarely seen in public spaces.

Globalization and Religion

Today hardly a day goes by without events in the world reminding us of the inescapable presence of religion in the public sphere. Whether it is in the United States, where large sections of the population and powerful lobbies of evangelical, catholic and Mormon Christians demonstrate on ethical issues such as abortion, and influence governmental policy; or in Israel, where religious extremists try to shift government decisions in their direction, or in several Muslim countries, where different players justify their actions by invoking Islam.

Today we live in a world which has become a village in economic terms. However, this village does not, as in the past in our country, have only one church in its main square. Today, globalisation, especially in the form of new information technologies, simplifies everyday life but at the same time it is constantly increasing the complexity of our world; the most diverse cultures, religions and worldviews are entering into direct contact with one another.

In our country too, we are becoming aware that the global nature of our world manifests itself above all in increasing economic integration and diversity of values. There is no single system of values, but a multitude of sometimes discordant systems which suddenly confront one another. The popular vote approving a ban on the construction of minarets on 29 November 2009 is an example of this confrontation.

Religion is a present and multiple reality in the world today. We are not necessarily talking here of traditional religious institutions but of value systems which are a point of reference for groups of people, systems which are like lenses through which they give meaning to the realities around us. In this sense the religious factor cannot be ignored in the political and power relations which exist in our societies.

Such developments in today's world are of vital concern to us: we need to re-invent the norms for our living together by accepting the pluralism of lifestyles and of values. This is true on the domestic as well as on the foreign level, especially when we are acting to promote peace. In the pluralistic world in which we live, it has become pointless to try to impose values a priori. We cannot afford not to hold a solidly argued public debate about the political principles that we choose to guide our actions.

The ways and means of our living together need to be rooted in the specific experience of citizens. In this context, the ethics of discussion proposed by Jürgen Habermas, which presupposes the spontaneously normative nature of communication in the democratic space, is appealing. Ultimately this amounts to saying that the best arguments and the most universal arguments will win the day. Also, for a healthy and effective dialogue to take place in the context of pluralism of religious references, it is essential that no one group should impose on everyone a sole interpretation

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of religious symbols. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that respect for freedom of opinion, of conscience and religion, together with the principle of non-discrimination, are preconditions for an authentic dialogue.

The Swiss Contribution

Switzerland intends to make a targeted and, we hope, effective contribution to this new definition of living together. This contribution is a central element of Switzerland's human security policy, the policy to which this conference is devoted.

It is a well-known fact that the concept of human security was developed at the beginning of the 90s, when the world was eagerly awaiting a peace dividend following the end of the Cold War. "Free of fear and free of need" was the eloquent motto, first presented in 1994. So it is hardly surprising that subsequently countries such as Japan, Mexico, Norway, Canada or Switzerland were among the most prominent promoters of this new approach, and that they were joined by countries such as Mali, Costa Rica, Thailand and Slovenia. What all these countries have in common is that they do not simply rely on classical power methods to defend their interests. These countries have to rely on soft rather than hard power if their ideas are to gain currency. They have to persuade others by providing expertise, by supporting cooperation programmes, by establishing partnerships with like-minded states and organisations and by creating competence centres in the fields of research and civil society. But above all else they are committed to a policy of dialogue.

In recent years Switzerland has made a point of developing dialogue as an instrument of foreign policy and a means of defending its interests. In geographical terms, this means that we increasingly seek exchanges with partners outside our regional framework in Europe, and that we include their perceptions of global challenges in our approach. This policy seeks to overcome political, economic and social limits and to build bridges between worldviews and interests that are often divergent in nature. In impo tant political areas such as peace policy, the policy of dialogue means that Switzerland has contacts even with state and non-state actors perceived as difficult. Of course certain minimum conditions must be met before we can engage in dialogue with such partners.

Respect, reciprocity and the determination to resolve the conflict are key factors here. But in principle it is worthwhile to regard these partners not only as part of the problem but also as part of the solution, even though this is not a guarantee of success. To have a chance of achieving success, partners are needed who are willing to engage in dialogue and then to make tangible efforts to find a constructive solution.

Within the framework of peace promotion, a sector of activity in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs has since 2004 been developing and implementing instruments and projects which help to transform conflicts in which the interests of actors and of communities with different world views confront one another.

These activities go hand-in-hand with others such as the United Nations initiative for the Alliance of Civilisations and more recently the High Consultative Council of the White House on religious communities and the service focussing on religion within the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The principles of action of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in dealing with conflicts with a religious dimension are derived from the following three points, which are the direct consequence of the encounter between the diverse views of the world which I have just described:

1. We live in a world where the pluralism of religious references and values is a reality which has a political impact. No particular norm can be imposed a priori on others. Modes of co-existence need to be re-invented. This first principle implies that all the actors who want to participate in dialogue are to be included, notably those whose conceptions and values are alien to us - even if they are perceived as 'difficult actors';

2. We must not tolerate a single interpretation of signs, symbols or of religious statements. Such intolerance is the source of the fundamentalisms which lead to exclusion and to violence; this second principle requires the application of a methodology which is neutral in denominational and religious terms; in particular it means that we do not place others under tutelage by

imposing an interpretation on their behaviour or their attitudes;

3. Methods of co-existence must be worked out in the political space by concentrating on empirical and specific experience. These approaches must of course respect the framework of international norms. We seek solutions to conflicts at the political level and on a practical basis, by applying a method of "dialogue through practice".

One example of dialogue in practice implemented by Switzerland concerns cooperation with Islamic charitable organisations. We initiated this project, known as the Montreux Initiative, in 2005. It was established in the context of general distrust of Islamic charitable organisations in the wake of 11 September 2001. The aim of the project is to strengthen transparency, especially in the area of financial flows, in order to reduce the obstacles with which these organisations are confronted and to create a climate of confidence and cooperation. This project, whose usefulness and relevance have been unanimously welcomed, creates a basis of fundamental knowledge about these religious organisations and makes possible the formulation of political recommendations on how to make the activities of these organisations more transparent and more effective. These questions are also the subject of a thematic platform established by Switzerland in the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilisations.

The Swiss Domestic Experience
Promoting dialogue at home and abroad following a method which is neutral from the denominational and religious viewpoint does not mean abandoning our own values. On the contrary, this approach corresponds precisely to the political culture that has been progressively, and sometimes painfully, developed over the centuries in our country. Switzerland, a crossroads of different cultures and religions, has had to learn the hard lesson of peaceful cohabitation in a small territory; it has had to work out modes of cohabitation taking into account different denominations, languages and economic interests. Religions, too, have clashed violently in the course of Swiss history.

We do not need to go back to the internment and expulsion of the Anabaptists in the 17th century,

the peaceful community known as "Swiss Brothers" in the United States. It is enough to recall the cultural struggle "Kulturkampf" and the "Sonderbund war", the Swiss war of secession which in the 19th century resulted in the ban on the Jesuit order in Switzerland, in the prohibition of the establishment of new monasteries and of new dioceses. It was only 100 years later, in 1973, that these bans were lifted. The ban on creating new dioceses was not revoked until 2001. Let us also remember the ban on ritual slaughtering in the 1890s, a measure of distrust vis-a-vis the Jewish community in Switzerland, a community which would have to wait a good century before being fully accepted. Each of these cases involved a new belief or a fear of foreign influence exerted by a religious community, or a fear of both of these.

These difficult episodes and measures of exclusion or of discrimination caused suffering and opened up wounds which are not forgotten. What brought these tensions to an end was a patient practice of dialogue and the strong common determination to concentrate on that which unites us in practice rather than on the abstract ideas that separate us. But this culture of political dialogue, as history has shown, is not a permanent achievement and has to be constantly renewed in practice. We must remain modest and vigilant.

In this context, the recurring controversies about Islamic symbols such as the wearing of the Islamic scarf in schools or the recent initiative to ban the building of minarets on Swiss territory demonstrate the feeling of insecurity of some of our compatriots. We must acknowledge and note this: globalisation is in fact accompanied by identity challenges and by genuine sentiments of insecurity. We face the challenge of accepting others, of reaffirming our values while ensuring that they are compatible with the pluralism of contemporary societies. Finding specific political responses to these questions is an essential task but also a highly delicate one. Simplistic and ideological categorisations of these different visions of the world short-circuit dialogue and prevent an objective and peaceful treatment of these questions. How for example is one to interpret the recent decision by state schools in Lucerne to take crucifixes out of classrooms at the request of an atheist parent? And is it appropriate to take a position on the question of a young girl who has

to choose whether to wear a veil or to play team sports?

A Pluralistic Political Space

These isolated examples, which are sometimes discussed in a controversial manner in the public domain, are examples of clear-cut opinions which make such discussions so sensitive. A climate of distrust and of incomprehension not only clouds issues in the ongoing debate but also undermines any possibility of later reconciliation because it radicalises positions. The subjective interpretation of the thoughts, convictions and values of others on the basis of a biased view of their religion merely serves to stoke fears. Some among us believe that they alone have the right to decide what constitutes a sign and what the meaning of such a sign should be. Apart from betraying a deplorably paternalistic approach, such an attitude is a usurpation of the intentions of others, a unilateral interpretation. This violates both freedom of opinion and expression and the sovereignty of each and every person as a human being. This is contrary to the spirit of the Federal Constitution, which prescribes the religious neutrality of the state and presupposes freedom of belief and non-discrimination between religions.

To conclude: the religious neutrality of the state is closely linked to the pluralist and democratic political space in which and by which we live. It is a space of negotiation in which communities that are called upon to live together can acknowledge each other with their beliefs and independently of their beliefs and of their visions of society.

The secular political space – "le siècle" as one said in the past – is not opposed to religion or to religious values. It is independent of them. The political order defined by our Constitution is an order of freedom and of responsibility which recognises transcendental values and which derives its freedom from them. The Swiss political space is one of freedom and of responsibility, one which is neutral in denominational and religious terms. It is an order in which citizens engage in dialogue to establish a consensus by which they regulate their living together.

What we in Switzerland believe in as a country is a political culture, rules of dialogue and of democracy, rules which are independent of religion but which allow space to religions and to beliefs of all kinds in our pluralist world, including the views of those who profess no beliefs at all. Our democracy needs these beliefs in order to live. We expect all citizens to bring their values and their rich experience to the table so that we can talk together about citizenship.

Mr High Representative, we wish to cooperate with you and with countries whose cultural traditions differ from our own to promote a mode of living together "when religions and worldviews meet."

Introduction to the Conference "When religions and worldviews meet"

Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio[1]

Secretary of State, Peter Maurer, Director of Political Affairs, Federal Department of Foreign Af-fairs, Ambassador Claude Wild, Head of Political Affairs Division IV, Human Security, Distinguished Guests, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends, if I may, I am very grateful to the Swiss authorities for inviting me to address this Conference on the com-plex but challenging issue of worldviews, religions and peace, a topical matter of our globalized times. But before entering into details, let me express my gratitude to the Swiss Government for its committed membership to the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations' initiative that I am proud to lead since 2007. Switzerland is among the most active members of the Group of Friends of the Al-liance, a community of more than 122 members made up of States and International Organizations that supports the High Representative (who so far happens to be myself!) and helps him to shape an agenda to advance the Alliance's goals on the ground. Both the so called "thematic platforms" and the "Nyon process" are Swiss branded contributions to the portfolio of ongoing projects of the Al-liance. After an initial run-in or build up period it is now time for both projects to gear-up for wider outreach and larger scale commitments. I am more than happy to announce that a working session on a thematic platform in the field of humanitarianism and international development cooperation will be held in Berlin in two weeks. Let me announce that I myself plan to take part in it and to come up with two concrete suggestions built on two very different case studies: one is the 1st Alli-ance Summer School that was held in Portugal last August which brought together 115 young peo-ple from 44 countries around the world; the other is based on my experience as United Nations Special Envoy to Stop

Tuberculosis, an area where I think there is room for the kind of action pro-posed by you. Regarding the Nyon Process, we certainly need to find a way to provide it with additional sustainability and plan the journey ahead.

The Alliance of Civilizations was launched in 2005 by Secretary General Kofi Annan upon a joint proposal put forward by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions, and polarization which potentially threaten world peace. Let's not forget the traumatizing sequence of terrorist attacks that started with 9/11 in 2001 and at a regular pace hit various urban settings from Bali, Istanbul, Moscow, and Madrid to London in July 2005. Nor should we underestimate the fact that world politics at that time was dominated by the so-called "global war on terror" – Afghanistan was invaded in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, in addition to a number of other counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency actions occurred in several Muslim majority countries.

As the spokesman for the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recalled on the occasion of the launch of the Alliance "Events of recent years have height-ened the sense of a widening gap and lack of mutual understanding between Islamic and Western societies - an environment that has been exploited and exacerbated by extremists in all societies". Therefore "the Alliance of Civilizations is intended as a coalition against such forces, as a movement to advance mutual respect for religious beliefs and traditions, and as a reaffirmation of humankind's increasing interdependence in all areas - from the environment to health, from economic and social development to peace and security".

Why am I recalling past history? Precisely because this helps to frame your topic of worldviews from the Alliance's own perspective. I therefore start these notes by sharing with you some thoughts on paradigm shifts, worldviews and cultural

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1 Jorge Sampaio, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. Address to the Annual Swiss FDFA Conference Political Affairs – Division IV - Human Security "When religions and worldviews meet" Bern, 14 October 2010.

diversity. This will be my first point. My second point will focus on religions as worldviews and their growing importance in politics and world affairs. My third and last point will deal with soft power tools to address conflict transformation. For each topic, I will make a few remarks but will also ask some questions to which, by the way, I have no answer but that, I hope, will feed our reflections.

1. On shifts of paradigms, worldviews and cultural diversity

The Alliance's initiative is underpinned by the recognition that worldviews have to be taken into consideration and integrated into politics and diplomatic practice, not only because a new kind of public diplomacy emerged after 9/11, but also because since then it has been characterized by a strong emphasis on security and insecurity issues and on the relationship between the so-called "West" and the Islamic world.

In spite of being deeply rooted in old philosophical ideas, the centrality of the concept of worldview in our modern world is linked to a paradigm shift in science, initiated at the turn of the 20th century. This paradigm shift led to new scientific discoveries and theories such as relativity and quantum physics, non Euclidian geometries, cognitive sciences, the development of new approaches in cultural anthropology and psycholinguistics and to new models of social behaviour.

New ways of making diplomacy are also being explored. For instance the use of a plethora of words to qualify diplomacy – public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft diplomacy, shuttle diplomacy, smart diplomacy, transformational diplomacy – shows that there is a new emerging paradigm that challenges traditional diplomatic culture.

Within this paradigm shift, the importance of worldviews became increasingly clear. The concept was somehow validated by modern cognitive theories on the human mind and its legitimacy consolidated.

Worldviews appear to be a framework for generating human perception and experience at large. They are a kind of a descriptive model of the world, comprising a number of basic beliefs. One main feature of worldviews is that they express fundamental assumptions – cognitive, affective and ethical – that a group of people make about the nature of things and which they use to give coherence to their behaviour and build a sense to their lives.

Personal identity but also national identities, referring both to the distinctive features of a group and to the individual's sense of belonging to it, are indeed associated to worldviews. Yet worldviews also refer to a shared framework of ideas, values, emotions and ethics through which an individual interprets the world and interacts with it.

The growing importance of worldviews during the 20th century is also related to the increasing contact between cultures and greater exposure to diversity – ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural – because of a number of developments.

Among these factors we can identify some global trends such as: permanent migration flows which changed the population make up of most of the countries around the world; new means of communication and the related expansion of media content; an increase in controversies and debates on value systems and identity issues; globalization and geopolitical changes in general; and world politics.

The question I would like to raise in this regard is threefold:

• On worldviews: Are all worldviews equivalent? Or are they basically incommensurable and therefore irreconcilable? How can we ensure that a constructive dialogue is possible between worldviews? How much do worldviews lead necessarily to what is called cultural relativism? What about universality of human rights?

• What is the role played by State and governments as regulators of the public space where various worldviews can meet, dialogue and cooperate? Or are worldviews a private affair? How can human rights be used as universal building blocks of worldviews?

• How much enhancing pluralism in order to ensure an effective combination between basic democratic principles and social and cultural cohesion of a society is at stake?

These are indeed questions that ultimately philosophers and social and political scientists have to solve or think about, but which politicians such as I – but also we all as citizens - have to deal with on a practical basis. The point is that the increasing diversity of our societies is becoming an issue, living together is creating growing anxiety and achieving consensus between different worldviews seems more and more difficult.

What can we do to make cultural diversity a shared value by all members of a community as a core part of Rousseau's social contract? What can we do at policy level to promote constructive dialogue between world views? I believe that this is one of the main and current challenges for our democracies. To a certain extent, our 21st century has to complete Rousseau's social contract with a new pillar, let's call it a "cultural pact".

2. On religions as worldviews and their growing importance in politics and world politics

In our modern times, we are witnessing interesting changes in the world as religion is making inroads into our societies and into world politics. The resurgent role of religions is witnessed almost everywhere. People now talk about God all the time and fundamentalists of all kinds (Christians, including the Catholic Church, Orthodox Judaism, sects and Muslims) are growing and have been very vocal in their request to express their faiths in the public sphere, believing that religion should rule every aspect of their personal behavior.

The expectation that religious movements and faith-based politics would diminish in influence or disappear altogether in the context of modernization and globalization has clearly been disproved by the emergence of religious-political movements with strong popular support in a number of regions and across several different faith traditions. Even in Europe, where secularization of religious behavior made it a private affair and secularism is responsible for the clear separation of state and religion, religious movements are thriving.

Now, going back to the "worldview paradigm", one could say that the problem in Europe is that secularism can no longer ensure a constructive dialogue between religious worldviews, namely between Christianity and Islam. Indeed (rather: Yet?)

believers may not like to see religions conceptualized as belief systems but the advantage of this approach is twofold:

• On the one hand, the question of truth in the various systems of beliefs becomes nonsense because beliefs are like axioms in a theory: they cannot be proven or argued for, but only argued against. Therefore, there is no need to enter into the controversy of the truth of religions – whether Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or Islam. We can leave theology to theologians and this is good news.

• On the other hand, being considered as systems of beliefs, different religions can, if they have sufficient beliefs in common, hold a constructive dialogue between them and allow for cross-cultural exchanges. In this case, a consensus between different worldviews can be achieved.

Now in spite of being a system of beliefs, normally a religion does not imprison its believers in it, does not preclude them from understanding other worldviews and genuinely communicating with others. However, I would like to go further and ask:

• Is Christianity or Islam to be conceived as a worldview or as part of a worldview? To what extent do different religious worldviews embrace similar – or at least compatible – ethical and political commitments?

• How do religious and secular systems go together and reinforce each other? What are the tools to be used in this approach?

• What is the role of religious pluralism?

I tend to think that we need to reflect further on pluralism, in particular on religious pluralism. Are we confronted with a new religious pluralism? Does it undermine the cultural and social foundations of democracy? Is it the reason why identity politics has become more salient? What's wrong with new religious diversity in secular Europe? Is it pluralism that is failing in our present times? After all, looking back on history, it seems to me that "the relation between pluralism and religion has never been unambiguous"!

Now, because public interest in religious pluralism has growth dramatically in Europe but also on the other side of the Atlantic, religion has moved up the political agenda in Europe, in the United States and around the world. Looking at Western Europe as a whole, we can say that growth in religious diversity is mostly related to immigration and that in continental Europe at least, immigration and Islam are almost synonymous. This is a key issue to understand the challenges ahead.

Despite differences of policy responses to ethnic and religious pluralism from country to country, as well as differences in integration policies, the general assessment among publics, politicians and the press is that none of the attempts to integrate Muslim religious minorities into European countries has been successful. The success of many far-right, anti-immigration parties in various elections in European countries is a clear sign of a growing malaise.

It has to be taken as a wake-up call. How we will master the political, social and cultural tensions that have emerged over the past decade will have a decisive impact on the future and health of democracy on the continent. At least this is my profound conviction.

3. Soft power tools to address conflict transformation

Before coming to an end, let me just say a few words on the third topic I announced at the beginning. The main point that I want to emphasize is that with the paradigm shift new tools and opportunities are available for conflict transformation. I will focus here on the use of soft power tools, namely what we can call "cultural diplomacy" at large.

This is an important tool, in particular when looking at the world in 2009. We realize that out of a total of 143 conflicts, 108 had a cultural dimension. However, please note that by stressing this dimension of some conflicts, I am in no way making the case for the culturalisation of political conflicts. Indeed political problems have to be solved by political means.

But it is also quite clear that protracted conflicts, even when settled by a binding political agreement between political actors or governments focused on the issues of contention, must always

be embedded in a much broader process involving people at all levels of society if we want to reach sustainable peace. This is why even in major politically harsh conflicts, soft power has a powerful – although often neglected - role to play because, after all, reconciliation as part of peace-building depends highly on cultural and identity issues, narratives and stories built and exchanged about conflicts, stories that influence their resolution or contribute to their perpetuation.

Just take the conflict in the Balkans, apartheid in South Africa or the case of East-Timor, three different examples but all of them showing the role of cultural and public diplomacy, as one can call it, as a soft power tool to build sustainable peace among people. Take also the 60 year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and see how much we should invest in soft power to influence the behavior of the two parts in order to get the desired outcome of peace.

After all, peace is never made but it is always in the making and negotiated agreements alone do not make peace, whereas people do. Therefore, let us invest in soft power tools that can be used to change perceptions and worldviews and by changing them, improve the quality of interaction between peoples. This is true for conflict resolution, but applies also to conflict transformation in our divided societies.

In my view, this is a task for an initiative such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. This is all about education, media, youth and migration, the four fields of action of the Alliance. This is all about learning how to live together in our globalizing word, where clashes anywhere are clashes everywhere and where cultural and religious fault-lines are a threat to the cohesion of our societies.

The Alliance of Civilizations makes full sense precisely in this framework as a new UN soft power tool for politics and diplomacy and to address the new "glocal" cultural challenges to security and peace. This could have been a question, but I prefer to leave it to you as a suggestion and as food for thought and hopefully action.

Part B

Conceptualizing the Role of Religion in Conflict Transformation

The following section aims to introduce some of the existing academic perspectives on the role of religion in conflict. The main focus lies on clarifying these perspectives as regards their diverse policy implications for conflict transformation. Sabina Stein gives a broad overview of three political science perspectives. Jean-Nicolas Bitter than elaborates the Cultural-linguistic approach, as an example of the Constructivist family of approaches.

Competing Political Science Perspectives on the Role of Religion in Conflict

Sabina Alejandra Stein[1]

Abstract

Over the last few decades, real-world developments have led political scientists to begin to conceptualize the relationship between religion and conflict. The aim of this article is to provide a brief overview of three political science perspectives on this question: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. Understanding these perspectives is important because the way we conceptualize the role of religion in conflict has a direct impact on any policy recommendations that are derived from them. From a conflict transformation perspective, constructivism provides the most flexible conceptual toolkit, as it does not suggest specific solutions to conflict, while primordialism and instrumentalism do. As an alternative to specific solutions, constructivism calls for a better understanding of the cognitive religious frameworks at work in a specific conflict as the first step to minimizing the use of violence between social groups.

Introduction: Religion and Political Science

With the advent of modernity and the decline of "traditional society" in some parts of the world, many scholars in political science thought that religion would cease to play a role in society and politics. This view was best captured by modernization theory, which argued that urbanization, economic development, modern social institutions, growing rates of literacy and education, pluralism, and advancements in science and technology would inevitably lead to the demise of religion and to the rise of secular, rational, and scientific phenomena (Fox 2004).

Despite the quasi-religious fervor with which political scientists defended these assumptions, developments on the ground have recently led to a renewed focus on religion in political science. The first wake-up calls came in the 1970s and 1980s with the Iranian Revolution and the rise of the religious

right in US politics. Since then, numerous political events have seriously challenged political science theories of religion's demise.

As if awakening from a long, secular slumber, political science at the beginning of the 21st century has thus started to grapple with the question of religion in politics, and especially the link between religion and (violent) conflict. The apparent religion-conflict nexus has also caught the attention of Western media and publics. Fears of looming "clashes of civilizations" and "modern crusades" are now common in discourse about the 11 September 2001 attacks, the "Global War on Terror", tensions over immigration in Europe, and popular understandings of conflicts such as those in the "Holy Land", Chechnya, or Kashmir.

The focus of this article is therefore not to answer the question: "What role does religion play in conflict?" Rather, it seeks to present an overview of competing political science perspectives on this question. It also seeks to highlight possible implications of the various concepts on how to deal with conflict. One of the key findings is that the way we conceptualize the role of religion in conflict has a direct impact on the suggestions made regarding how to deal with conflicts. As these concepts exist and as they have real-world impacts, the question is not so much whether we agree or disagree with them. As long as they are being used, we need to understand their logic and be aware of their potential impact, whether in academia, in the media, or in the policy or conflict resolution field.

Three Theoretical Perspectives

The three political science perspectives on religion and conflict we focus on here are *primordialism*, *instrumentalism*, and *social constructivism*. These theoretical lenses represent competing ways of understanding the relationship between religion and conflict: They advance different assessments on the inevitability of "religious" conflicts and, more

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importantly, on the prospects of dealing with such conflicts.

Primordialism: Ancient Hatreds and Clashing Worlds

The key tenet of primordialism is that differences in religious traditions are among the most important *causes* of conflict. According to this view, there is an inherent or *primordial* animosity between religions that renders conflict quasi-inevitable. No scholar has done more to propagate this view than Samuel Huntington with his "Clash of Civilizations" thesis (1993, 1996). Though it uses the term "civilization", Huntington's work has been widely interpreted as predicting conflict between groups belonging to different religious traditions in the post-Cold War era. As Huntington explains, "civilizations" are diffe entiated by "history, language, culture, tradition and, *most important, religion*" (Huntington 1996, italics added). As a result, people of distinct civilizations "have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, [...] liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy" (Huntington 1993: 24). "Over the centuries, [these] differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts" (ibid).

According to the primordialist view, religious differences lead to conflict due to the central role that religion plays in constituting both individual and group identity.[2] As Jeffrey Seul explains, "no other repository of cultural meaning has historically offered so much in response to the human need to develop a secure identity and sense of locatedness" as religion (Seul 1999: 564). Religions help provide the predictability and continuity that individuals need in order to maintain a sense of psychological stability. They do so by providing adherents with a world-view that assures their place in a meaningful and orderly universe. Moreover, religious communities and meaning systems are often the source of the belonging and affirmation that most individuals seek. For these reasons, religion is often at the core of individual and group identity. While arguments on how religion shapes identity may also be propagated by non-primordialist scholars, primordialists are distinguished by their assumption that actors have one main identity and that the way religions shape that identity is fixed over time.

Given the importance of religious frameworks in the psyche of adherents, when such frameworks are challenged, adherents will also feel challenged at the most basic level (Fox 2004a). Such challenges can thus provoke defensive and sometimes violent reactions. The tragedy, according to primordialism, is that religious frameworks are felt to be threatened by the mere presence of a different religious community. Because groups – religious or other – usually define themselves in opposition to a significant "Other", when an out-group asserts its identity it poses a direct – even if unintentional – threat to the identity of the in-group. Such dynamics are particularly problematic in the case of religiously-defined groups, since religions often inspire believers to abide by customs and behavioral rules that increase the visibility of inter-group difference (Fox 2002).

What are the policy implications of primordialism? The primordial paradigm is popular largely due to its simplicity in explaining complex phenomena. It has had a tremendous impact outside academia. International media, especially in their covering of conflicts in the Balkans and the Middle East, have often resorted to primordialist arguments, framing differences in religious adherence between groups as the key explanation for violence. For example, the bloody conflicts that ripped Yugoslavia apart are explained as resulting from long-suppressed "ancient hatreds" between ethno-religious groups that resurfaced after the fall of Communism (Kaplan 1994).[3] Similar discourses have dominated certain foreign policy circles. Clash-of-civilization

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2 The term "identity" raises a host of philosophical questions that are beyond the scope of this article. We here refer to the notion of "personal identity" – the sense of self or subjectivity and its persistence. Treatment of identity varies across the three theoretical perspectives presented in this article. Primordialism sees identities, as well as the culture/religion in which they are embedded, as having an inherent and fixed essence. Constructivism, on the other hand, adopts a post-modernist conceptualization of identity, seeing it as a process or a discourse. Identity is thus a shifting process and a temporary construct (see for example Hall 1994)

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3 Note that the primordialist or Huntingtonian accounts are particularly popular for explanations of ethnic conflicts where warring groups are differentiated by, among other things, religion. See the contribution by Jean Nicolas Bitter in this section of the issue for the problem of treating ethnic and religion conflict as conceptually equal.

undertones could be read in rationalizations of the US's "War on Terror" and explanations for the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.[4] In Europe, the political right has resorted to primordialist arguments to explain tensions and assert the ultimate incompatibility between "local" populations and "immigrants", especially if these immigrants happen to be Muslims.[5] When it comes to recommendations on how to deal with potential conflicts, the primordialist perspective therefore simply consists of propagating a separation of different cultural, religious groups.

Despite its popularity, primordialism suffers from severe empirical and theoretical shortcomings. From a theoretical perspective, scholars such as Amartya Sen (2006) and Edward Said (1981) have criticized primordialism for its essentialism. Religions (or "civilizations", in Huntington's idiom) are not monolithic, immutable, or isolated entities. Plurality, change, and osmosis are terms that better capture the inherent dynamics of civilizations. From an empirical perspective, primordialism's predictions have not materialized. Many – if not most – wars today are fought in religiously homogenous areas (Hansenclever/Rittberger: 646). Moreover, instances of religiously plural yet peaceful societies also cast doubt on primordialism's validity. The deterministic nature of primordialim has also been criticized. It has limitations in grasping the complexity of human behavior and tends to lead to self-fulfilling prophecies (Sen 2006).

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4 General William Boykin, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence under George W. Bush, has been quoted as saying that the war on terror was a fight against Satan, and of telling a Somali warlord that "My God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol." http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/nov/02/usa.religion

5 "As long as there is repeated violence and serious sexual coercion, even rape of school girls, where the majority of the perpetrators are foreigners, mostly from Muslim countries, then nobody, neither politician nor judge, can prevent citizens from being extremely reticent when it comes to the nationalization of foreigners." Translation of: "Wenn es – auch in der Umgebung von Schweizer Schulen – wiederholt zu Gewalttaten, zu schwerer sexueller Nötigung, ja sogar zu Vergewaltigungen von Schülerinnen kommt, wobei die weit überwiegende Zahl der Täter Ausländer zumeist aus muslimischen Ländern sind, dann kann niemand – weder Politiker noch Richter – den Stimmbürgern verbieten, bezüglich der Einbürgerung von Ausländern äusserste Zurückhaltung zu üben. *Islam-Argumentarium – Grundbegriffe Fassung: 01 (Egerkinger Komitee) Datum: 04.05.2007.*

Instrumentalism: The Utility of the Sacred (or the "Opium of the Warriors")

Instrumentalism rejects the view that differences in religion are real causes of political conflict. Conflict, like all politics, has always been and will always be about "who gets what, when, and how". From this realist perspective, the causes of conflict are *material*. If the world is witnessing a rise in violent religious movements, we should not attribute this to any dogmatic dispute but, rather, to growing economic, social, and political inequalities in and between nations (Hansenclever/ Rittberger 2000: 645).

Instrumentalists nevertheless recognize that religion can play a part in violent conflict. They see this role as the "opium of the warriors" – a tool used by self-interested elites to mobilize support and fighting power for conflict. The distinction between the elite and the mass is central to the instrumentalist approach. In this agent-based approach, it is power-seeking elites pursuing economic and/or political ambitions who *instrumentalize* religion and manipulate the masses in order to improve their strategic advantage.

To explain why elites would exploit religion at times of conflict, instrumentalists draw on several primordialist arguments. Firstly, collective organization and mobilization for conflict generally require some unifying mission or identity that is sufficiently powerful to motivate masses of people to kill and be killed on a large scale (Stewart 2009). As discussed above, religion can provide both. The security of one's religious framework has been identified as a common good in whose defense individuals are willing to take up arms.

Secondly, when conflicts are framed as being about religious values – not interests – it is more likely that combatants will regard the use of violence as morally justified. Religion can be used to dehumanize the enemy, exalt the virtues of martyrdom and self-sacrifice, and lead combatants to believe they are fighting for a transcendental cause (Rapoport 1984). Michael Sell's (1998) account of how Serbian nationalist propaganda during the Bosnian war portrayed Muslim Slavs as "Christ-killers" is an illustrative example.

Thirdly, the likelihood of violent campaigns succeeding also depends on the level of support

from broader sectors of society, which in turn depends on the public justification for the use of violence (Hasenclever/Rittberger 2000: 651). Here again, religion becomes an ideal instrument. As Fox (1999) explains, one of the principal social functions of religion is its ability to legitimize actions and institutions through its moral authority. Thus, movements that invoke religion are able to align themselves with what is considered moral in society, even if their goals have little or nothing to do with religion. Robert Pape's (2003) discussion of the "art of martyrdom" exemplifies this legitimating function. According to Pape, suicide terrorism is a high-value strategy against democracies. However, it can also provoke alienation and moral repugnance from host societies. In order to avoid a backlash, organizations using suicide bombings justify their actions on the basis of religious motives that match the beliefs of the broader community. Such framing can also help them acquire valuable allies in the form of religious institutions and networks, both local and transnational.

What are the policy implications of instrumentalism? In order to prevent or end conflict, instrumentalism focuses on addressing the socio-economic and political interests of parties. The essence of the conflict, as well as the means of its resolution, is seen as centering on the distribution of material resources and political power. Religious frameworks do not enter into the equation, except if the argument is made to secularize the masses in order to make them immune to elite manipulations.

Although less simplistic and deterministic than primordialism, instrumentalism too faces theoretical challenges. It is difficult to reconcile instrumentalism's focus on material factors with its recognition that religious discourses are often necessary to mobilize the masses. Instrumentalism's arguments for why the sacred is a potent weapon are largely based on primordialist assumptions on the flammability of religious identity and doctrine. There is therefore an inherent lack of consistency in the instrumentalist worldview, especially when it comes to understanding the masses. Meanwhile, elites and their motivations remain too narrowly conceptualized in this overly rationalist approach.

Constructivism: Religion as Worldview

Constructivism, finally, takes up some insights from both primordialism and instrumentalism, but does so from a very different angle.

Constructivism encompasses a wide range of theories and approaches.[6] It is thus inaccurate to speak of a single "constructivist understanding" of the role of religion in conflict. Here, we focus on constructivism as it is frequently used in political science, emphasizing the social construction of reality.[7] Within this understanding, we focus on constructivism's account of the crucial role that *ideational or cognitive structures* play in shaping social actors' identities and, consequently, realities.

"Cognitive structures" can be understood as "shared understandings, expectations, and social knowledge" (Wendt 1994: 389). They interact with material structures to make up the social world. Examples of ideational structures include ideology, nationalism, ethnicity, and religion.

According to constructivists, cognitive structures play a *constitutive* role in defining social actors' identities. To "constitute" means that certain properties of actors are made possible by, and would not exist in the absence of, the structure by which they are constituted (Wendt 1995: 72). In other words, ideational structures ascribe *meaning* to actors' identities, infusing them with a sense of who they are, what social roles they are expected to play, and how they should relate to other actors around them.

Given this conceptualization of identity, the link between cognitive structures such as religion on the one hand and political phenomena such as violent conflict on the other becomes clear. Actors' identities (products of the ideational structures in which they are embedded) will shape their perception of the material world, define their interests, and determine their behavior towards other actors.

Of course, social actors are rarely, if ever, defined by a single identity. We are enmeshed in a com-

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6   According to Emanuel Adler (2002: 95), there are many theoretical branches within constructivism, including modernist, modernist linguistic, critical, and the radical postmodernist wing.

7   See the contribution by Jean Nicolas Bitter in this section of the issue for a cultural-linguistic (post-constructivist) approach to conflict and religion.

plex web of cognitive structures, which endow our identity with multidimensionality. Nevertheless, religion often does play an important role in constituting individual and group identity for reasons discussed under primordialism. As a consequence, religion can often act as an indpendent motivating force in politics by functioning as the lens through which actors understand the world and their role therein. In this context, Jonathan Fox (2009) points out that religious worldviews can at times lead to extreme and intractable policy decisions and strategies (e.g., the role of George W. Bush and Tony Blair's messianic worldviews in their 2003 decision to go to war in Iraq). As a result, behavior in conflict can in great part be read in terms of *role-plays or scripts* provided by religious worldviews. This will be particularly true for actors who emph size religious frameworks in their self-identity. Fundamentalist movements would be one such example.[8]

Religious cognitive structures can also impact the conflict behavior of non-religious actors. Indeed, political actors who do not hold religious worldviews might nevertheless be constrained by widely held religious beliefs among their respective communities (Fox 2009). For example, it might be unwise for actors to undertake actions that run directly counter to some belief, moral ethos, or value that is widely held by their communities. A case in point is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which even non-religious leaders on both sides need to weigh how their people will react to any negotiated agreement concerning holy sites like the city of Jerusalem. From this perspective, actors – even if secular – are *constrained* by the religious frameworks in which they operate.

It is important to clarify that constructivism does not deny that power and material interests play a role in explaining conflict. Nevertheless, material structures such as the distribution of wealth only acquire meaning for human action through the structures of shared knowledge in which they are embedded (Wendt 1995: 73). In this sense, constructivism rejects instrumentalism's rationalist assumption that actors' interests are exogenous-

ly given; it is cognitive structures such as religion that define them.

Constructivism also recognizes that self-interested elites can, at times, seek to exploit religious cognitive structures in order to legitimize violent campaigns. However, in contrast to instrumentalists, constructivists see a limit to how far religious traditions can be manipulated (Hasenclever/ Rittberger 2000).Constructivists remind us that religions are intersubjective structures. Consequently, they take on a life of their own; they are not as malleable to the interests of elites as instrumentalists pretend them to be (ibid.). Moreover, constructivism maintains that religious frameworks contain symbolic resources that can be used to promote both conflict and peace. As complex and multilayered matrices of meaning, religions can at times be interpreted as legitimating – even sublimating – violence and at times be interpreted as encou aging unity and reconciliation. Forthis reason, constructivism disagrees with primordialist and instrumentalist views that religious doctrine inevitably contributes to stoking violence. Because of the inherent ambiguity in religious doctrine, conflict-prone elites will have to emphasize discourses that interpret religion in a way thatlegitimates violence and convince their constituencies of the validity of their interpretations. These interpretations, however, will always be vulnerable to counter-interpretations contesting the purported righteousness of conflict. From a constructivist perspective then, the ultimate role of religion in conflict depends not on a "clash of civilizations", but, rather, on a "clash of interpretations" (Hasenclever/Rittberger 2000).

To summarize the constructivist perspective: Religious worldviews can profoundly shape actors' identities, which in turn shape conflict behavior. Constructivism, however, does not maintain that religious worldviews inherently push adherents towards violent conflict. Religious frameworks can equally inspire non-violent behavior. Whether conflict is escalated or de-escalated by religious structures ultimately depends on which interpretation of religion prevails in a given situation and, consequently, on the identity adherents derive therefrom. Unlike primordialism, instrumentalism does not treat identities as fixed; these can be transformed depending on the intersubjective interpretation of religious doctrine. Conflict,

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8   Appleby (2000) defines fundamentalism as a religious response to the marginalization of religion in modern, secular society. The aim of fundamentalist movements, therefore, is to enhance or restore religious hegemony in their society.

therefore, can be prevented and resolved through interpretations and reinte pretations of religious frameworks that challenge the legitimacy of violence.

Conclusions

This overview of three political science approaches to the role of religion in conflict highlights that the theoretical lens we use shapes our understanding of the causes, nature, and potential solutions to conflict. In the case of primordialism, the policy implication is to separate religious groups. Regarding instrumentalism, the policy implication is to deal with the "true" material causes of conflict, or to educate the masses so that they can no longer be manipulated by the elites. Constructivism, finally, is less simple than the other perspectives, but is also more useful from a conflict resolution perspective, as it conceptualizes how religion can lead both to violence and peace. From a conflict transformation perspective, constructivism can be used better to understand and penetrate the cognitive religious frameworks involved in specific conflicts, as a first step to exploring how different religious frameworks can co-exist in a flexible manner. How constructivism can be useful in this endeavor is elaborated in more depth in the following article.

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Transforming Conflicts with Religious Dimensions: Using the Cultural-Linguistic Model

Jean-Nicolas Bitter[1]

"The challenge of our time is learning how to manage, negotiate or navigate through multiple worlds."[2]

Abstract

Religious and political factors influence each other in a number of contemporary conflicts, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel-Arab, Kashmir, or Sri Lanka, to name only a few. This interplay makes the conflicts in question all the more difficult to resolve. George Lindbeck[3] has developed a cultural and linguistic model of religion that is cognitively and politically neutral and helps to understand how religions and doctrines can be both firm and flexible. It also explains how, if religions and religious discourses are taken seriously and not regarded as pretexts for other motives, possibilities nevertheless remain for doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation. In terms of practical conflict resolution, the model creates opportunities for conceptualizing and implementing negotiation or mediation processes aimed at co-existence between worlds.

Introduction: Focus of Activities of the Swiss FDFA

The purpose of this paper is to sketch the use of the cultural-linguistic approach to conflict transformation, focusing on its potential in dealing with conflicts with religious dimensions. The approach is one of the main conceptual tools guiding the conflict transformation efforts of the "Religion, Politics, Conflict" (RPC) sector of activity of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

The work of the RPC sector builds upon experiences, methodologies, and working procedures developed in the framework of the humanitarian mediation work of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Since the 1980s, humanitarian delegates have had to deal with governments and armed groups whose actions and discourses were shaped in different worldviews, be it the "Shining Path" in Peru or various types of Islamist movements.[4] In order to be appropriately equipped to conduct humanitarian negotiations in such contexts, mediators had to be guided by cognitively (religiously, ideologically) neutral frames of analysis and methodologies of intervention. The cultural and linguistic approach to religions and quasi-religious discourses was perceived as an adequate and useful model.

When developing its own conflict transformation approach, it seemed quite natural for Switzerland, which identifies itself and is widely acknowledged as a neutral actor, to apply to the field of political conflict resolution and political mediation the instruments developed in the context of humanitarian mediation. Switzerland's system of government, its political culture, and, in fact, its Constitution necessitated a religiously neutral approach, especially when the country was engaging as an actor in peace promotion. The core business of FDFA/ PD IV's peace promotion work is to contribute to the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts. The occurrence and duration of a violent conflict can be attributed to the fact that the parties to the conflict do not (or no longer) have agreed conflict resolution mechanisms for regulating ongoing or emerging disputes. The Swiss FDFA understands its work as facilitating the process by which the parties jointly develop lasting resolution mechanisms. The level of action is "Track 2"[5] and above.

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2   Docherty, J. S. 1996. When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Table. Doctoral Thesis, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University.

3   Lindbeck, G., The Nature of Doctrine. *Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age.* Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1984.

4   Bitter, J. N. 2003. *Les Dieux Embusqués. Une approche pragmatique de la dimension religieuse des conflits,* Genève, Paris: Librairie Droz, pp. 46 – 156.

5   Influential but non-official actors (religious actors, business elite, academics, media representatives, etc.). Track 1 refers to official actors and elites of non-state actors. Track 3 refers to grassroots actors

Within this framework (political conflict resolution), the objective of the RPC sector of activity was to contribute to the transformation of violent conflicts where religious and political factors are deeply interconnected. Experience shows that in contexts of violent conflicts between communities, dialog about values alone does not strengthen confidence. To the contrary, dialog may even deepen mistrust, unless words are followed by actions that give meaning to them. Progress can be reached if the focus lies on practical cooperation in issues of common interest. That is why Switzerland does not conduct or support inter-cultural or inter-religious dialogs per se as instruments for political conflict resolution. Instead, it engages or supports dialogs on practical issues held with actors who, even though they may hold religious convictions or even exercise religious authority, have a de jure or de facto *political* responsibility. The dialog thus takes place between political actors, not between "cultures" or "religions", and addresses practical issues, notultimate values or doctrinal truths. The focus of RPC is thus the engagement with religiously inspired political actors.

Due to this focus, RPC does not engage in conflicts in which religion plays only a role as identity marker (for instance as it happened in the Balkans, or as it happens in Lebanon with the exception of Hizbollah). Indeed, from the point of view of religion understood as a cultural and linguistic matrix, identity is not a determining factor (although it may be present). The organising principle in the "identity" theory is the "boundary" problem of reality for a community: who is in the in-group, who is in the out-group, and what is the boundary between? Accordingly, identity and boundary become highly conscious and named. Identity should be recognizable (from inside and outside), but does not necessarily have a constitutive substance. The identity conflicts in the Balkans are a case in point: Religions were used as "markers", but there was little or no difference (in terms of internal substance, vision, matrix of social construction of reality) between the groups. Arguably, identity conflicts understood in this way (as "ethnic conflicts") do not require the same conflict transformation approach as conflicts in which parties inhabit different social constructions of reality (which shape interest and influence process), without necessarily being aware of the fact.

A "Cultural and Linguistic" Theory of Religion

The following section discusses conceptualizations of the interplay between religious and political factors, or between values and interests, in violent and protracted contemporary conflicts. It also considers methods for guiding action in those contexts.[6]

It is important to understand the nature and mechanism of the interplay of religious and political factors in order to find the most useful ways to come to a successful negotiation between worlds. Religions can be usefully conceptualised as matrices of social constructions of reality.[7] In this view, they constitute vital "fiduciary systems" (Polanyi) for the communities who inhabit them. Imposing a "world-view", a "world", or a "religion" is one of the worst forms of oppression and violence (Oscar Nudler).[8] Interactions between religions are therefore susceptible to violence. Conflicts between "worlds" are complex because the respective values and interests of the antagonists are not independent from each other: Values do shape interests, and therefore differences of interest cannot be satisfactorily resolved in a classical bargaining process. Religions are not only enacted as obstacles to conflict resolution by the communities who inhabit them. As different matrices of social construction of reality (and besides being motivators for peace and of symbolic gestures of reconciliation), they are also potential sources of unprecedented assets (cultural, religious, human) that can catalyze the

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6   The argument is only briefly incompletely lined out in this paper. A more extensive presentation can be found in: Bitter, J. N. op. cit., 2003. Les Dieux Embusqués. Une approche pragmatique de la dimension religieuse des conflits, Genève, Paris: Librairie Droz.

7   It is also important to note the plural of "matrixes" and of "realities" in the cultural linguistic approach. This stands in contrast to "constructivism" if it understood as being derived from the structuralist literature, with the idea of a unity of structure underlying cultures or languages. In that case, the cultural linguistic approach would be more a "post-"constructivist approach. For we do not suppose a priori that there is one underlying structure or foundational basis of language shared by all religions, wordviews or matrixes of construction of reality. The cultural linguistic appraoch allows for the possibility of non-commensurability between worlds. This is neither an essentialist approach - which may be the consequence of a structuralist approach - nor a relativist approach – that also presupposes commensurability against which a "relativistic" approach could be defined.

8   Nudler, O., "On Conflicts and Metaphors", in: J. Burton (éd.), *Conflict: Human Needs Theory,* New York, St Martin's Press, 1990, p.188

creative negotiation processes necessary for conflict resolution and political cohabitation.

The approach used by RPC to work on religious-political conflicts is derived from the work of George Lindbeck, a Lutheran theologian who had been observer at the Second Vatican Council and taught at Yale Divinity School. He studied the dynamics of ecumenical dialog from a religious science point of view and asked the following question: How can the possibility of religious (or confessional) reconciliation without capitulation be conceived? How can doctrinal positions that in the past contradicted each other be reconciled without renouncing previous positions or past beliefs? How can a believer change their religious position and at the same time remain faithful to the past? For Lindbeck, such dynamics are better explained by a cultural and linguistic model of religion than by the more familiar "propositionalist" (religious utterances as truth claims) or "experiential-expressivist" (religious utterances as symbolic expression of inner religious feelings, core to religion in general and universal) modes of religion:

"[A] religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought. […] It is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good (though it may involve these), or a symbolism expressive of basic attitudes, feelings, or sentiments (though these will be generated). Rather, it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities. It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and non discursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully developed. Lastly, just as a language (or "language game", to use Wittgenstein's phrase) is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioural dimensions, so it is also the case of a religious tradition." [9]

Doctrines are for a given religion what grammar is to a specific language, setting the rules within which the formation of sentences is possible (i.e., in the case of religions, what attitudes and actions are possible), yet not prescribing specific sentences (or in the case of religions: not prescribing specific attitudes, actions). Similar to the role of grammar in language, the religious "grammar" can be used in eternally changing realities, while at the same time remaining "true" or faithful to its narrative or constitutive discourse. According to this view, the encounter between two systems of rules (dogmas or values) that differ highly, or even contradict each other, does not necessarily imply that they are mutually exclusive in practice. This will depend on the context in which the encounter takes place. Take for example the "rules" of driving on the left or right respectively, which are clear in meaning and clearly opposed to each other – except when one specifies that one is valid in Britain, the other in the United States.[10]

Thus, religions are equipped with vast narrative resources allowing them to absorb and give coherent meaning to a changing world, providing security to a community. In this conceptualization of religion, religions have a synchronic and a diachronic dimension. The synchroic dimension provides values, rules, andframes for various possible actions at a given time (like football rules or road rules – driving on the left or right, allowing for an unlimited number of "moves", and only forbidding certain ones). Religions also have a diachronic dimension, as they provide frames that allow for the development of innumerable actions over time; actions that are evolving, new, and unprecedented. In this way, religions can remain true to their essence, respecting the identity of their "grammar", while also allowing for a flexible adaptation to various situations over space at one time (synchronic), as well as over time (diachronic).[11]

In this view, religious discourse or narratives remain faithful to themselves while absorbing the changing world religious communities are faced with. For instance, the Biblical narrative, though

9   Lindbeck, G., The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1984, p. 33.

10   Lindbeck, G., The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1984, p. 18.

11   Lindbeck, G., The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1984. Bitter, J. N. op. cit., 2003. Les Dieux Embusqués. Une approche pragmatique de la dimension religieuse des conflits, Genève, Paris: Librairie Droz.

recognized as faithful to itself, enfolds differently when absorbing a new Greek New Testament context, a Roman context as the one of Saint Augustine, the mediaeval world of Saint Thomas Aquinas, or the beginning of the so-called modern age with the Reformation. As Lindbeck notes, the Chinese Christian Church has developed religious interpretations that are unheard of and difficult to understand for Westerners. They are, however, the coherent result of the Biblical narrative absorbing a Far Eastern context.

Similarly, Islam remains faithful to itself when it absorbs the modern world (political) context and develops unprecedented interpretations of Islam. This reading may contribute to transforming a recurrent conflict on the issue of democracy between some Muslim scholars and secularists, for instance. Some authorities among the Muslim Brotherhood now accept the mechanism of democracy (elections, rotation of power, separation of powers, pluralism), having processed Islamic principles by means of "ijtihad", the effort of interpretation that a Muslim must undertake to give religious meaning and guidance to a new context. Secularists, however, are more than sceptical about these new interpretations. Their view is often that it is impossible for orthodox scholars, who have immutable values, to change those views that have not been democratic in the past, and hence they suspect that the new interpretations are only pretexts for some other agenda.

The cultural and linguistic model can help solve this conflict by allowing us to understand how a religion can be both firm and flexible, and absorb a changing world while remaining faithful to itself. The cultural and linguistic (and narrative) approach of religions may be useful for conflict resolution work in three ways:

1. Cognitively neutral, and acknowledging both the possibility of firmness and flexibility of "worlds", the approach allows to construct a relationship with actors that respects them by acknowledging the world they inhabit;
2. The identification of the possibility of firmness and flexibility cognitively and practically opens a space for negotiations and creative problem-solving;
3. The approach enables mediators to create a neutral space of action, in particular regarding the

issues of power and security that are at stake when dealing with "worlds" (see below).

The cultural and linguistic theory or approach is meant to be religiously neutral. One can use it in a similar way as one reads a geographical map: It does not imply decisions either for or against the communally authoritative teaching of particular religious bodies.

This neutrality of approach does not imply that one has to renounce one's own values. It functions as an instrument for conflict transformation, with the understanding that all ingredients of the process – including the frames of analysis employed – must be acceptable to the parties involved.

Further characteristics of "religions" that are relevant for conflict resolution include the following: Religions as "worlds" or matrices of social construction of reality are intimately related to the security of the community that inhabits them (as "fiduciary systems", they produce cohesion). These matrices also produce effects of power. Religions (or quasi-religions, such as Maoism or Communism) as social constructions of reality may entail different (politically relevant) conceptions and visions of society, as well as different views of how society should develop andshape its future. They also may imply different regulating mechanisms (including conflict regulating mechanisms).[12] Hence, the encounter between such discourses (which, according to Foucault, are enactments of power, since they shape the field of possible actions for others)[13] may result in tensions and conflicts, especially if one discourse is imposed and no power-sharing agreement has been developed to regulate this.

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12 Cf. the "ethnoconflict theory" field of research, for instance: Avruch, K.; P. Black, "The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution". *Peace and Change,* 16 (1991) 1, or Nader, L.; H. T. Todd (ed.), *The Disputing Process – Law in Ten Societies,* New York, Columbia University Press, 1978.

13 Foucault defines the exercise of power as "a way for some people to structure the field of possible actions of others", cf. in Dreyfus, H. L.; P. Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. With an Afterword by Michel Foucault. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 222.

Using the Cultural-Linguistic Model to develop a "Mediation Space" and Diapraxis activities

Insofar as the conflict transformation work can be described as a "conflict constructing and conflict dissolving system", a number of methodological issues are entailed in the framing (construction) of the issue that has be selected on the basis of experience, and hence is already referred to above. A number of practical and strategic "do's and don'ts" for engaging within "conflicts with religions dimensions" have been summarised elsewhere (Bitter, 2003, pp. 487ff.). In the following paragraph, a few methodological guidelines are highlighted that have proven to be useful in designing conflict transformation processes.

The process for dealing with conflicts between "worlds" is usefully thought of as designing and facilitating the setting up of a "mediation space". The "mediation" work is not understood here as result of the presence of a go-between third party, but rather supposes the process of meeting or confrontation of two discourses or two narratives seeking to coordinate their actions, whether this process is supported by a third party or not. According to this approach, mediation is similar to "negotiation" understood as a process of joint decision-making leading to joint action. This broadened understanding of mediation allows one to analyze the effects of a third-party mediator intervention not as a "go-between" that has the reputation of being transparent, but rather like a third conflict actor, for better or worse. This follows Lederach's definition of mediation as a "[…] process involving the creation of social spaces between divided groups, as opposed to a process lodged in the work of an individual or small team".[14]

Within the mediation space, the "language", culture, or religious vocabulary of the persons and groups involved should be considered as resources for a creative process producing joint solutions. They will not be seen as the passive receivers of a solution analyzed by others following linguistic constructions foreign to them. Participation in the process will be measured in terms of the possibility that each party will have had to enact its own linguistic and narrative (both discursive and non-discursive) resources. This should be thought of as a team effort, drawing on the creativity and on the innovation capacity specific to the development and innovation rules of each world.

Because meaning (understood as the concrete effects of utterances) may be constructed differently, dialog towards problem-solving in mediation spaces should be constructed methodologically as "dialog through practice" (sometimes referred to as diapraxis – see the contributes to diapraxis in the methods section below). The objective of this process is to produce projects providing pilot experiences that serve as blueprints for wider solutions required by the conflict context.

In a sense this working procedure allows partial or sectorial implementation to take place before or during more formal or official negotiations, hence reversing the usual focus on track 1 peace negotiations, and the usual negotiation-implementation sequence. The underlying challenge is how to build trust and clarify what any agreement may actually mean as regards any practical consequences it will have. Agreeing and implementing some joint activities before the end of negotiations can build sufficient trust and clarify what any agreement could entail, so incremental implementation goes hand in hand with negotiations.

Conclusion

It is a common view to think that religion is "true religion" only if it is a vehicle of peace, and also if it keeps away from political issues. If it does not, it means that religion has been "instrumentalized" for other (political) purposes. From a cultural and linguistic point of view, one would argue that religions do have, as internal "types" and resources, both their angels and their demons. One remembers Cyprian saying "there is no salvation outside the Church…" and forgets the second half of his utterance "… and there is no damnation either" – meaning that damnation, and, I would add, demons are also constructed in the narratives of the Church. As angels, demons take different forms from one religion to another. If (some kind of) politics is associated with demons, then one should think that "religio-political" demons can take different forms, and is not very useful to ignore them. Also, those who are efficient in containing demons – say,

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14 Lederach, J. P. 2002. *Building Mediative Capacity in Deep-Rooted Conflict. The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 26(1): pp. 91-101.

for instance, "radical" and nationalist religious actors rather than "extremist" spoilers – are probably those who are the more likely, if they speak up, to attract recognition of legitimacy and mobilize people, and, by doing so, to isolate extremists.

Part C

Methods to Deal with Conflicts with Religious Dimensions

From a practitioner's perspective, this section on methods of conflict transformation and mediation that can be used to deal with conflicts with religious dimensions is the center piece of this issue of Politorbis. Anne Isabel Kraus, Abbas Aroua, Michelle LeBaron, Lissi Rasmussen, Jean-Nicolas Bitter, Simon Mason, and Sabrin Kassam describe various methods that seek to be a source of inspiration for practitioners working in the field, who are faced with conflicts where cultural or religious factors seem to play a substantive role.

Culture-sensitive Process Design: Overcoming Ethical and Methodological Dilemmas

Anne Isabel Kraus[1]

Abstract

The belief systems of conflict actors not only have various potential impacts on the substantial issues of a conflict. They also heavily influence the actors' deeply ingrained normative mindsets of social interaction, including their perception of how conflicts should be handled: their behaviors, customs, convictions, expectations, and needs in procedural regards are thoroughly shaped by their respective religious or non-religious beliefs. Third parties are faced with considerable difficulties if these procedural cultures on the part of the involved conflict actors (including those of the third parties as well) are incompatible in essential points: How can they design mutually acceptable negotiation and mediation procedures that allow for effective talks and sustainable agreements without imposing their own procedural standards on the parties? This article provides an analysis of the main ethical and methodological dilemmas that these kinds of procedural differences entail for third parties. Building on this, it proposes a generic model for mediating these differences in a systematic manner. It basically consists of a three-step iterative process: 1) presupposing hypotheses, 2) eliciting and integrating information and feedback, 3) continuous correction and retrospective legitimization. The model can be used as a basic framework for culture-sensitive

process design in all stages, such as in process planning and talks about talks, in fine-tuning during negotiations as well as in process evaluation.

I. Introduction

To third parties, normative conflicts usually pose considerable methodological challenges. But when these conflicts relate to the question of how to handle the conflict *procedurally*, they become especially difficult to manage.[2] Further complications arise when the actors draw on different cultural[3] backgrounds to justify their procedural claims and when the facilitator realizes that her[4] own procedural concepts have a strong cultural imprint, too. But when there is no inter-cultural consensus on how to handle a conflict, how can the facilitator lead the process in a way that is legitimate and acceptable for all actors involved? How can she mediate without imposing her own values and norms on the parties, but also without requiring unacceptable normative compromises from herself? In short, how can we manage culture-based procedural conflicts in an ethically appropriate and methodically effective manner?

This article explores the crucial ethical dilemmas and methodological problems that mediators encounter in procedural conflicts arising in negotiations. Seeking to overcome these ethical dilemmas and methodological problems, it proposes

2   For the distinction between the substantive, procedural, and emotional levels of conflicts, see the triangle of satisfaction in Moore et al. 2010, 91.

3   The term "culture" is understood as "the shared, often unspoken, understanding in a group (…) (which) shapes our ideas of what is important, influences our attitudes and values, and animates our behaviors." See LeBaron et al. 2006, 14; also Geertz 1973, 89. Cultural groups are constituted by socio-economic, religious, political, ethnic, gender, generational, class, educational, professional, organizational, and other shared similarities. For methodological questions on dealing with culture-based traits, see Cohen 2007.

4   For simplicity and beauty of language, as well as to reflect the gender of the respective author, the author's gender will be used throughout the text, but it includes the other gender, in this case the male.

a basic methodology that allows procedural differences to be mediated without imposing one's own normative mind-set on the parties and without negating own values and norms at the same time. *On the one hand, this approach tailors negotiation processes that are in agreement with the cultures of the actors involved:* As far as possible, the actors' subjective conceptions of procedural justice and effectiveness are incorporated in the design of the process. To prevent this pluralistic approach from being abused or becoming ineffective when confronted with destructive behavior, on the other hand, *every actor, including the facilitator herself, is entitled to a veto when they regard their own fundamental values and norms as being violated.* This explicit respect for their indispensable values and norms might encourage the parties to jointly work on a reconciliation of their functional interests[5] concerning the process. In sum, the key argument is that culture-based procedural conflicts are manageable if we respect the legitimate normative limits of all actors involved and mediate between their procedural interests on a functional level.

While we will focus in the following on process design[6] for negotiations[7] with third-party assistance (as in mediation),[8] the method theoretically provides impulses for dealing with and transforming conflicts that involve any means and forms of interaction, including violent or legal ones.

II. Culture-based procedural differences

When actors to a conflict come from different cultural backgrounds, it can be assumed that they rely on different culture-based values, norms, and patterns of behavior of handling conflict.[9] Because of that, in a considerable number of cases, actors may not accept the procedures suggested and/or adopted by other actors or third parties. In such

a case, besides substantive disagreements (*what*), tensions will appear in relation to procedural issues (*how*).[10] But as negotiation processes are highly interdependent by nature, a mutually acceptable result of negotiation depends on how the actors cooperate in the process. Because of this, unmediated procedural tensions may be one reason why inter-cultural[11] negotiations often reach impasses and agreements are difficult to implement.[12]

What is the nature of procedural conflicts in practice? For instance, regarding the distribution of power in the process, actor A may find it obligatory to make all parties participate in decisionmaking, while for B, it is indispensable to leave decisionmaking to an authority. Here, the procedural conflict is about different (joint and authoritative) types of decisionmaking. Or, concerning the in-/directness of communication, actor A may be convinced that conflicts have to be settled as discreetly as possible through confidential consultations with insider facilitators in order to save face and protect relatioships, while B claims that conflicts have to be discussed directly and explicitly with the assistance of external third parties so as to identify root causes and ensure accountability.[13] Another example would be the tension between task- and relationship-oriented approaches: For instance, A deals with a conflict very functionally and focuses on the immediate issue at hand, while B is only ready to discuss the issue if A is more mindful of how the history of their relationship shapes the present understanding of the issue.[14] From a broader perspective, we see that most of the

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5   For the concept of functional interests, see Rothman 1997, 57, 178.

6   For two different concepts of process/dispute systems design, see Moore 1996, Chapter 4 and 6; Sander 2006 and 1994.

7   Negotiation understood as a method of joint decision- and action-taking.

8   Mediation understood as negotiation facilitated by a third party structuring the process without having decisionmaking power.

9   See Moore et al. 2010, part 1; Williams 2003; Moore 1996, 211p, 228, 266, 317; from a socio-historical perspective, conceptions of justice have always varied between different cultures, see Ross et al. 2002, 4-10, and, with regard to procedural justice, Epp 1998, 85. Concerning the question of justice in conflict, see Deutsch 2006.

10 The term "procedural" applies very broadly for every *form* of handling and managing conflict, whereas "substantive" refers to the *issue* at the heart of the conflict; see Moore 2010, 91.

11 When using the term "inter-cultural", an interaction or collaboration between parties from different cultures is implied. "Cross-" or "trans-cultural" refers to actors from different cultures from a comparative or overall perspective, considering each of them separately or as a group rather than focusing on the interaction between them.

12 See W. Pearce et al. 1997, 158; Rothman 1997, 5; Bush et al. 2005, 2; Albin 2001, 7; Salem 1993.

13 On this observed difference between Asian and Western actors, see Ropers 2011; Leung et al. 2010; Antaki 2006; Faure 1999; Lee 1997; Kirkbride et al. 1991. For specific conceptions of honor, see Pely 2011.

14 This example refers to the case of a discussion between a US state agency and an American Indian tribal representative (source confidential).

categories for mapping cultural differences (such as high context/low context communication and individualism/communitarianism)[15] entail considerable procedural implications.

What can we learn from this? To the same extent that culture shapes the way in which actors deal with conflict, culture-based procedural differences can turn into potential breaking points in inter-cultural negotiations.[16] This means that *in order to mediate inter-cultural conflicts in a fair but also effective and sustainable way, we need to establish common procedural principles and rules that can reconcile the particular normative standpoints of the actors involved.*[17]

Conflicts where different belief systems play a key role[18] can be especially susceptible to procedural tensions for two reasons. First, there is an immense diversity in belief-based conceptions of justice, honor, guilt, and interpersonal relationship and, in consequence, also a big variety of belief-based values, norms, and social practices of dealing with conflict; consider, for instance, the diverging attitudes towards Dealing with the Past, such as forgiveness and oblivion vs. investigation and punishment.[19] Second, belief-based standpoints are necessarily normative and, in addition, tend to be perceived as non-negotiable: To the extent that they are part of internalized convictions and social rules,

actors may consider them as indispensable for their moral and cultural identity and individual well-being as well as for the groups' social order.[20]

III. General problems of dealing with culture and normativity in conflict

When contemplating how to mediate between these differences over procedural questions in negotiations, we have to bear in mind some general problems regarding culture, conflict, and normative claims, and their potential implications regarding procedural questions:

First, even if a tradition of handling conflict is well-founded in history and society from a cultural or religious point of view (such as customs of physical punishments), it is not necessarily justifiable from an ethical or legal point of view (based on human rights postulating a right to physical integrity). At the same time, ethical and legal standpoints are also shaped by the cultural context of the actors who stipulate them; the validity and legitimacy of these ethical and legal values and norms also depend on historical and social acceptance.[21] This constructivist understanding of the irreducible interdependency of values, norms, and culture means that from a philosophical point of view, *there are no and never will be universal and ultimate standards about what is "fair" "negotiation" that we could resort to when dealing with procedural differences.*

Second, how can we distinguish an authentic culture-based claim from a culturalized one? A culturalized claim unconsciously mixes or deliberately conceals basic human needs or economic, political, or strategic interests with real or pretended cultural fixations.[22] For instance, is a defendant who rejects a truth-finding commission and insists on a reconciliation ritual seeking spiritual peace or impunity? If an actor rejects the procedural principle "nothing is agreed until all is agreed," as suggested by the mediator, is this rejection based on cultural reasons or on a lack of trust in the other actor or the process in

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15 Hall's and Hofstede's "dimensions of culture" (High context/Low Context Communication, Individualism/Communitarianism, Universalism/Particularism, Specificity/Diffuseness, Sequential Time/Synchronous Time, Low Power Distance/High Power Distance) can be helpful as starting points for understanding culture, as long as they are not misunderstood and misused as dichotomized, fixed-point descriptions of particular social traits to legitimize culturalistic claims. See LeBaron et al. 2006, 32-55; see also Williams 2003; Hui 1986.

16 See Law 2009.

17 See the classics of procedural ethics: Luhmann 1983, 169; Lind et al. 1988. More recently, see Ropers 2011, 25; Törnblom et al. 2007; Williams 2003, 6; Albin 2001, 28, 35; Epp 1998.

18 Concerning the role of religion in conflicts, conflict transformation, and peacemaking, see for instance The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding 2009; Berg et al. 2005.

19 See Ropers' report of the case where Buddhist monks found that 'Vergeben und Vergessen' ("forgive and forget") was more appropriate for Buddhist culture in dealing with Sri Lanka's war experience than 'Aussprechen und Bearbeiten' ("express and work on it"), which was perceived as a typical Christian idea. See Kühner 2007, 58f. For more examples, see, e.g., Irani et al. 2000. At the same time, besides these differences, there are of course various *commonalities* between religious ideas of peace, which are used in interreligious dialog; see, e.g., Merdjanova et al. 2009.

20 See Enns 2007.

21 See Vossenkuhl 2006, 43, 53.

22 See Mason et al. 2010, 3. Similarly, conflict entrepreneurs utilize grievances for waging war by tying these grievances to cultural identities, see Eide 1997.

general?[23] As each "culture" largely depends on the interpretations of its representatives, *it is very difficult to determine from outside whether certain procedural practices are really motivated and justified by a cultural context or not.* For handling procedural conflicts, this means that the argument of culture can easily be used as a pretext to conceal other kinds of interests or to excuse violations of other actors' integrity.

Third, there is no point in trying to negotiate directly on and transform belief-based values and norms as long as they are perceived as subjectively indispensable.[24] In order to avoid ending up in a moral stalemate or violating legitimate moral claims, *it might be more advantageous to focus on mediating practical procedural interests instead of values and norms*: the functional means that serve to fulfill values and norms are usually much more negotiable than these values and norms themselves.[25] Nevertheless, if we can ensure that the actors' legitimate moral and cultural boundaries are respected, we may still look for ways to make fixed procedural values and norms more negotiable.

Bearing in mind these fundamental challenges, there seems to be one basic precondition for successfully mediating between conflicting procedural claims in an explicit[26] manner: *the parties to the conflict must have an interest in overcoming the procedural deadlock that prevents them from settling their substantive issues. Only when we can build on this common interest will parties be willing to negotiate on procedural questions and temporarily postpone the discussion on content questions.*

IV. Dilemmas in dealing with culture-based procedural differences

Let us now look a bit more closely into the specific ethical and methodological challenges of procedural conflicts.

Considering the global pluralism of values and norms from a cultural as well as an ethical point of view, there is neither an abstract universal idea of procedural justice nor a body of procedural rules for settling conflicts that can be considered cross- or trans-culturally valid in a consensual sense.[27] Of course, there are some overlapping fundamental values that can be found in several cultures. For instance, the ideas of "human dignity" given by God in Islam and the secular Western "human rights" are surprisingly similar in practice, even if they have different roots. However, these overlapping ideas do not yet establish a resilient universal consensus on procedures. Additionally, apart from the fact that any "universal" or supra-national normative order thus lacks the legitimating basis of a trans-cultural consensus, the provisions of international human rights and international law are far too abstract for the kind of conflict we have in mind here: Even if these norms and rules were acceptable for all actors involved, they do not apply for regulating the subtle practical interactions between individuals from different cultures.

The pluralism and relativity of procedural values and norms produces two difficult *ethical dilemmas when it comes to designing processes for inter-cultural settings. Both of them have significant methodological consequences.*

First, in the absence of an overarching procedural standard, we cannot justify subordinating one set of values and norms to another. Thus, we have to respect and treat them equally when designing inter-cultural procedures. That also means that we cannot expect our own culture-based methods to fit into other cultural contexts if we only "adjust" them to the respective context.[28] Instead, we need to tailor procedures in accordance with the specific culture-based procedural needs, interests, and constraints of the actors and have to ensure their acceptability before applying them. In summary,

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23 See Mason 2008, 76.

24 See Mason et al. 2010, 3; Atran 2008; Enns 2007.

25 Jay Rothman's concept of functional interests provides an effective tool to address this level of more negotiable ideas amid other non-negotiable claims. See Rothman 1997, 57, 178. Ropers 2011, 25, Noesner 2010, 113, 123 and Montada 2009, 504, also highlight the conduciveness of a practical/ functional level of negotiations and rules when it comes to facilitating normative or identity-based conflicts.

26 See Section VI for a discussion on whether to mediate explicitly or implicitly in procedural conflicts.

27 See Ernst et al. 2010; Bhatia et al. 2008, 127-143; Hastrup 2001; Brems 2001; Habermas 1999; Tergel 1998; Walzer 1994; Nunner-Winkler 1994; Kausikan 1993, 26; Maxwell 1990; Bernstein 1983.

28 Furthermore, international procedural rules for ADR in civil and commercial matters (e.g., those of ICC, WIPO, UNCITRAL and, for the Chinese-American or -British context, CIETAC/CCPIT with CPR and CEDR) do not rely on a trans- or inter-cultural consensus, but only seem to reproduce the culture-based norms of the most powerful players among the rule-makers.

culture-sensitive process design needs to be inductive and consensual.[29]

However, most procedural models entail normative preconditions that are not inductively and consensually verified. Habermas even argues that some of these preconditions are generally irreducible: every actor who enters into a conversation, Habermas says, intuitively accepts the implicit rules of argumentation.[30] Thus, he asserts that participating in a negotiation automatically implies acknowledgement of the rules of the actor who is explicitly or implicitly "leading" the talks – which, in the end, is a question of power. But even if this were true in a descriptive sense, it is not a voluntary consensus and thus lacks both justification and sustainability.[31] Therefore, *instead of relying on implicit procedural assumptions and "irreducible" preconditions, a culture-sensitive procedural model needs to uncover them and allow them to be contested*.

But if we want to do this, we are confronted with the following dilemma: *How can we design and start a consensual process that respects and integrates both parties'` procedural claims equally, when there is no consensus between them which we could build on to avoid discriminating one of the parties?* The methodological consequence is that we either have to work with procedures that lack acceptance, effectiveness, and sustainability; or that we have to refrain entirely from becoming involved as a third party because one of the most basic requirements for a successful process – clarity on procedural questions – is missing.

This brings us to a second dilemma: (Western) third-party ethics claim impartiality in terms of not taking sides; many also claim neutrality with regard to the own interests, objectives, and values of the mediator concerning the conflict.[32] However, while staying impartial and neutral concerning the content (*what*), third parties are required to structure the process of negotiations (*how*) in order to support the parties in handling the conflict.[33] In procedural conflicts, this distribution of roles (impartiality and neutrality regarding the content, combined with leadership in the process) results in a serious problem for mediators: when the process becomes the substance of the conflict (*how=what*), a third party cannot be impartial and neutral anymore. Whatever principles, methods, and instruments the mediator uses, they are infused with cultural values and norms that express not only the mediator's professional principles, but also her ethical, political, and belief-based values and convictions.[34] Procedural conflicts thus reveal the fact that mediators themselves, whether they like it or not, are positioned and interested parties when it comes to the question of procedures.

The best example for this is our own third-party approach: If one actor were persistently violating a basic ethical and methodological principle of our own, e.g., "one side may not oppress the other", would we still continue with our efforts? If not, why not? How can we substantiate and legitimize such a principle in the context of culture-based procedural conflicts despite the fact that there is no trans-cultural consensus in procedural matters? This second dilemma challenges our self-conception as third parties not only in an ethical, but also in a methodological sense. To illustrate this with a real-life example, imagine this case of a training workshop that took place within a broader conflict transformation process:

The team of international facilitators invited the participants from a European neighboring state to help structure the workshop in terms of agenda-setting and content. The participants were bemused by this way of proceeding, as they had expected the facilitators to take on the role of "experts" and actually tell them precisely how to handle their conflict. For the facilitators, who shared a liberal democratic worldview, part of their

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29 See Ropers 2011, 27.

30 See Habermas 1983, 103.

31 Ironically, this lack of voluntariness also contradicts Habermas` own key principle of universality for consensual decisionmaking ("Universalisierungsgrundsatz"), which claims that only if an action is right (or wrong) for others can it be right (or wrong) for us; see Habermas 1983.

32 See Bolger et al 2010; Moore 1996, 197, 354; for an example, see the European Code of Conduct for Mediators 2004.

33 For the separation of process from content in classical models of mediation, see for example Moore 1996, 18. Nevertheless, Cobb highlights how process and content are interdependent and how the mediator has an impact on content and outcome by shaping the process, see Cobb 1993.

34 For a discussion on the contextual or culture-based relativity of mediation procedures, see Montada 2009, 509; Antaki 2006; Reif 2005; Bercovitch et al. 1992, 4.

expertise consisted of procedures designed to empower the participants to take a leading role in setting the agenda. Thus, there was a fairly clear and even paradoxical conflict between strongly participatory facilitators and less participatory participants over the procedural question of who should take the leading role in shaping agenda and content.[35]

Taking a look behind the scenes, the participants may have felt bound to the cultural rules of the broader normative context, where the relevant stakeholders would only accept and follow decisions made by recognized authorities. If in this situation, the facilitators had insisted on their own participative approach, the participants might have perceived this as an expression of ignorance of their culture, living conditions, and constraints of their real life beyond the workshop and, in consequence, may not have collaborated either in the process or in the implementation of results.[36]

Should we try to be procedurally impartial and neutral in such a case and submit the process completely to the contextual circumstances, whatever costs or missed opportunities this may entail from our point of view? Should we do so even if we believed that the participants would benefit from our own approach or that this approach could contribute to a constructive transformation of the bigger social context? Thus, how can we reconcile our professional commitment to impartiality and neutrality with our own ethical and methodologicalconvictions?[37]

First of all, we have to acknowledge that the idea of a normatively *neutral* third party hardly fits with reality. Neutrality in substantive normative issues may be possible in some cases, but when it comes to process questions, it is clearly an illusion: Third

parties acting in the role of process facilitators inevitably have to perform in a norm- or rule-based manner with regard to procedure in order to be capable of acting effectively. A facilitator will always need to control the process in certain respects (e.g., stop insulting, minimize violence) in order to accomplish something with it. In addition, if a mediator is professionally or personally committed to certain values and norms, she will have a legitimate desire to make sure that her work is not abused for intentions and actions she does not support, such as violations of human rights.[38]

Let's say that this state of affairs is acceptable to us – what about *impartiality*? Even if and, paradoxically, precisely because we want to stick to our own values and principles, we still may want to adhere to impartiality and respect the pluralism of norms when mediating conflicting procedural claims: We know that we have to treat everyone fairly in equal measure because if we do not, the parties will not build trust and we cannot negotiate effectively.

Translating both consequences into the mediator's role, an "all-partisan" or "multi-pa tial" approach that actively ensures that all parties can equally voice their legitimate concerns and at the same time reflects the own normative stand point captures the idea of "being impartial while not being neutral" quite well.[39] This approach may be even quasi trans-culturally acceptable, as long as its scope is limited to the minimal common interest of all parties to overcome the dead lock situation resulting from the conflicting interdependent process claims (see section III).

But there are still open questions here: How do we deal with other, more demanding procedural norms and rules that we perceive as indispensable? Do they overrule the impetus to be impartial or all-partisan towards the parties and, if yes, how can we legitimize such a claim? Or is the principle of all-partisan impartiality

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35 One of the participants remarked in the closing session that they had engaged in the process because it was consistent with their culture to follow the instructions of the facilitators. Case description of Mariska Kappmeier, Alexander Redlich, and Jay Rothman, 2011.

36 In the case described above, the facilitators did not actually abandon the participatory approach. They became explicit and transparent about it and addressed the fact that it may be confusing; they also explained that the nature of this procedure was a deliberate part of the way they worked. Case description of Mariska Kappmeier, Alexander Redlich, and Jay Rothman 2011.

37 On this dilemma, see also Ropers 2011, 27.

38 International Alert differentiate this in their Code of Conduct as follows: "Although *impartial* in as far as we conduct our work among different conflict parties, we are *not neutral* in terms of the principles and values we adhere to which we must in appropriate ways work to advance at all times." See International Alert 1998, 4 (emphasis added).

39 On the concept of impartiality as all-partisanship ("Allparteilichkeit"), see Kirchhoff 2008, 247; Carnevale et al. 1996.

so obligatory and absolute that we had better refrain from claiming any other norms and rules by ourselves?

V. Overcoming the dilemmas through hypothetical presupposition and continuous self-correction

Looking for knowledge and tools we can draw on for tackling these issues, we find wide-ranging studies on culture-based differences in conflict styles[40] and many concepts of inter-cultural negotiation and mediation, inter-cultural fluency, and hybrid conflict management mechanisms.[41] However, there seems to be no method yet that allows both a) systematic mediation between diverging normative procedural claims in an impartial manner that nevertheless does not amount to a denial of own principles, as described above, and, on basis of this, b) the development of inter-cultural procedural principles and rules that are acceptable to both parties. That means that we do not yet systematically apply the basic idea of mediation to inter-cultural process design. The matter seems to be not so much a matter of methodological incoherence as a typical blind spot problem: In designing and performing procedures that we consider fair and effective, we may intuitively assume that the way we act when doing so must also be fair and effective.

In the following, a basic model will be proposed that should help to make this blind spot accessible. The model has been developed in direct response to the ethical dilemmas and methodological challenges pictured above in order to handle them in an ethically acceptable and still practicable manner. It has not yet been applied and tested in practice, which means that the examples given in the following only illustrate a hypothetical real-life application. The model consists of an iterative trial-and-error process that allows us to presuppose a provisional procedure, which we gradually legitimate by continuous correction and confirmation by means of the results and feedback we get from its application.

Having learned that mediating procedural conflicts in a fair and sustainably effective manner requires a process that is inductively and consensually legitimized, we know that, theoretically, we have no legitimate grounds for prescribing any absolute rules for the process. But at the same time, we want to make sure that in these open and unregulated negotiations nobody's fundamental values and norms are violated. Thus, what we need is a very basic ground rule[42] that is capable of preventing an exacerbation of the conflict and at the same time minimalistic enough to be acceptable to all actors.

As already mentioned above, we suggest the following minimal rule: All actors, including the third party, are explicitly entitled to veto process elements that they cannot endorse. A veto is accepted when the actor can provide evidence that the element in question would violate values and norms he considers indispensable (for the question of how to distinguish between false and authentic claims concerning indispensability, see section III). As much as this fundamental principle of mutual respect for each other's values and norms can serve to avoid further escalation, we can base its legitimacy on the parties' common interest in overcoming the deadlock in process questions, which is a prerequisite for the process in any case (see section III). It follows that we can keep the right to veto separate from the continuous correction as described in the following. This means that parties have to consent to the equal veto right of all actors before they actually start the process.

This iterative process has the following three steps:

Step 1) Presupposing Hypotheses: After having studied the cultural (culture understood as a generic term that also includes religion) background of the parties and having tried to identify their culture-based procedural standpoints, the third party postulates common procedural principles on a hypothetical basis. These principles also include the facilitator's own fundamental procedural values and norms, e.g., the principles of "not oppressing the other" or "participative ownership of all the parties in

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40 See, e.g., Busch et al. 2010; Bagshaw et al. 2009; LeBaron 2006; Williams 2003; Avruch 2003; Said et al. 2001; Kopelman et al. 1999; Avruch 1998; Pearce et al. 1997; Rothman 1997.

41 See, e.g., Moore 2010; LeBaron 2006; Reif 2004; Ropers 2011, 26.

42 See Moore 1996, 156.

decisionmaking (including intra-party decisions)".[43] Building on the principles of all actors involved, the facilitator develops a provisional procedure for mediating conflicts in the specific inter-cultural setting.

Step 2) Eliciting and Integrating Information and Feedback: The provisional procedure is carried out by focusing on mediating between process-relevant functional interests, leaving aside conflicting values and norms (see comments on separating values and norms from functional interests in section III). While doing so, it must be made unmistakably clear that the facilitators will ensure that all parties have the same opportunity to contribute their concerns and interests concerning process questions in order to jointly shape and optimize the common procedure (all-partisan or multi-partial approach).

In mediating between the functional interests, the facilitator may rely on the techniques and instruments she normally uses for mediating conflicting interests. However, she will have to allow these techniques and instruments also to become subject to the procedural discussion. In doing so, the facilitator receives not only information on the actors' general procedural values, norms, and functional interests, but also spontaneous feedback on the ongoing procedure; this information must not be explicit, it can also be provided implicitly by the parties while interacting with each other. For example, party A claims that decisionmaking has to be assigned to the religious or political authorities from both sides, whereas B stipulates that all actors should participate in decisionmaking. Both parties argue that their preferred way is fairer to the parties as well as more effective in anchoring results and agreements in people's minds. The facilitator will then elicit the functional interests of both sides in more detail and then encourage the elaboration of a common decisionmaking process (e.g., a voting procedure) that fully or partially assigns the required roles to both the religious authority and the other actors.

If parties reject a principle of the provisional procedure because it is unfamiliar or seems unfavorable to them, the facilitator can give a non-binding taste of its benefits so that parties can "test" it. For instance, at the start, the parties may still attempt to insult, oppress, and hurt each other; but over time, they may realize that negotiations where this behavior is not accepted (because they follow the principle "not to oppress each other") serve to reach their objectives: While the mediator is creating a safe space and preventing one party from trying to dominate the other, they will find that such a condition enhances the effectiveness and fairness of conflict interaction. In this way, one can work towards establishing common principles that are beneficial to all parties even if the parties perceived them as unacceptable in the beginning.

If an indispensable claim for modification from actor A and a veto from actor B exclude each other, the facilitator needs to explore whether this conflict is about fundamental values or about mere normative positions. In the first case, the process has uncovered a discrepancy of values that has to be respected and may bring the process to a (provisional) end. In the second case, the facilitator would continue to elicit the negotiable functional interests behind the positions and mediate between them.

Step 3) Continuous Correction and Retroactive Legitimization: The outcomes of these negotiations inductively correct or confirm the provisional procedure that has been applied up to that point. To prove this revised version and in order to further optimize and finally legitimate it, the procedure is repeated starting with step 2). In the course of its iterations, the procedure acquires more and more acceptance among the parties. The point when the parties do not ask for more corrections marks the achievement of a minimal consensus on procedural principles and rules.

The question whether and how a third party should make this self-reflexive approach explicit to the parties or carry it out implicitly while discussing substantive matters is in itself an inherent part of process design.[44] Depending on the case and the cultural background of the parties, it can be very

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43 Some scholars see the equilibrating empowerment of weaker actors as a key factor for the success of negotiations processes; see, e.g., Larson 2003.

44 See Moore 1996, 212 and 228.

encouraging or highly irritating for them to make the approach transparent: On being assured that there will be a continuous self-correction of hypothetical principles and instruments, parties from a democratic cultural context with participatory traditions (such as North Americans or Western Europeans) may gain confidence in the process and its results. If there are indications that parties from a cultural context with authoritarian traditions (such as North Koreans) would have serious problems to place their trust in such a self-challenging and open structure, it may be more agreeable for them if it is adopted implicitly — which, however, does not necessarily mean keeping it secret. In general, talking about procedures instead of substance requires a certain readiness for meta-communication.

Let us explore the potential real-world application of this methodology:

In Nepal, in the talks that led to the 2006 agreement, the Maoists and the democratic parties had a procedural culture that was different from that of envoys and mediators from the West.

Step 1) Both Nepali parties realized that it would be beneficial to structure their talks more than was common in their culture, even if they were not ready to give a formal mandate to an outside mediator (not least because this could have been problematic in the eyes of India, not in a cultural, but in a political sense). For the facilitator from the Swiss FDFA, Günther Baechler, the *presupposing hypothesis* was therefore: "No formal mandate as mediator will be possible in this case, but an informal, implicit mandate as facilitator to structure the process may work."

Step 2) By *eliciting and integrating more information and implicit feedback from the parties* during the negotiations, it soon became clear that although he was trusted, even an informal mandate as a facilitator did not imply that he could sit in the meeting rooms. In Nepali culture, the role of facilitator is traditionally given to insider persons with some decisionmaking power on content rather than to an outside, impartial mediator, who would only focus on process.

Step 3) Therefore, *partly correcting the initial hypothesis*, a procedural compromise was found

through an iterative process, where the parties welcomed the structuring and "go-between" services of the Western facilitator outside the meeting room, e.g., by drafting a sequence paper, even if he never sat in the meeting rooms when the talks took place. Looking back after the agreement, the greater ownership of the process by the Nepali parties, which was owed to the structured talks, satisfied both the parties and the Swiss mediator.[45]

The procedural solution found between the parties and the facilitator in this case was definitely not a classical example of mediation, as the facilitator did not have a formal mandate and was not sitting at the table between the two parties. When considering the case with the methodology developed above as an analysis framework, however, one would argue that it was an appropriate culture-sensitive process, as it took into account the procedural culture of the parties, but also provided space for improving the procedure methodologically through structuring the talks by informal third party services. As a result, it seems that this three-step model can help to analyze and clarify processes that do not fit the "standard" approach.

A second example illustrates how the model may help to proceed in negotiations where the procedural cultures of the parties differ. In the case of the Waco siege in 1993 (for more on the case, see chapter X in this publication), the FBI as one party framed the negotiation process as a "complex hostage taking case". If negotiations led by the negotiation coordinator Gary Noesner failed to work, combat forces would enter the compound and liberate the "hostages". David Koresh, the leader of the Branch Davidian sect, on the other hand, saw the conflict as a fight between the "forces of evil" (the US government and the FBI) and the "righteous" (the Davidian community), which had to hole up in their compound to defend themselves. In Koresh's interpretation, this was the battle of the "end times" (Armageddon) as prophesied in the Book of Revelation he believed in.[46]

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45 Insights provided by Günther Baechler, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. On insider mediation in Asia, including in the Nepal case, see Ropers 2011, 23.

46 See Noesner 2010, 96-98.

Step 1) The advice of scholars of apocalyptic belief as well as film footage on the Davidian community was used in this case. Based on this, the *presupposing hypothesis* of the negotiation coordinator was that Koresh was not a psych path, since his arguments – e.g., the conviction that he was a prophet, stockpiling weapons, and practicing defensive actions to prepare for Armageddon – were coherent with the Bible, even if they reflected an unorthodox interpretation of it. Therefore, the negotiation coordinator treated him as a counterpart with whom it was possible to negotiate on a "way out" of the conflict that was also compatible with the Bible.[47]

Step 2) In discussions with Koresh over the phone during the siege, *the idea for a process was jointly shaped* by which Koresh would deliver a nationwide broadcast explaining his apocalyptic interpretation of the Book of Revelation and then write down his message to the world. Once he had been heard by the world, he would peacefully surrender together with his followers and submit to the US justice system – and would not, as the negotiators feared, lead them into mass suicide.[48] In contrast to these practical negotiations on process questions, discussions about religious questions with Koresh turned out to be a dead end.[49]

Step 3), the *continuous correction and retroactive legitimization of the process*, never happened, because the iterative process of how to handle the situation peacefully (step 2) was aborted by the FBI when David Koresh did not fulfill a part of his promise on time. The FBI decided not to continue negotiations, but to enter the compound with heavy weapons, and the Davidians burnt down the entire compound. Seventy-five Davidians were killed.[50]

The Waco case shows the danger of labeling the "other" as a "psychopath" or the "forces of evil"rather than acknowledging the differences in belief concepts and reasoning as conflicting understandings of how to handle the process that do not preclude cooperation on a practical level.[51] The negotiation coordinator, knowing

both cultures, started to develop a process that could have made sense in both worlds, if he had been given enough trust and time from both sides to allow it to develop. Unfortunately, the two sides were unable to trust each other, as they perceived the actions of the opposite side as mere manipulations and insults to their authority that had to be punished and defeated uncompromisingly.

In this case, the beauty of the model is that it highlights the possibility of a more balanced way of shaping a negotiation process, where the process is "negotiated in the making" rather than imposed by either party. It also reveals that with a consistently respectful pluralistic attitude towards differences (even if they are perceived as strange or pathological), combined with a creative functional approach in process questions, can generate new space for negotiation and joint decisionmaking.

VI. All questions answered?

After having illustrated the model with two cases, let us finally see how the model answers to our problems in detail. The first question was how to start a process without having a procedural consensus among all actors to rely on. The answer s the iterative process itself: *the negotiation or mediation procedure does not need to be fully accepted from its very beginning if we ensure its systematic correction and acceptance in the course of the process itself.* Our answer follows the idea of reflexive learning: just as when trying to communicate with strangers without having a common language, but an object to refer to as a common reference point, we knowingly presuppose mere assumptions (Presupposing Hypotheses) in order to correct and legitimate them afterwards (Continuous Correction and Retroactive Legitimization) according to the responses we get (Eliciting and Integrating Information and Feedback). This offers the possibility of postponing the legitimization of a proposed procedure until we are able to deliver it. In other words: In return for a continuous and inductive self-correction, we are allowed to act on prejudice.[52]

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47 See Noesner 2010, 98, 105.

48 See Noesner 2010, 110.

49 See Noesner 2010, 114, 127.

50 See Noesner 2010, 127.

51 See Noesner 2010, 113, 123.

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52 Davidson offers this idea when describing the triangulation principle that people use when interacting without having a common language. See Davidson 2001, 83, 86.

In the end, that means that it is not a procedure recognized as "just" that legitimizes the outcome, but the outcome legitimizes the procedure. As the procedure actually produces the outcome, it retroactively legitimizes itself. Thus, by making the procedure as self-reflective and adaptive as possible, we can embark upon it despite having no commonly accepted normative basis to build on. In this way, the iterative process allows us to overcome the dilemma of starting a negotiation or mediation procedure witout an inductively legitimated procedural basis.

But how do we deal with the circle of double relativity that starts when procedure and outcome are treated as mutually dependent? We have to make a virtual break here: We take *either* the procedure or the outcome (the elicited procedural principles and rules of the parties) as a given reference point for adjustment.[53] However from an ethical point ofview, there has to be a certain primacy of the procedure over the outcome: Only a bigger procedural structure can take care of the common good of the parties, who primarily have to make sure that their own interests are fulfilled. Thus, only when the functional interests and/or vetoes of both parties can be mediated and there is a consensus on how the existing procedure has to be improved, the procedure will be modified.

Altogether, the procedure remains self-constituting and permanently temporary as long as its outcomes give new reason for adjustment. As each result (in the form of common procedural principles and rules) depends to a large degree on context and actors, it has to be understood as a minimal, situative, and temporary consensus that cannot be transferred to another context without systematic inductive self-correction.

How does the model answer the second question, which was how the facilitator can deal with own indispensable values and norms and remain all-partial at the same time? As long as the facilitator sees none of her own indispensable values and norms as being in jeopardy, she will mediate and integrate the parties' procedural

interests in an all-partial manner. *However, at the moment she feels obliged to veto unacceptable modifications of the procedure and the other actors do not accept this, the facilitator may resign from her role and mandate in that process.*

One procedural norm that a facilitator may regard as non-negotiable could be the principle of "not oppressing the other". Beyond that, there are most probably other indispensable values and norms to which the individual facilitator is legally bound or ethically committed. Regarding the legal dimension, the cogent norms of international law (such as the prohibition of amnesties for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide) constitute the minimal framework that any mediator is theoretically bound to, especially when she is acting officially for an organization such as the UN or the Swiss FDFA. With regard to the ethical dimension, the third party should carefully explore her own bottom line in terms of her minimal values and norms as well as their concrete application in the given context before starting the process.

We may summarize this second answer as follows: When applying the iterative process described above, it is a prerequisite on the mediator's side to make herself aware of what exactly is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in procedural regards for her, whether it comes from the legal and ethical code of her organization or her personal ethical values.

VII. Conclusion

Without doubt, inter-cultural conflicts about the how of handling conflicts confront mediators with intricate ethical dilemmas and methodological challenges. But having analyzed and understood these problems, we learn that they are manageable, too, if we respect and integrate the legitimate procedural perspectives of all actors involved within the minimal parameter that all sides can veto procedural elements that they perceive as violations of their values and norms. Correspondingly, culture-sensitive procedures have to be built on the balance of two kinds of efforts on the side of the facilitator: to become aware and confident of own indispensable procedural values and norms and at the same time to integrate the parties' procedural conceptions wherever possible.

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53 Vossenkuhl suggests this method, called 'Maximenmethode', for handling the mutual interdependency between abstract moral norms and real-life problems, which both are changing over time. See Vossenkuhl 2006, 87, 252.

As a result, the main added value of this approach is that appropriateness can be achieved in all relevant regards: On the one hand, the procedure offers a way to tailor context-specific processes that do justice to the particular values and norms of the parties. On the other hand, it does not force normative compromises that would not be acceptable for a third party or from a broader methodological, ethical or legal standpoint. In this way, the framework provides a basis for dealing with procedural conflicts that can finally be accepted as a consensual and legitimate procedure.

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Transforming Religious-Political Conflicts: Decoding-Recoding Positions and Goals

Abbas Aroua[1]

Abstract

A key question in conflict resolution is to what extent religion is involved, whether as a cause, a way of expression, or a tool for the resolution of the conflict. The aim of this note is to bring some insight to this issue based on the experience that the Cordoba Foundation has accumulated with conflicts in or involving the Arab world. The core idea is to map the different ways in which political and religious positions and goals may interact. This opens space for decoding and recoding religious and political dimensions of a given conflict, thereby enabling the non-violent transformation of the conflict.

Introduction: Religion and Conflict

2.1. Religion

In the Islamic perception, religion (din) has two dimensions: one vertical, between the individual and his or her Creator, and one horizontal, between the individual and other creatures. Therefore, religion for Muslims is simultaneously a personal spiritual experience, a source of inspiration for the conduct and action of the individual, and a collective experience providing the community with a system of values and a normative framework, even in the absence of a religious institution obeying a strong authority and a formal hierarchy, at least in the Sunni tradition. This explains why secularism, particularly in its extreme forms, where the

individual and collective experiences are completely dissociated, is largely viewed by Muslim communities as incompatible with Islamic teachings. This duality is often a source of incomprehension by non-Muslims, notably Christians, due to the historical evolution of relations between the church and the state in Western Europe and the US. As in other cultures, religion for Muslims is a collective experience, since it determines shared history, narrative, and language, as well as a common vision allowing a projection into the future and the hereafter. In this sense, it is considered as a shelter in difficult times when the individual or the community feels threatened, such as in conflict.

2.2. Conflict

In today's Islamic societies, conflict is viewed negatively, as something to be prevented or even denied as a social reality, a perception that has dramatic implications on the way it is analyzed and resolved. However, in the Islamic tradition, conflict is recognized as a normal social phenomenon and a sign of God who could have created all human beings according to the same "blueprint", but instead preferred to make every human being a singular entity with a unique intellectual and emotional character and own goals and aspirations in life. Similarly, the cultural specificity of communities is not viewed negatively and is recognized as an attractive prerequisite for communication, exchange, and mutual knowledge; "O you mankind! We have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes so that you may know each other." (Quran: 49:13) The individual and collective specificity are the primary causes of difference and dispute and sometimes of conflict, which may be defined as a contradiction or incompatibility of goals that may take the form of interests or values relating to the temporal or spiritual realm. Moreover, conflict, when well managed, is perceived in the Islamic tradition as a driving force that can bring positive social change

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and (re-) establish justice at all levels, which constitutes a cardinal value in Islam. On the other hand, conflict resolution is viewed by Muslims as a religious duty. It is reported that the Prophet Mohammed once asked some of his companions: "Do you want to know what is more valuable than fasting, praying, and almsgiving?" They answered: "Yes." He then said: "It is to restore the links between conflicting parties."

3. Goals versus Positions

The positions adopted by the conflict parties do not necessarily reflect, explicitly, the goals in contradiction, and may be expressed in a language relating to either the temporal or the spiritual. If we limit the space of analysis to two dimensions: a) religious (a parameter associated with the spiritual order), and b) political, in the broadest sense of the term (a parameter associated with the temporal order), then the four configurations shown in Diagram 1 are theoretical possibilities.
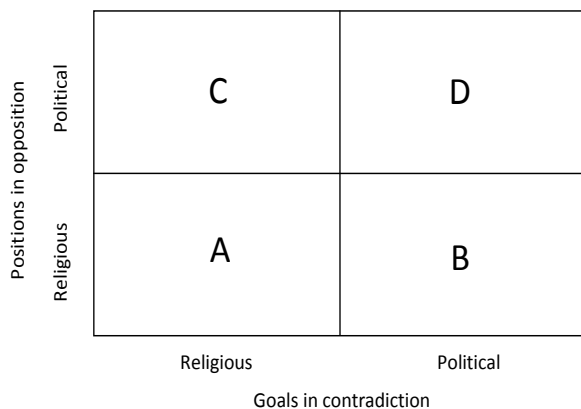

Diagram 1: Categories of conflict defined by the religious or political nature of the goals in contradiction and opposed positions.

It is useful to distinguish three categories of "conflicts with religious dimensions":

A) A conflict involving a contradiction of religious goals that manifests itself in terms of opposition of religious positions;
B) A conflict involving a contradiction of political goals that manifests itself in terms of opposition of religious positions;
C) A conflict involving a contradiction of religious goals that manifests itself in terms of opposition of political positions.

Other mixed configurations are also possible involving contradictory goals under the spiritual and the temporal that manifest themselves in terms of opposition of religious or political positions (center of diagram 1).

4. Typology of conflicts in/involving the Arab world

Based on the practical experience with a number of conflicts in the Arab world (Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Somalia, Sunni/Shi'ite, al-Qaida/US administration) and on the study of what is called "political Islam", most conflicts in or involving the Arab world seem to belong to category B. The fact that such conflicts belong to category B can be explained by:

- The failure to master the political language, due to the political deadlock and the impoverishment of political culture in the Arab world after decades of occupation and tyranny;
- The formulation of grievances and discontent and the expression of claims in a mastered religious language that is rich in vocabulary relating to the issue of justice, conceived as a social bond, a source of legitimacy, and a means of legitimization of the discourse;
- The feeling, largely shared among the Arab-Muslim peoples, that the international system of positive law consistently fails to address their distress.

Often, these conflicts are falsely regarded as belonging category A, and this misperception can be explained by:

- The lack of effort committed to analyze this type of conflict and to explore the real underlying contradictions;
- The desire of one of the parties to instill such a perception in order to isolate the other party and to deprive it of support or sympathy in public opinion;
- The desire of a third party to impart such a perception, for reasons (legitimate or not) often external to the conflict.

5. Examples of conflicts in/involving the Arab world

5.1. The Algerian conflict

The most explicit example, and the one nearest to the author, is the Algerian civil war that began in 1991, which was presented to the public opinion for over a decade, through the media and also by "experts" in Arab and Muslim world affairs, in conflict, and in terrorism, as a religious war led by medieval fanatics against the modern republic. However, over time, this perception proved not to be accurate for the following reasons:

• Although one of the conflicting parties uses religious rhetoric, the conflict has been shown to be essentially political in nature. The respective goals of the conflict parties relate to the temporal and mainly concern fundamental rights and freedoms such as respect for identity, political participation, equitable distribution of wealth, etc.
• Both "Islamists" and "Secularists" are found in both conflict parties (Le Pouvoir, or the political establishment, vs. the opposition), which proves that the divide in Algeria is not ideological, but political.

5.2. The "cartoon crisis"

In 2006 the Cordoba Foundation led a mediation process between the Danish authorities and a group of NGOs from the Arab-Muslim world over the crisis caused by the "Faces of Mohammed" cartoons published on 30 September 2005 by the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten*. The protests in the Muslim world, which took a violent form in a few cases, were often expressed in religious terms, postulating a clash between Islam and the West. However, during the dialog between the Danish and Muslim delegations, the underlying goals of the latter were found to be not as religious as they seemed in the first place. The Muslim delegation stated that the situation in the Muslim world is characterized by intense popular widespread anger, together with a feeling that the honor and values held sacred by Muslims are being trampled, and said that the crisis was indicative of the resentment of Muslims against Western policies vis-à-vis the Muslim world: various forms of aggression, particularly the military invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (Denmark being involved in both cases).

6. Methodological Implications

Based on the observations made concerning the typology of conflicts in or involving the Arab world, the operational methodology advocated to treat this type of conflict is similar to transformational methods used in mathematics and physical sciences to facilitate the resolution of systems of complex equations. These methods consist of transforming the equations and reformulating them in a space where their resolution is easier, then reconverting the solution and reformulating it in the original space. In the context of conflict resolution, this method consists of the following steps:

1) Listen directly to the conflict parties, separately, and avoid relays that may alter their discourse and create a bias;
2) Decode the language used by the conflict parties, and translate it in terms of goals (transformation allowing the transition from religious to the political space);
3) Analyze the goals of the conflict parties and identify the points where they are at odds;
4) Proceed with legitimization of the goals of the conflict parties in their law system(s);
5) Find a way to transcend the contradictions (this is the most difficult task and requires expertise and the ability to think laterally);
6) Formulate the solution in the language used by the conflict parties, to facilitate its acceptability (inverse transformation from the political space back to the religious).

This process of decoding and recoding is elaborate, since it obviously requires sufficient mastery of the social, legal, religious, and cultural systems involved, as well as sufficient familiarity with the vocabulary used. But it is also rewarding, since it provides an efficient way to attain a sustainable conflict resolution.

Creating shifts: Using arts in conflicts with religious dimensions

Michelle LeBaron[1] interviewed by Simon J A Mason

Abstract

Conflicts can be addressed productively by using arts-based approaches as a part of intervention repertoires. These tools allow participants to access deeper levels of meaning and identity than classical, rationally-based mediation approaches. They broaden assessments of conflicts, introduce complexity into people's understanding of each other and of the issues, and thus may resolve impasses in previously blocked situations. When religious dimensions are at play in a conflict, approaches based on reasoning are severely limited in revealing core meanings, values, patterns, and aesthetics that are implicitly involved because peoples' logics may be different. Arts-based approaches can change the mode or way of paying attention among those in the room, whether before, during, or after more conventional negotiation processes. These approaches also rehumanize people and foster capacities for empathy and creativity. The specific family of tools referred to in this interview is known as expressive arts and were developed by Paolo Knill and others.

Expressive arts activities are not a "free for all", but have their own structures and integrity. They may decenter participants in a conflict, temporarily moving them from frontal engagement in issues. Experience with multi-modal arts activities can help group members generate new awareness of each other and the issues. Paradoxically, by softening the groups' focus via the arts, the group itself can become more sensitive and functional. Expressive arts are useful points on a continuum that also includes more classical mediation techniques, such as Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). Arts activities have to be sensitive to the cultures of the parties attending, and often have to be used in subtle ways. Harvesting the experiences and link-ing back into conventional processes can be of great assistance in resolving practical issues.

Introduction

Simon: Let me introduce you to the reader before I ask you some questions on the use of arts-based approaches in dealing with conflicts related to culture and religion. Michelle LeBaron is Professor of Law and Director of the University of British Columbia's Program on Dispute Resolution. Her research focuses on how the arts can foster belonging and social cohesion across cultural and world-view differences.

I have four questions: First, what are arts-based approaches to conflict resolution? Second, how can they be specifically useful in conflicts with religions dimensions? Third, what are the practical structures, guidelines, and steps of an arts intervention? And fourth, how do you respond to some of the concerns that often arise as regards to the use of arts in conflict transformation, e.g., that they are too soft, touchy-feely, and therapeutic?

Michelle: Let me start with a concrete example of how arts were used in a specific mediation case, and then answer your questions one by one.

There was a case in Canada involving a very big public policy conflict. This conflict involved politics, the allocation of resources, and world views – i.e., arties' values and ordering of values. It was a multi-party process of about 18 different people representing much larger constituencies. At a certain point in their work with each other, the parties came to impasse, even though they were being assisted by very able mediators. They had worked hard, but they could not find a way to move beyond that impasse, no matter which techniques were used. They were stuck. So they decided to take a break. The break was a prelude to breaking up entirely and saying: "Well, we can't fix this right now; we can't come to an agreement."

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One of the groups represented at the table was the youth constituency. They were under 20-year-olds who said: "We have an interest in how these resources are used." During the break, they asked the mediators whether they could do a little piece for everyone after the break. So the youth did a kind of break-dance, a whole dance sequence they had just spontaneously developed during break, which portrayed and worked with some characters at the table, using a bit of humor, but also animating and dramatizing the issues they had been speaking about. The others at the table were surprised and taken back. There was humor and laughter, but also a sense of shift in the room. Little bits of talk followed, and when people refocused on the issues, they were able to resolve a very complex set of problems. The mediators observed that that piece by the youth changed everything. It was a moment of shift.

If people keep going on the same trajectory, they remain caught up in the same conflict in the same way. In many religious-political conflicts, a shift is needed. The Canadian case was one of many examples where I have seen shifts happen through some moment of ritual, a time of stepping outside 'business as usual.' The arts help us do that because, even if we say in our rational minds: "I do not know how to do this, I do not know how to move forward, or what else to do," there is a part of us that knows; sometimes we need to get our rational minds out of the way and tap into that knowing.

Arts-based approaches: going beyond the rational

The spectrum of arts-based approaches and the use of expressive arts in conflict transformation are as old as history. Before we had theories about conflict resolution and apparently more sophisticated ways of intervening in conflict, we used the rituals, ambiguity and the expressiveness embedded in arts to address conflicts, including or especially conflicts related to world-views, religion, and politics. Indigenous cultures use dance and feasting to mark times when two previous enemies come together and find a way to create a new rapprochement. So we have that tradition in our human history.

In contrast, more recent approaches to addressing conflict reveal a more rationalist, instrumental bias. Yet these approaches have been limited

in their success. If the whole constellation of methods for 'scientific' ways of resolving conflict were truly enough, then we should have reduced the number of conflicts that we are facing in the world, and certainly the violence attached to them. I do not think we have done this to the extent many of us dream could be possible.

I think of arts-based approaches as a whole family of tools that feature creativity, or "unconventional viability," in the words of Tatsushi Arai. They are only unconventional because in less traditional or non-indigenous cultures, we have given them up. They were actually quite conventional when societies were less mobile and more intact; then all kinds of rituals for reconciliation were used. Arts-based approaches include performative arts such as theater, making vignettes, creating poems, making sculptures or creating rituals as in the earlier example. They welcome sensing and feeling over thought and analysis. They allow people to step aside from an intense focus on the conflict itself, its substance and dimensions, and instead get into that terrain which is much harder to name and frame in exact ways, yet is absolutely vital to the dynamics that are going on. Arts-based approaches help people go beyond the rational to a more complete level of involvement and insight.

Using arts in conflicts with religious dimensions
Especially in religious conflicts, much of what fuels difference is about world-views and cosmologies. These dimensions are so deeply embedded in identity and habits of being that they are very hard to access and many aspects of them are really not negotiable. I would argue that they should not be negotiable. I was reading a book recently about why religion is superstition and why God cannot possibly exist. This author thought he was making an air-tight case that religion is superstition and can be discarded all together. But then he talked about the death of his mother and how after she passed away he could still sense her, feel her being in communication with him, and he said that this was a great mystery to him. He then found ways to explain it away, but as I read it, I thought: We can do all sorts of rational things to explain away or analyze why conflicts involving religion ought to be dealt with in traditional ways as with other political conflicts, but in fact, cosmological conflicts call for different approaches. Even for someone like this so-called modern scholar who says he has

discarded all of them, religion and ideas about the bigger picture are present. If they are present and implicated in a conflict, we need a way to access them. If we cannot bring them into the conversation, or into the frame of what is relevant, we cannot really touch the essence of what is really going on. Their texture, nuance and mystery cannot be analyzed with sequential logics, but they nonetheless exist. We can be instrumental, we may be able to manipulate, or - if you want a less Machiavellian word - we can work with and massage aspects of the conflict, but we are not accessing its essence. This will leave people at best feeling unsatisfied, and at worst could escalate conflict.

Arts-based approaches can be used not only to foster reconciliation, but from the very start of any engagement in conflict. They may play a role in what we call conflict analysis, where parties and issues are identified. Sometimes we get these analyses wrong, particularly as an outsider coming in. For example, many people framed the Northern Ireland conflict as solely a religious conflict. Accordingly, they worked to get Protestants and Catholics together. Of course, this conflict was about religion, but not only about religion; there were many more dimensions and complexities.

Sometimes, arts approaches can help thicken and deepen understandings of a situation and introduce unspoken factors, which may be obvious to the parties or just below the surface. The terrain of the sacred often remains unmentioned because it is the kind of terrain that is more amenable to candlelight than to the spotlight. If, as conflict interveners, we come in with the spotlight, we may not surface it. Arts-basedapproaches contribute to a nuanced approach. So they are an important tool for assessment and for convening, for naming and beginning to understand the complexities of a political-religious conflict.

A conflict transformation process never progresses in a straight line or follows a single strategy; a whole family of responses and strategies are needed that change as different dynamics arise. If you read the stories of invention, creative channels are often opened up by stepping away from an intense focus on the issue. The inventor goes for a walk, does something else, changes modes. It makes sense that when the mode being tried does not work,

it is worth trying a different one. The arts take us directly into the realm of the symbolic, the realm where meaning is surfaced through action, where identity is revealed in all of its facets. This realm is really important because religious-political conflicts are rooted in the symbolic domain. They do have material and relational aspects, but if interventions do not tap that symbolic domain and address meaning-making and clashes of meaning-making, they cannot be successful.

Religion is more than just values. One of the neglected dimensions is the aesthetic. Every theology, every cosmology has an aesthetic component, a way that it is beautiful to believers. This beauty is usually expressed in rituals that touch the core of the teachings. While religion is related to values, it is also related to the deeper essence of sacred and aesthetic experience that makes religion so compelling. The arts help us touch and share these mysteries and find commonality even across different religions. Awareness of commonality arises from the respect for mystery that can be acknowledged between two devout peoples even when they have very different perspectives.

Words are often inadequate to 'explain' religion. More of the values, perspectives and nuances of religious behavior can be conveyed through the arts than if people try to describe them in words. For example, a Muslim might be able to describe appropriate behaviors during Ramadan, but it would be harder to convey the essence of the experience of observing it. An outsider might get a much richer sense if a group of believers created a sculpture that reflected their experiences of Ramadan. In the sculpture, the observer would see not only aspects of Ramadan observance, but also the richness that lives between the lines. It is what lies between the lines that reflects the values, aesthetics, attitudes, and ways people stand in relation to something. The tableau may feature people in quite different poses, reflecting their diverse experiences of Ramadan. The multi-model and flexible approach of expressive arts allows some complexities within the group to emerge. We can't imagine that any group who are Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, or adherents of any other cosmology, see life the same way. They see it in vastly different ways. And the key to addressing complex religious-political conflicts is to recognize

the diversity, the complexity, and the nuances within the groups. The arts are a powerful way to expose and explore these dimensions.

An example comes from my experience with conflict over abortion. Involved in this issue are not only two sides, but many different people with vastly different perspectives. If athird party can get those involved on both sides to realize the complexities within and between their groups, then there are many more opportunities to build practical bridges for resolution than when they see each other in terms of clear and exclusive binaries.

Structure and guidelines of arts in conflict transformation

Let me talk about the importance of structure, the role of the facilitator, the need for guidelines, and some of the steps or phases arts-based processes may involve.

Structure: Expressive arts are not created in a free-for-all, but in a structured environment. It is that structure that protects participants from being lost. It would not make sense to have a structured mediation process, and then a phase of arts free-for-all. Rather, it is important to structure the arts activity within an atmosphere of exploration with attention to timing, framing, and goals for activities. So using the arts is not about reversing back to a pre-school play mentality. It is about inviting participants to explore and see what happens inside a very different kind of structure.

A ritual will always have its own order. If we think of the way that the Christian mass proceeds, it is very particular and the order and sequence are critical. This is true of any sacred ritual. Similarly, in expressive arts, there is always a particular kind of structure. One thing expressive arts practitioners talk about is "decentering." The arts are often used to 'decentre' a group, or get them away from what they think is or must be, helping them literally move into what could be. As a process continues, it is facilitated to coherence and integration so that by the time it is finished; people are back in their comfort zones, but perhaps with new awareness and perspectives.

The facilitator: The role of the facilitator is design and monitor the experience, and to intervene if things get stuck. Facilitators seem themselves always as part of the relational system, leading the group to explore kaleidoscopic ways of seeing and being. Of course, the facilitator always carries responsibility for where the process goes and keeping people safe. Facilitators are both inside and apart from the process, monitoring its parts and its overall, constantly changing dynamics.

Guidelines: In expressive arts approaches, guide-lines are designed to provide structure while moving away from contrived or clichéd forms. Processes usually start with warm-ups to help participants step out of self and image conscious-ness. Beginning with a warm-up can help partici-pants develop a sense of freedom and an aware-ness of subtlety and mindfulness. For example, when co-creating a mural, participants need to be confident that no one is going to judge them. Expressive arts is not about aesthetic evaluation; it is about exploration and expression. The idea is to see what emerges when 'low skill, high sensitivity' activities are offered. People may be anxious about arts activities because of their self-image as not creative. This is why it is important to emphasize that using arts is not about artistic excellence or creating a juried product, it is rather about engagement with others in sensitive ways. The key is to be open to what is happening in all of its different dimensions and facets.

Steps in the process: Once the arts activity has been introduced along with guidelines, frameworks and a warm-up, the group is ready for multi-modal arts activities. These activities include moving among arts modalities according to the needs and opportunities of the context and the inspiration of the facilitator as cued by the group. This is followed by harvesting, reflecting, and observing the experience, without analyzing it. Only after this non-analytical harvesting does the group return to problem-solving processes.

This approach to using arts in multi-modal ways is important for various reasons. Following an activity like joint painting with other arts activities can lead to breakthroughs and new connections. For example, participants who have just created a mural may be asked to take a particular image from it that strikes them and write a poem or a rap,

or to develop a theme from the mural and make a sculpture in small groups. In other words, they are asked to weave what has already been created into another mode of expression. This might happen two, three or four times so that there is not just one creation, artistic project, or rhythm. In this way, participants begin to relate to different facets of issues, diverse sides of each other, and complexities of interrelated issues. Using multi-modal arts fosters multi-dimensionality in how issues and counterparts are perceived.

The final phase, called 'harvesting,' is vital. Here, it is essential for participants to resist evaluation or analysis, remaining in observation and reflection. They might reflect on what they noticed about the mural or what they observed in themselves as they wrote a poem. Harvesting involves phenomenological descriptions that help participants to particularize some of the things that arose in the course of their engagement. As they explore connections and observations without evaluating, participants discover insights that can inform their ongoing work.

After harvesting, more conventional modes of engagement can again be used. Participants generally need to generate concrete outcomes in relation to issues that divide them. The fruits of the expressive arts harvest can help them to move forward by giving them original, nuanced material from which to draw. In addition, the group rituals that expressive arts offer also lend a new rhythm that may become a touchstone for the process. So when people are negotiating a peace agreement, they might reference their arts experiences and say: "I feel right now just as I felt when I was thrown off balance in the dance." Expressive arts has given them a language to talk about their experiences and perhaps correct course during negotiations. It provides a choice other than lapsing into the mutual accusations and negative labeling that might have characterized earlier communications. Referencing expressive arts experiences can also encourage parties to take some responsibility for their participation. For example, in a dance exercise, it is up to them to maintain balance. They may relate to others, but the locus of control is inside of them. Remembering this may help participants take responsibility for their participation in negotiations. In these ways, expressive arts experiences become helpful

anchors in the difficult work of negotiating practical outcomes.

Responding to concerns about the use of arts

Some concerns have been raised that arts-based rituals might be culturally biased. All rituals carry cultural content; at the same time, it is possible to facilitate activities that do not borrow expressly from the traditions of any participant. Expressive arts facilitators look for common themes that might be echoed in rituals composed with the group. It is important not to impose rituals, but to think about drawing forth or co-creating rituals. These rituals will need to have resonance with the group, but not be biased toward one or the other side. Arts activities free participants from pressures to conform to others' expectations and blend their own aesthetic sensibility in creating a group product. And that product, be it a mural or a mosaic, has its own structure which might offer spaciousness to participants who felt confined.

Sometimes it is said that arts-based approaches are too therapeutic or soft. This concern may be addressed in two ways. On one hand, arts-based approaches are not completely distinct from tools used in more traditional approaches to negotiation and mediation. For example, in many peace processes, mediators work to invite confidence-building measures (CBMs) between the parties. These can range from jointly taking a walk, going for a picnic, or listening to the news together. These kinds of CBMs are on the same continuum as arts-based approaches because they are embodied and experiential, and they divert attention from an analytic focus on issues. They build rapport, yield awareness of complexity and give participants relief from a single-minded focus on the issues. Sports diplomacy is another area that is related to expressive arts. When parties attend a rugby match, play ping pong or participate in an athletic exchange, they are also experiencing the domain of the aesthetic.

Ironically, when many people negotiate, their engagement may be denuded of the aesthetic dimension when they need it the most. I would say along with John O'Donohue that we need beauty as human beings, and yet we tend to take all the beauty away and sit in generic rooms and try to find solutions. The family of experiential approaches that includes expressive arts introduces not only

beauty, but the gifts of shared experiences to processes, generating positive emotions. Conflict resolution practitioners are currently embracing a flowering of approaches that are holistic, imaginative and experiential as Stephen and Ellen Levine have demonstrated in their new book *Art in Action.*

When groups are afraid of or resistant to arts-based approaches, it is important to be very subtle. Facilitators should not invite huge leaps outside participants' comfort zones. Groups of business leaders should not be invited to dance, conjuring images of tutus and embarrassing moves. They will either refuse to engage, or they won't do it with their hearts and so they won't profit from it. Here is a story from Canada that illustrates how effective arts approaches can be, even if they are used in very small, subtle ways. There was a group of people who were involved in multi-party lawsuit that had been going on for some years and cost huge amounts of money. At a meeting of this group, most participants were lawyers representing parties who had come toge ther for a one day mediation to see if they could resolve differences before going to trial. The mediator was thinking of arts-based approaches, but he also realized there was very little scope for anything 'outside the box.' These people may have been there to either check the box, and say "we tried", or to really make progress, but they certainly were not there to draw pictures. The mediator could not have asked them to do it and retained credibility.

The mediator came in and said: "We have an agenda and we are going to follow this work plan circulated in advance." This satisfied people's expectations and set them at ease. And then he said: "But just before we do, I wonder if we could do introductions. Most of you have met, but some of you do not know each other. Would you please give us your name and say something, as you do, about your connection to this place." The mediation was taking place in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, a very beautiful place. People began to introduce themselves, saying things like: "Do you see that hill over there? That is where I proposed to my wife." These things made their identities more complex to each other and brought aesthetic language into the room. They looked across the table with surprise as they heard things that did not fit with

their knowledge or image of the other. It was a tiny variation on how things tend to be done, but it was enough to shift them out of their single-minded focus on 'business as usual.' This activity yielded a more humanized, aesthetic awareness in the room, which the mediator drew on as the day progressed.

Following introductions, the mediation went ahead in a conventional way and ended in an agreement that averted trial. The mediator believes that the turning point toward success happened during the introductions. Introducing physical and aesthetic language was enough to shift the dynamics of the situation. This may be all a third party can do, yet that slight difference may have a huge impact.

Conclusions

Expressive arts processes help to deepen understandings of issues, ourselves and others, and infuse conflict resolution processes with fertile resources. Analyses tend to narrow and particularize issues, drawing on specific kinds of logic. One of the great challenges when intervening across different cultures and religions is that one logic is not the same as another. The arts give an experience of alternative logics in a way that makes it more likely that they will be respected and understood in the process of negotiating lasting outcomes.

One of the great failures of violent conflict is lack of empathy. It is hard to be engaged in violent conflict if you cannot empathize with the other side. The potency of the arts is in their capacity to re-humanize and foster empathy. The arts engage participants in feeling and sensing those things that are somatically known including human interconnectedness. We all have physical, intuitive wisdom. It is that same wisdom that tells us: "Don't walk down that street." You may never know why you did not walk down that street, but somehow you knew to avoid it. The arts help us tap into intuition, accessing mystery and meaning that may be beyond the grasp of rational analysis, but at the heart of conflict and conflict transformation, particularly in the realm of political/religious conflicts.

Diapraxis:
Towards Joint Ownership and Co-citizenship

Lissi Rasmussen[1]
interviewed by Damiano Angelo Sguaitamatti

Abstract

In this interview, Lissi Rasmussen describes the roots of diapraxis, its application in different contexts as well as its limitations. She introduced the term in 1988: "While dialogue indicates a relationship in which talking together is central, diapraxis indicates a relationship in which a common praxis is essential. Thus by diapraxis I do not mean the actual application of dialogue but rather dialogue as action. We need a more anthropological contextual approach to dialogue where we see diapraxis as a meeting between people who try to reveal and transform the reality they share."[2] One of the main diapraxis projects conducted by the Centre for Co-existence is a Christian-Muslim care project in hospitals and prisons in the Copenhagen area.[3]

1   Rev. Dr. Theol. Lissi Rasmussen is the chairwoman of the board of the Islamic-Christian Study Centre (IKS, www.ikstudiecenter. dk) - Centre for Co-existence. The Centre was established in May 1996 by a group of Christians and Muslims and is supported by Christian and Muslim organizations and societies. The overall purpose of the center is to "build positive relations between citizens with Christian and Muslim background through cooperation on equal footing and to work for equal citizenship – nationally and internationally."

2   Lissi Rasmussen, From Diapraxis to Dialogue. Christian-Muslim Relations. In: Lars Thunberg et al. (eds.), Dialogue in Action, New Delhi: Prajna Publications 1988), S. 282.

3   The Christian-Muslim care work for ethnic minorities in hospitals and prisons was started by the Islamic-Christian Study Centre in 2003 and comprises an Ethnic Resource Team (ERT) consisting of nearly 40 volunteers of various ages and ethnic and religious backgrounds. Many of them have a background in healthcare, including as doctors, nurses, and pharmacologists. All ERT members have undergone training in care work and have been selected for their maturity and ability to communicate. ERT members receive regular supervision and are offered training and education through courses, conferences, events, etc. The project also involves hospital and prison clergy, psychologists, and theological educators. The project is conducted by a part-time paid coordinator. The overall task of the team involves building bridges between ethnic minorities and hospital staff in Copenhagen area, including prison hospitals. Their main job is to visit patients and family members of other ethnic backgrounds than their own and to teach and advise hospital staff about the background of ethnic minority patients. They are available around the clock. The work in prison includes mentor arrangements for youth in prison, among other things. See also http://ressourceteam.dk/.

The Origins of Diapraxis

Damiano Sguaitamatti: Where does the concept of diapraxis come from?

Lissi Rasmussen: Diapraxis is a concept or model for conflict resolution that was developed in 1988 and later adopted by a variety of organizations and individuals in missiology and in interfaith action. Today, diapraxis is no longer confined to religious practice. Indeed, it is widely used in relationships between believers and non-believers, as well as among secular organizations.

I felt that the term "dialog" was too focused on communication about faith and theology and that there was not enough interaction between human beings – involving larger relationships of living, experiencing, and working together. There was a need not only for a discursive *dialog*, but for a cooperative-discursive diapraxis. In other words, there had to be a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. My inspiration to emphasize the practical aspects of religion (equality, reciprocity, collective ownership) came partly from living and doing research in Africa in the 1970s and early 1980s – especially in Tanzania, where the concept of *Ujamaa* (common ownership of land, joint cultivating of crops, etc.) brought Christians and Muslims together and made it easier to avoid or overcome conflicts.

How Diapraxis Works

Damiano Sguaitamatti: In your 1988 paper you say that dialog is "outdated". Why is dialog no longer suitable for tackling today's conflicts?

Lissi Rasmussen: I have talked about different models of conflict resolution; there is not just one model. However, in Western Europe, for instance, where there is no systematic violence against different ethnic and religious communities and where violence is less visible, conflicts take place more in the perceptions and minds of people. The question then becomes how to bring people

together and create the confidence that is lacking; especially in situations where religion is used to gain votes and to increase the fears in the society, in particular among the majority.

There were many dialog initiatives, especially after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US, in many European countries. It is certainly good and useful when members of diverse faiths come together to study theology together in order to know more about their respective religions. However, people can meet for dialog and then part ways again without progressing in terms of coexistence and interaction. In order to create lasting *relationships*, you must interact on the ground and, if possible, *work* together beyond mere theological studies.

Quite often, dialog is perceived as communication between two or more partners who are basically *different*. We tend to generalize and believe that the other belongs to a confined community and culture that can be defined in a static way. However, with the interplay that takes place today between people across national and regional borders – with different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds – our identity derives from values of different cultures and religions. Ethnic and religious borders as well as borders between political and ethical values are broken down, as we see now in North African and Middle Eastern countries. As a consequence, we all carry layers of different cultural, ethnic, and religious identities. This is why I say that dialog, in the way we normally understand the word, is outdated.

What is happening now in the Arab world – the so-called "Arab spring" – shows that that we are not that different anymore. We affect each other through the internet, on Facebook, Twitter, and so on. Young people in the Arab countries know exactly what is going on outside their country, in the West and elsewhere. They are aware of the conditions of youth there. Furthermore, we no longer have monolithic cultures or religions; all of them are influenced by each other. The issue therefore is not about relating to others who are basically different from me. The encounter takes place both *between* human beings and *within* human beings. There is an encounter of different cultures within each of us. This frightens many people.

Therefore, what we need – also in situations of conflict – is not just "interreligious dialog" as a discursive practice. We need to build relationships and work with each other in commonprojects for the common good. This is what is happening in Egypt and Tunesia at the moment. What al-Qaida failed to achieve in more than a decade, what the US and their allies could not achieve from the top, was done in a few months from the bottom in a common struggle that could be called diapraxis: decade-long dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt were removed with the hope to establish more democratic and inclusive forms of government. Youth across borders, Muslims and Christians are struggling together, creating the kind of trust, solidarity, and togetherness, which gives them faith in their future.

Damiano Sguaitamatti: Why is diapraxis more suitable than dialog and what does it aim to achieve?

Lissi Rasmussen: Sometimes, Muslims criticize the almost ritualized way in which Christians talk about the necessity of dialog, without going beyond this cliché. The notion is not put into practice. There are exceptions, of course: In Europe there has been a paradigm shift. Some organizations and churches have gone beyond dialog and are working together with people from other faith in a more reciprocal way, in an arrangement where both parts have ownership in the interaction.

Diapraxis, on the other hand, means working together, having common experiences, having a common goal. It is much stronger than just talking together. This is what I have seen in my own country. Shared work experience yields results at three different levels (at least):

1. Participants achieve certain project goals, such as awareness of citizenship rights and fulfilling a need among people, bringing people together, pointing to problems in society.

2. The interaction itself, regardless of the project goals, has an effect on the individuals involved in the work. They get to know each other as well as aspects of the other person's religion. Members of minority groups may feel that they are part of society and have a role to fulfill. They feel needed and *share the ownership* over a certain activity.

3. The third effect is felt by those who benefit from the diapraxis work in a wider context. In our counseling work, these are patients and prisoners whose self-esteem has been raised and who feel it is very important that there are people who take their needs and interest seriously.

Diapraxis and Religion

Damiano Sguaitamatti: Even though diapraxis is not confined to religion, it seems diapraxis is strongly linked to it. What is the reason to link religion and diapraxis?

Lissi Rasmussen: Religion is but one of different ways of relating to each other. This is the area I have been working in. But I know of two centers, one here in Denmark (Institut Diapraxis) and one in the US (DiaPraxis: Awakening the Spirit of Creative Collaboration), that do not focus on religion. They work on conflict resolution in a much broader way. I am sure that one could think of other contexts where diapraxis could be used. After all, the principle is not overly complex and a familiar element of pedagogy or psychology! Even children may stop fighting if you get them to work with each other. Sharing practical work is more fruitful than just discussing.

The reason why we use religion in diapraxis is related to today's political situation. Common national and international challenges have become more urgent. There is a need for a more authentic and just international and national social order (democracy). Climate change, unequal political and economic power relations, lack of inclusion, and oppression are urgent challenges for all of us. All these sources of conflict have been globalized, especially since 2001. A conflict in one part of the world may provoke acts of revenge or intervention elsewhere. Hence, solutions need to be crafted across religious and cultural boundaries and cannot be confined to specific communities (e.g. the West).

Moreover, religion is increasingly being used and abused politically and ideologically in order to incite hatred and violence. Religion is now seen as part of the conflicts. The precise causes vary, of course, from conflict to conflict. However, religion is never the root of the conflict. I cannot think of a conflict in history or today, where religion is the root cause of the conflict. It depends, of course,

on how you define religion. But people are not fighting over theological issues and doctrines. Rather, their differences arise from membership in different religious communities, because the membership is often congruent with the parties involved in a conflict. This is what happens especially in Nigeria and Indonesia. This is also true of Denmark: the daily conflicts in our country are not about religious doctrines as such. It is about lack of inclusion, perceptions of the others caused by media and politicians.

Hence, religion becomes a part of a conflict, which is normally ethnic or political, e.g. about power and territories. Most of the conflicts in Nigeria are about land ownership and who came first. Who has a right to live here? Who are the real residents? The conflict may, for instance, pit settlers against herders. Religion then becomes part of the identity and is therefore part of the cultural identity and conflict. Sometimes it becomes part of an opposing or exclusive identity *against* others, as in former Yugoslavia.

It is therefore important for us as religious people to say that we have a responsibility here to make sure religion becomes a means of cooperation and peace, rather than part of the problem. By engaging in diapraxis on concrete societal challenges, theological issues and disagreements can be tackled in more meaningful and constructive ways. By focusing on the concrete issues for the communities involved, we may challenge the fundamental epistemological assumptions that have constituted the foundations of our efforts in the past.

Finally, religion is also a very strong motivating factor for our struggle for peace, even in conflicts where religion does not play a role. In most cases, the content of diapraxis, of the common projects, is not religion itself. Religion may be the motivator for working together. This is also why al-Qaida uses religion. I do not know how religious Osama bin Laden was in terms of being faithful and pious. But he used religious arguments because you need something powerful to excite people and to get them to do what you want.

Damiano Sguaitamatti: If diapraxis is confined to religion, it may alienate secular people. How do you tackle this challenge?

Lissi Rasmussen: I do not think diapraxis can only take place between religious people. It could also be an opportunity for religious communities to work with secular NGOs. Actually, that is quite important. Otherwise, there is a danger of becoming a kind of religious elite or alliance against all the "godless people" around us. This way of thinking excludes all the other people that are more secular. Our Centre has therefore been very aware of working with non-religious groups, such as human rights groups.

Depending on the country and context, there may be more or less confrontation between radical secularists and religious people, for instance, when it is argued that religion has to be excluded from the public space. Are religious arguments valid in political debates? In this respect, Christians and Muslims have a common problem. A relevant application of diapraxis here might be to promote the inclusion or recognition of religious views in general. Some of the interreligious councils are working with Muslims and Jews on such issues. In Denmark, some independent churches want to have the same rights as the state church.

But conditions vary significantly from country to country. In Norway, for instance, the Human-Etisk Forbund (Norwegian Humanist Association) has equal rights with the religious communities.[4] And they are part of the interreligious council. This would be unthinkable here in Denmark. Here, atheists do not see themselves as a new religion. At the same time, Norwegian atheists can be very critical of religious people.

Religion is a motivator. On the one hand, motivation can stem from theological concepts: for instance, the basis for cooperation may be the common faith in God who has created human beings, which imposes upon us the responsibility to treat human beings as we want to be treated ourselves. This idea is found in various theological concepts, for instance *khilafa*, a term in Islam that resembles the concept of stewardship as also found in the Bible. So there are theological concepts you can use. On the other hand, cooperation may be motivated by a common religious experience.

Diapraxis helps you to understand why religion (or a value) is important to a specific person. You learn to see it more from within the person you work with than what you have heard from others or in the news and media. The common work may lead to some discussions about values and religion. For instance, does illness come from God, are you allowed to be angry with God when you are in a crisis situation involving illness or suffering? And how do we master such a situation? All these questions come in a much more natural way, and the discussions are much more fruitful than if you just sit down and talk about whether Christ was the son of God or a prophet or whatever, without knowing each other, without having any basis for discussing.

Diapraxis and Power

Damiano Sguaitamatti: There are, however, differences in power between different communities. How does this affect the need for shared ownership?

Lissi Rasmussen: This is very important. When we look at the Middle East, this imbalance is exactly the main problem, and one source of political violence. The West has the power and resources. As a consequence of this power difference, people might be tempted to resort to violence against the powerful. However, what is happening now is that there is an alternative to al-Qaida. The younger generation in many Arab countries is taking its destiny into its own hands – not in opposition or confrontation to the West, as al-Qaida. They have adopted and applied some of the West's values and political views. What this will bring in the future we do not know. We just see that it has to come from below. We cannot impose it from the West. It will be interesting to see how it affects the power (im-) balance.

There is always a power relationship, in any situation. Of course, in Denmark, there is still the perception of a relationship between hosts and guests. From my own experiences in building the Islamic-Christian Study Centre, it is possible to give and maintain this feeling of having common ownership of the cooperation or the diapraxis. It is again my experience that it is easier to achieve if you are actually acting together than talking together. The talking part then becomes more

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4 Note of the editor: for instance, they receive state funds on a per-member basis, like the Norwegian churches.

natural, as does one's understanding of the other side.

Diapraxis and Citizenship

Damiano Sguaitamatti: How does diapraxis differ from other methodologies?

Lissi Rasmussen: Diapraxis and other methodologies are not mutually exclusive. In fact, diapraxis "in process" can easily take the form of co-mediation or translation work. It very much depends on the context. Therefore, there may be different "models" encompassing a variety of methodologies rather than distinct methodologies.

Practice in "diapraxis" is defined as both action and relation. It is action addressed to another human being – a common action and an action addressed to each other. Diapraxis can both be pro-active and re-active. Dialog often follows tensions or clashes that have resulted in mistrust and hostility. However, long-term proactive efforts creating possibilities for lasting co-existence and cooperation are also needed – not least in order to avoid conflict and polarization.

Such efforts could consist of cooperation on common projects, for instance involving humanitarian service, counseling, improvement of living conditions, etc. They may consist of efforts towards including all citizens in the democratic process of a country as equal partners. I therefore have often referred to diapraxis as a pro-active rather than re-active process that prevents crisis and conflict and builds trust between people.

In this respect, co-citizenship is a very relevant concept. The lack of equal citizenship is often a source of conflict (for instance, in Denmark or Nigeria). We therefore need to work on the issue of citizenship and work for "*co-citizenship*". This is a dynamic, integrative and inclusive term whose content is defined not in terms of culture and difference but in terms of the rights and duties of every individual. The emphasis is on the horizontal, inviting collective action. Citizenship emphasizes the individual rather than culture, ethnicity, and religion. Its starting point is society as a common project and involves active participation. You may say that the concept of co-citizenship is similar to what is called multiculturalism, i.e., the notion of citizenship that is not based on one single culture but encompasses a variety of cultures and identities. However, multiculturalism again stresses the cultural aspect, whereas co-citizenship stresses the equal rights of all individuals. This is the way people want to be seen: as individuals, not just as part of this or that cultural community.

There are groups of people that are excluded and, although they are born in the country and want to be part of society, are refused admission and treatment as equal citizens. This may result in gang membership, criminal activities, and to some extent also radicalization. I see this as the price of our way of relating to ethnic minorities.

Diapraxis in this situation could provide equal opportunities in society. It would be a political activity, because the main problem is that religious and ethnic minorities are used to gain votes through populist approaches. The way the government makes reference to minorities suggests that they are not members of society, to be served by the government and its ministers, but as problems that society has to get rid of before things can improve. Minorities themselves, especially the young people born and raised in Denmark often adopt this identity and think of themselves as unwanted and problematic.

Another case in point is Nigeria. Discrimination is embedded in the constitution: Citizenship in Nigeria is not linked to one's place of birth or residence, but depends on the parents' and grandparents' citizenships. This obviously creates problems and has an effect on peoples' sense of responsibility. If you do not have citizenship, you may not have rights, and you may also lack a sense of responsibility for the community. Diapraxis is very much about giving the people a sense of responsibility for and within the community.

Importance of Transparency

Damiano Sguaitamatti: Are there any limitations when working with diapraxis based on religion?

Lissi Rasmussen: The goal itself has to be agreed upon. This is a limitation. The way in which the goal is reached can be negotiated. But one has to agree on the goal. In the counseling work at our center, the goal needs to be clear: this is not a missionary project. We are not trying to convert people into Christians or Muslims, but we are trying to help

people in crisis situations. This has to be clear, otherwise we would not succeed. There would be a lack of trust, and mutual trust is indispensable for the work of our center, which started in 1996. This also means that we don't try to convert others to our views. When the trust is there, you can do almost everything you want. This applies not only to the people of the center, but also to the people who benefit from our counseling. Transparency is paramount, and the participants cannot pursue a hidden agenda.

Diapraxis in different contexts: a brief discussion with Rasmussen

Jean-Nicolas Bitter[1]

Abstract

Diapraxis – dialog through practice – is understood and used differently depending on the conflict contexts it is used in, and depending on the way these contexts are read. In some contexts, religion serves as an identity marker, as a label that clarifies membership in a social group and demarks it from the out-group. In other contexts, religion plays a more substantive role as a cohesive factor in a community, and the values and ways a social group uses to make sense of the world and construct reality clashes with that of another community. Diapraxis can be used in both types of contexts, but it will play a different role and focus on different dimensions. There are three dimensions that can be addressed by diapraxis: miscommunication, mistrust, and clashing narratives. In the first context of conflict where religion serves as an identity marker, diapraxis will tend to focus on the first two types of challenges on an interpersonal level, enabling communication and trust-building through joint action. In conflict contexts where religion plays a substantive role, diapraxis focuses first on the community level and can address challenges of miscommunication and mistrust, but also the deeper narratives that are at play and that keep the conflict entrenched. In contexts where the basic narratives are clashing, a step-by-step conflict transformation process built around jointly agreed actions can move actors towards a non-violent form of living together.

Introduction: Different uses of diapraxis

The 14th Dalai Lama once said that in our times, we must go beyond words: Deeds and actions are needed. As a matter of fact, this is what can be observed in numerous experiences of interreligious dialogs that have taken place for decades now. As Lissi Rasmussen notes, there is a need for a dialectical relationship between theory and practice – or between words and actions. This is even more salient in contexts where the protagonists of an envisaged dialog are in violent conflict with each other. Experience shows that in such contexts of violent conflicts between communities, dialog about values alone does not strengthen confidence. To the contrary, dialog may even deepen mistrust, if words are not followed by actions that give meaning to them. Progress can be reached if the focus lies on practical cooperation in issues of common interest.

Diapraxis – dialog through practice – can be understood as action combined with thought that goes hand in hand with a discourse about action. It has developed on the basis of the observation that words are not sufficient to build and transform individual relationships, in Rasmussen's words, nor to build bridges and transform conflicts between communities. Diapraxis is a fairly new concept. Little has been written on how we can underst and and use it. When we try to describe in more detail the concrete uses and functions of diapraxis, it is interesting to realize that there are many variations. The use and function depend on the different contexts in which it is applied and on the modes of reading these contexts.

Based on a cultural and linguistic approach to religions applied to violent conflict settings (see the article on the Cultural Linguistic approach in Part B), RPC's[2] understanding of diapraxis is not contradictory to the way Lissi Rasmussen applies the term, but there are some differences. Her paper (cf. above, in discussion with Damiano Sguaitamatti) offers the opportunity to very briefly shed light on the RPC's uses of the term "diapraxis" by contrasting it to that of Rasmussen. This is also useful in indicating specific aspects of the use of "diapraxis" that depend on the respective context it is used in, and the way this context is read and understood.

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1   Head of the "Religion, Politics, Conflict" Sector of Activity of the Swiss FDFA.

2   "Religion, Politics, Conflict" theme of action of the Swiss FDFA.

Rasmussen refers to different cultural contexts – e.g., Western, Arab, or Sub-Saharan African – when she elaborates on the uses and meaning of diapraxis. In Western Europe, there is a basic common understanding that the common basis of society is citizenship. Conflicts take place more in the perceptions and in the minds of people. Accordingly, diapraxis may focus and seek to build on the idea of citizenship. In the Arab World, where the youthful actors of the so-called "Arab Spring" are connected to what happens outside their country through the internet, people may also take citizenship as a reference point. In Sub-Saharan Africa (Tanzania, Nigeria, in the context of interethnic strife), the notion of the collective may be stronger than the idea of individual citizenship, but in the cities, people may refer to the latter concept.

In these contexts, religion is a matter of membership; it is not the content or substance of religion that make groups different. On the contrary, common principles of living together can be appealed to across religious boundaries, and may even serve as bridges between different groups. In all these contexts, diapraxis brings people together and transforms relationships and individuals from within. It is done on the basis of action and practical experience performed together, with people who have a notion of citizenship, or, as in Sub-Saharan Africa, practical experience of living together. In such cases, religion does not actually play a substantial role other than being part of identifying membership in a social group. Religion plays the role of "identity marker" in such cases. Thus, religion does not have a determining role for the use of diapraxis; hence, as Rasmussen says, diapraxis is not confined to religious practice.

Diapraxis in contexts where religion plays a substantive role

In contrast to contexts marked by a shared view of political reality based on common citizenship as described by Rasmussen, the settings RPC focuses on are different. RPC's reading is that there are contexts in which the worldview and the vision of political reality, respectively, are not shared a priori. In such cases, there is no consensus of the basic political vision, such as how to live together or under which values and rules. Even if there is a widespread consensus on the essential importance of citizenship in Europe and North America, there are exceptions. These exceptions call for a different type of diapraxis, which we outline below. These exceptions can be viewed as islands of communally believed visions, with shared ways of viewing the world and reality. Examples are extreme right-wing or anti-abortionist movements in Europe and the US. Due to the historical development in the US, there are probably more such communal islands there than in Europe.

What about other contexts? In Northern Africa and other regions undergoing political uprisings and transformations, the notion of citizenship appears as a future worth aspiring to, and the uprisings certainly have striven in this direction.[3] But there is no agreed and shared vision of the (future) political reality yet. In Egypt, for example, debates on the role and place of Islam in government and society have been strong and contentious since the uprisings and leading to the elections. Examples include the positions and discourses of Salafist groups, the Muslim Brothers, and other parties and groups with Muslim reference.

RPC works in settings where violent conflicts oppose communities from different worldviews or religions. Accordingly, this entails conflicts in which visions of reality, perceptions of society and justice, and mechanisms for conflict resolution may differ profoundly. Thus, they are not only the object or stake of conflict, but at the same time constitute the highly divergent mechanisms through which conflict is enacted. "World shaping" is the main mechanism at stake here. Membership issues and questions related to identity and in-group and out-group as well as to the boundaries between communities may or may not arise, but they are not essential in the process.

In contexts where there is no shared perception and vision of what holds society together, we argue, a different type of diapraxis is needed. This also entails the need for a specific understanding of "religion". RPC views it as useful for conflict transformation purposes to understand religions or worldviews as matrices of social construction of realities. A religion entails making sense of reality

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3   "Citizenship" is, by the way, not an accurate translation of the locally used term (madaniyya), but our use of the term in this context reflects our understanding of the debate.

and the world. It provides adherents with a lens that shapes perceptions, behavior patterns, and actions.

Different functions of diapraxis

The cultural and linguistic approach to religion and conflict identifies three problems that need to be addressed when violent conflict between communities involves an encounter between worldviews.

Miscommunication: The first locus is the communication problem of misunderstanding. In such contexts, communication is laden with misunderstandings because the matrices, wider logics, or "grammars" that give meaning to utterances or gestures are not shared. Diapraxis – or dialog through practice – will play an important role to help the protagonist understand what the opposing group means with its utterances. This is done in an interaction where protagonists are invited to spell out the practical consequences of their speeches. Rather than rephrasing what has been said in different words, a possible question could be: "Is it correct to say that what you have said has such and such practical consequences?".[4] The conversation should be led by a logic where meaning is checked by clarifying its practical implications. This is important because utterances or key words may take different meanings due to the different grammars or logics present in the interaction. Meaning may be constructed in different ways. The practical effects of utterances are clearer than the utterances themselves, because we lack the wider framework to make sense of them. In this way, we understand what the other side means, because we get a sense of its practical implications. Thus, dialog geared towards problem-solving should be constructed methodologically as "dialog through practice" looking and aiming at a non-violent living together. We may not understand the other side with words, but seeking to understand the practical consequences of what is being said or proposed facilitates understanding and opens the door to co-existence.

Mistrust: The second locus is mistrust between parties. Misunderstandings quite naturally lead

to mistrust between the protagonists. But lack of practical follow-up on speeches deepens that mistrust and gives it a different quality, in the sense that this introduces doubt about the intentions of the protagonists. Our experience shows that dialog about values alone does not strengthen confidence. On the contrary, it often even deepens mistrust, insofar as words are not followed by actions imbuing them with meaning and clarification about the intentions of the protagonists. Here we can attribute another role to diapraxis – it also serves as a practice-oriented shared search for ways of living together with a focus on practical cooperation in issues of common interest that are relevant to the transformation of the conflict. This process is a joint creative exercise of searching for those actions that are both possible within the "grammars" of all the parties involved and desirable for them. The objective is here to identify relevant activities for improving coexistence that are acceptable and agreeable to all groups involved. The activities have to be jointly developed. This is an iterative process that takes time. This process in itself can help ease tensions by creating shared interests, building confidence, and establishing common ground.

Clashing narratives: The third locus goes beyond the issue of mending the communication and mistrust between protagonists. Something deeper is at stake that touches on the narratives at work in the conflict and the will of the actors to co-exist. Taking a step back and using a more "structural" point of view based on a "narrative analysis ofmediation", what is at stake is to address the stalemate between the parties by repeating the enactment of each one's narrative of the conflict. Such a narrative analysis shows that parties repeat behavioral patterns that are entailed in the roles they play and the roles they attribute to others. The implementation of jointly agreed measures relevant for the transformation of the conflict displaces this ongoing conflict pattern by modifying the roles and scripts of each party toward each other. It places the parties on a path that progressively shifts the former conflict lines and cleavages. The third role of diapraxis is thus jointly to implement these activities within the scope of pilot projects, to evaluate their results together, and to continue and to improve the process by repeating the same steps. Such a dialog through

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4 The dialog methodology employed here is different from the style of communication based on rephrasing along the lines of "If I understand you correctly, what you are saying is…", which may not necessarily work in such a setting, since the other group – or the facilitator – does not refer to the same grammar, or lacks the resources needed to rephrase the utterance.

practice represents a step-by-step process of conflict transformation looking at a non-violent form of living together. This iterative process increases the number of joint actions, a process that will, in turn, bring a momentum of change that displaces the existing and entrenched conflict pattern.

Conclusions

RPC experiences (see some of the case studies in Part D) shows that personal relationships and trust are often built through diapraxis, but will not necessarily be the most important outcomes of the process, especially in contexts where the very fundamental questions and assumptions of coexistence are at stake.

In RPC's understanding of diapraxis within the type of contexts where religion plays a substantive role, the focus is on the third challenge of the deeper, underlying narratives that keep a conflict entrenched. The focus is on ways to communicate properly by identifying the challenges at stake, to build trust through jointly agreed action, but above all also to allow the narratives to evolve so as to let parties co-exist. Work on the process that leads to joint action is necessary. Accordingly, diapraxis is understood as an inter-community cognitive, trust-building, and step-by-step conflict transformation process.

Bridging Worlds: Culturally Balanced Co-Mediation

Simon J. A. Mason,[1] Sabrin Kassam[2]

Abstract

This article outlines culturally balanced co-mediation as one strategy to improve the mediation of conflicts dealing with religiously inspired political actors. Co-mediation can lead to greater acceptability because cultural proximity between a party and individual mediators is possible without threatening the overall process, content or outcome impartiality of the mediation team. Culturally balanced co-mediation is also a powerful tool in bridging cultural or religious gaps between the parties to a dispute, as the cultural proximity of the mediators to the parties allows for deeper understanding between the parties and the mediators, which helps the mediators facilitate communication and understanding between the parties.   If culturally balanced co-mediation is aimed at, it is important that the constellation of the co-mediation team should adequately represent the key cultural or religious divides separating the parties, but these are not mirrored one to one. Parties tend to test any mediation team, so the distinction between tactical challenges to the impartiality of the mediation team, and genuine concerns about lack of balance has to be assessed.

Introduction

Co-mediation,[3] sometimes also referred to as team mediation, has been defined as "the cooperation of mostly two (or sometimes more) mediators in mediation".[4] By including different competences in the team, co-mediation can be used as a strategy to overcome some of the challenges commonly encountered by mediators, e.g. lack of leverage, arrogance, partiality, ignorance, inflexibility, haste, and false promises.[5] The benefits of the co-mediation process are wide-ranging. On the one hand, there are practical advantages that can be realized in a wide range of disputes. These include sharing the workload, facilitating training settings,[6] and diversifying, as well as complementing expertise within the mediation team.[7] On the other hand, there are specific strategic advantages to be gained in conflicts that involve religiously inspired political actors, or conflicts where culturally factors play a key role. In conflicts with religious dimensions, co-mediation can be used to increase the acceptability of the mediators, and to bridge different worlds through an understanding of the different worlds within the mediation team.

Besides its advantages, there are also potentially shortcomings in the co-mediation set-up. One

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3 Mediation is understood here in the broadest sense, including neutral low-powered mediation and dialog facilitation. " Mediation is a process of dialog and negotiation in which a third party assists two or more disputant parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict without the use of force. The general goal is to enable the parties to reach agreements they find satisfactory and are willing to implement. Mediation should be regarded as a specialized endeavor, encompassing a body of knowledge and a set of strategies, tactics, skills and techniques." Laurie Nathan, 6 November 2009, "Plan of action to build the AU's mediation capacity".

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4 Fechler, Bernd. Co-mediation in Cross Culture. Inmedio. http://institut-inmedio.de/en/publik/fechler_Co-mediation.pdf

5 Brahimi, Lakhdar and Salman Ahmed. In pursuit of sustainable peace, the seven deadly sins of mediation. New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 2008.

6 Co-mediation is also a useful technique for mediator training. In this sense, there may be one more experienced mediator and one apprentice involved in the mediation of a dispute. This approach serves as a training ground for the novice and allows the novice to gradually gain more and more responsibility. It is important to evaluate the complexity, escalation and power balance of the conflict so as to avoid doing more harm by using a novice. See Lela P. Love and Joseph B. Stulberg. Practice Guidelines for Co-Mediation: Making Certain That "Two Heads Are Better than One" In MEDIATION QUARTERLY. Vol. 13, No. 3, Spring 1996 Jossey-Bass Publishers.

7 Whilst some mediation cases are faced with a dilemma of either giving priority to an extremely skilled and experienced mediator or choosing one who is highly knowledgeable on the case in question, co-mediation avoids this issue and allows for both assets to be represented in the mediation team. See Lela P. Love and Joseph B. Stulberg. Practice Guidelines for Co-Mediation: Making Certain That "Two Heads Are Better than One" In MEDIATION QUARTERLY. Vol. 13, No. 3, Spring 1996 Jossey-Bass Publishers.

of the main criticisms of co-mediation is that if a single person is running a mediation meeting, it can be conducted more clearly, more decisively and more flexibly than with a team of mediators. Single mediators can adapt to the unfolding dynamics without having to be concerned about whether they are upsetting their co-mediator. Co-mediators that are not in sync with each other tend to be clumsier in a mediation process than a single mediator. Nevertheless, there are ways around some of the shortcomings of co-mediation: getting to know each other well, and a clear division of roles either according to functions (e.g., engaging in the fray versus keeping track of the broad picture) or according to phases of a meeting (e.g., one person starts the meeting and the other takes over after the coffee break, or when the other mediator reaches an impasse). Furthermore, besides weighing the pros and cons of co-mediation, in reality it is very rare to have only one mediator in a dispute. Due to the complexity and multiplicity of mediation tasks involved, most conflicts use some form of co-mediation rather than single mediators. This text does not focus on co-mediation in general, but specifically on co-mediation where members of the co-mediation team come from different cultural or religious backgrounds and these are relevant to the conflict they are mediating.

Strategic advantages of culturally balanced co-mediation

The strategic advantages of culturally balanced co-mediation (CMCM) include an increase of acceptability of the mediators, and the potential of the co-mediation team to bridge worlds more effectively.

Co-mediation allows for greater acceptability by combining cultural proximity and impartiality: By definition, mediators have to be accepted by the parties, else they cannot mediate. Acceptability[8] depends on various characteristics on the part of the mediator, such as impartial behavior and attitude, leverage and the ability to muster

resources to deal with the conflict,[9] the mandate,[10] and the mediator's cultural or religious proximity to one or both parties.[11] Particularly when issues of power, identity, or values are at stake, parties may feel more comfortable with a mediator who partially reflects their individual or collective background.[12]

However, how can impartiality coincide with cultural proximity? In order to answer this question, the concept of partiality has to be unpacked. There are three types of partiality: process, content, and outcome partiality.[13] Partiality always refers to being closer to one actor than another, the question is if this affects how the mediator shapes the process, the way the mediators deals with the content, and finally, if it has an impact on the outcome of the negotiations. Process partiality prevails when the mediation process is not left up to the parties. This can either mean that the mediators strongly shape the process (even against the will of all the parties), as is the case in heavy or high powered mediation, or it can mean that the process is guided in favor of one party to the detriment of the other (which would just be simply bad mediation). Most mediators shape the process to a certain degree, but the difference between facilitative or neutral-low-powered mediation and high powered mediation is precisely the degree to which a mediator will direct and shape the process (see also Anne-Isabel Krause's contribution illustrating how facilitative and low-powered mediation can be used in a cultural-sensitive manner). Content partiality refers to the tendency of actors (be they mediators or negotiators) to look for the same solutions as they are in the range of their cultural

8   McCartney, C (2006). Dilemmas of third-party involvement in peace processes: Reflections for practice and policy from Colombia and the Philippines. *Conciliation Resources,* p.14.

9   Brahimi, Lakhdar and Ahmed, Salman. In pursuit of sustainable peace, the seven deadly sins of mediation. New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 2008.

10 Svensson, I and Wallensteen, P, 2010, The Go-Between: Jan Eliasson and the Styles of Mediation, *United States Institute of Peace*

11 Carnevale, Peter J. and Choi, Dong-Won (2009), "Culture in the mediation of international disputes" International Journal of Psychology 35/2: 105-10, Wehr Paul (1996) Mediating conflict in Central American" Journal of Peace Research 28/1: 85-98.

12 Fechler, Bernd. Co-mediation in Cross Culture. Inmedio. http://institut-inmedio.de/en/publik/fechler_Co-mediation.pdf

13 See: Elgström, Ole (2003) "The honest Broker"? The council Presidency as a mediator", in Ole Elgström (ed.), European Union Council Presidencies (London: Routledge): 38-54.

thoughts and know how. Outcome partiality, where the mediators actually influence the final decisions and agreements is a no-go in mediation, and would mark the difference between mediation and heavy-powered diplomacy.

As it is often difficult, if not impossible, for one mediator to be equally close and equally impartial to all sides, culturally balanced co-mediation can be used to create a balance at the level of the mediation team, rather than at the level of the individual mediator. In this respect, the individual mediator may be relationally partial, closer to one group than the other, which might be useful in the mediation process, without com promising process, content or outcome partiality across the team. Thus, the constellation of mediators in the co-mediation team can be used strategically to reflect a balance that is specifically useful for the conflict in question. A diverse representation along different cultural lines can ensure that no one party feels outnumbered or disadvantaged.[14] This can lead to greater acceptability and trust and thus a more effective mediation process.[15] Neverthless, if a balanced cultural representation is not guaranteed (see question one below), it may be better to Zhave complete outsiders, or insiders working together with outsiders, than an unbalanced insider mediation team.[16]

In summary, culturally balanced co-mediation – understood as a team of mediators from different cultural backgrounds relevant to the conflict they are working on – can often balance cultural proximity and impartiality better than a single mediator, or a co-mediation team that is culturally biased towards one or the other side, or culturally an outsider.

Culturally balanced co-mediation allows for greater understanding by combining cultural proximity and detachment: When social groups refer to values and worldviews that are foreign to other groups they are in contact with, it can make the interaction more difficult.[17] Even if this does not mean that peaceful co-existence is impossible, it does pose challenges to the mediation of the conflict in question. One of the key requirements of mediators working in such conflicts is a 'deep understanding of both worlds'[18] so that they can 'create channels of communication and translate the divergences'.[19] As this may not be possible for an individual mediator, a culturally balanced co-mediation team made up of individuals that together can understand the different worlds and translate divergences can be extremely effective. Simply having a greater diversity of perspectives within the mediation team based on the diverse cultural backgrounds of the mediators can lead to a better assessment of process related questions.

Empathy is one of the pre-requisites of a mediator.[20] Having different degrees of cultural affinity to the different parties allows the team overall to have greater empathy, relate better to the parties, and thereby build relationship and trust. Here, it is also important to make differentiate between empathy (i.e., "To a certain extent, I understand your positions, interests and logic; I am sorry for the pain you are going through") and sympathy (empathy plus the last step of stating: "I agree with you and your cause").[21] For mediators, empathy is absolutely necessary, while sympathy is catastrophically detrimental. In some cases, cultural proximity that leads to acceptability and empathy may also mean that the mediator can

14 "Co-mediation"(2005), Presentation to the Western Australian Dispute Resolution Association Seminar.

15 "About Co-Mediation and Multiple Mediation", Construction Dispute Resolution Services. Available at: http://www.construc-tiondisputes-cdrs.com/co%20mediation_and_multiple%20 mediation.htm.

16 Wehr, P and Lederach, J.P, 1991, Mediating Conflict in Central America, *Journal of Peace Research,* 28(1) p.87. draw attention the difference between of 'insider partial' mediators, whose main attributes are trust relationships with the parties and personal incentives for assisting the conflict resolution and 'outsider neutral' mediators, valued for the impartial stance and personal disassociation with the conflict in question. The difference between different types of partiality developed by Elgstöm, however, seems to allow more flexibility.

17 Ambassador Claude Wild, Prononcé à l'occasion de la Confé-rence annuelle de la DPIV, Berne 14 Octobre 2010

18 Aroua, A (2009), Zurich Workshop "Transforming Conflicts with Religious Dimensions"

19 Ibid.

20 Interview with Julian Hottinger, "Don't judge, throw your prejudices over board and listen" In: For Peace, Human Rights and Security, Switzerland's commitment to the world. Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011. http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/ppese.Par.0005.File.tmp/Fuer_Frieden,_Menschenrechte_und_Sicher-heit_EN.pdf

21 Presentation by Julian T Hottinger, Peace Mediation Training for Cordoba Now. Oberhofen June 2011

be more critical towards the party of her or his culture, which may advance the process.[22]

The mediators do not need to mirror the conflict of the parties in a one-to-one manner, because if they did so, they would be plagued by the same lack of trust, goodwill, and understanding as the parties. The co-mediation team has to bridge the worlds of the parties within the team by mirroring some aspects of the parties' culture and conflict, but not all of them. The mediators must to some extent remain outside the fray of the conflict to be effective. The metaphor of the bridge is useful: rather than standing in the river between the parties, the mediators have to stand on the bridge, somewhat removed or detached from the divide. As in impartiality, the mediator treats both parties equally. Unlike impartiality, a degree of detachment entails some emotional distance to the conflict to remain effective.

Different techniques can then be used whereby the mediation team interacts in a way that mirrors the parties, yet at the same time reframes certain aspects of this relationship. Through the mediation team, the 'respect, forms of communication and problem solving'[23] that the disputing parties are expected to develop can be demonstrated through the mediators' dialog, attitude, and relationship with each other.[24]

In the culturally balanced co-mediation cases outlined below, this combination of cultural proximity with detachment from the conflict occurred in different forms, e.g. professional training of the mediators, having lived in a different cultural area for some time, or personal experiences highlighting the benefits of co-mediation over unilateral conflict resolution approaches. Due to the need of balancing cultural proximity and detachment, the mediators do not always have to be of the same religion or culture as one of the parties. In some cases, a deep understanding of the culture, either acquired or experienced from living in a certain culture without having origins there,

is sufficient.[25] Similarly, a combination of mediators close to the various cultures as well as total cultural outsiders may also be helpful.[26]

In summary, culturally balanced co-mediation can help bridge the worlds of the parties by having mediators from different cultural backgrounds bring in a deeper understanding of the different worlds and facilitate communication between these worlds.

Questions and challenges related to co-mediation

Various questions and challenges[27] arise when using co-mediation, be these co-mediation in general (all the following points), or culturally balanced co-mediation specifically (latter two points). These have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis:

• *Do the mediators have a sense of competition between them?* It is extremely important that the mediators should not feel they are in competition, especially when some have a more dominant role than others. In this sense, they must be flexible, have a 'whatever works best' approach, and leave their ego detached from the mediation process.

• *Have the mediation team discussed and clarified the goals, strategies, plans and tasks involved in the mediation meeting?* Although variety in terms of the perspectives and strategy ideas within the mediation team may be of value, and there can be disagreement on these matters outside the meeting room, it is important to consider where the focus will be and to pull in the same direction during the actual mediation sessions. Co-mediators who fight in front of the parties lose their credibility. A co-mediator who surprises his or her co-mediators during the mediation session, twisting the process in a totally different direction than agreed on, is likely to jeopardize the process. It is therefore important to divide up the tasks in advance of the mediation process so that different members of the team know exactly

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22 See the case study below related to the Danish Face of Mohammed Caricatures.

23 "Co-mediation"(2005), Presentation to the Western Australian Dispute Resolution Association Seminar.

24 Ibid.

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25 Aroua, A, 2009, Zurich Workshop, Transforming Conflicts with Religious Dimensions

26 Wehr, P and Lederach, J.P, 1991, Mediating Conflict in Central America, *Journal of Peace Research,* 28(1) p.87.

27 Questions 1-3 are inspired and adapted from Lela P. Love,]oseph B. Stulberg Practice Guidelines for Co-Mediation: Making Certain That "Two Heads Are Better than One" In MEDIATION QUARTERLY. Vol. 13, No. 3, Spring 1996 Jossey-Bass Publishers

what is expected from them. This allows each mediator to focus on certain areas and make the most out of the effective partnership. Once a co-mediation team has gained experience and is in sync, less planning is needed, and more natural role division develops.

- *How does the constellation of the mediation team relate to key factors of the conflict?* Structuring a balanced mediation team requires in-depth knowledge of the conflict, so that the key divide is either mirrored fairly in the mediation team (e.g., mediators from both cultural contexts), or if one does not choose to use the culturally balanced co-mediation approach, the team does not mirror the divide at all (e.g., mediators from a completely different cultural context). The balance has to reflect the most appropriate dimension. To do this, it is crucial to evaluate each and every conflict extensively to determine the underlying factors at the heart of the dispute. For example, while gender balance may be crucial in some conflicts (e.g., conflict related to gender-based discrimination), the cultural balance of the co-mediation team may be more important in other conflicts (e.g., conflicts related to cultural discrimination). In longer processes, the limited balance of a co-mediation team can also be partly complimented by having experts or other mediators come in for certain issues (e.g. a working group on women's rights).

- *Is the questioning of the co-mediation team's impartiality a strategic or tactical move from the parties?* Especially at the early stages of a process, the parties tend to test the mediators' impartiality, commitment, and authority. Thus, the lack of balance in the mediation team may be a genuine strategic concern of the parties; however, it may also be the case that the parties are testing the mediators and creating an issue for purely tactical reasons. In one mediation case in Kenya, the parties challenged the ethnic constellation of the mediation team. The mediation team overcame this issue by stressing their common Muslim identity, rather than by adapting the ethnic balance of the co-mediation team (which would have lost time). By refusing to let the parties divide and rule the co-mediation team

on ethnic grounds, the mediators showed their authority and commitment to serious mediation.[28]

These four questions should be considered when deciding on the use of co-mediation, the constellation of the co-mediation team, and the operational questions involved.

Case Studies
Danish 'Faces of Mohammed' Cartoons: A Cross Cultural Mediator-Party Relationship
An example of the concept of 'bridging worlds' within the mediation team was the use of mediation by the Cordoba Centre for Peace Studies related to the 'Faces of Mohammed' cartoon crisis. This was a dispute between some Danish media representatives, the Danish government, and some Muslim groups, first in Denmark and then later further afield. The conflict was sparked by depictions of the face of Mohammed by some Danish cartoonists. The mediation process that took place in Geneva in February 2006 involved a Muslim advisor for the Danish delegation (Abbas Aroua) and a Scandinavian advisor for the Muslim delegation (Johan Galtung), working together in a culturally balanced co-mediation team. The co-mediation constellation was shaped by the wishes of the delegations themselves and demonstrates a slightly different use of co-mediation than the typical strategy of achieving a direct connection between the party and their respective mediator. In this circumstance, the understanding and ability to connect with the different cultures that is fostered within the mediation team lends itself well to identifying the underlying feelings on both sides of the dispute, and thus nurturing a successful mediation environment. Strategically, the cross representation creates a space in which each party is able to develop a sense of understanding from someone who can express the views of the opposing party, but is also a trusted figure. The two mediators also knew each other and trusted each other. This built confidence and a favorable environment for mediation, allowing for an effective subsequent dialog process. [29]

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28 This example was mentioned by Dekha Ibrahim Abdi in interviews with the author.

29 Mason, S, Aroua, A and Aberg, A, 2010. Mediating Tensions over Islam in Denmark, Holland and Switzerland p6.

Christian and Muslim Militias in Northeastern Nigeria:[30] *Common Ground between the Mediator and the Party*

Another example of culturally balanced co-mediation related to a conflict with religious dimensions involved Christian and Muslim militias in northeastern Nigeria. With the approval of Jos State authorities, Imam Mohammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye worked as co-mediators between the Christian and Muslim sides of the dispute. Two factors stand out in this process: Firstly, as preparation for direct dialog and negotiations, when the groups were separate, having a Christian mediator on the Christian side and a Muslim mediator on the Muslim side allowed the issues that lay at the heart of the conflict to be identified from both angles. Secondly, once the team had come together, the equality and balance in the team fostered a very advantageous mirroring dynamic. Both mediators allowed each other to speak, and religious connection was made from quoting both from the Bible and the Qur'an. This success carries even more weight when considering that previous mediation efforts had been very unsuccessful, also due to the fact that the mediators had been Christian and were therefore seen as biased and not accepted by the Muslim delegation.

These cases illustrate how relational partiality between the mediator and the party, based on common cultural aspects, facilitates a deeper insight into the root of the dispute, yet impartiality can still be maintained through the co-mediation team. Another use of the co-mediation idea is the use of a cross-cultural relationship between the mediator and the parties, where the mediator working closely with each party as a kind of 'coach' is culturally close to the opposing party. If the mediators are trusted, this creates a favorable environment for conducting dialog and unpacking the opposing parties' viewpoints, as part of the preparations of negotiations.

Conclusion

Culturally balanced co-mediation allows for greater acceptability and impartiality of mediators, while at the same time enabling greater cultural proximity and understanding of the different 'worlds' at play. It will not overcome all of the challenges faced by mediators in conflicts that involve religiously inspired political actors. Nevertheless, it is an effective tool that can be flexibly combined with other methods, some of them outlined in this publication.

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30 Smock, 2009, Zurich Workshop "Transforming Conflicts with Religious Dimensions"

Part D

Case Studies

Policies, concepts and methods are only validated by actual case studies. Bob Roberts, Jean-Nicolas Bitter, Dieter von Blarer, Corinne Henchoz Pignani and Abdulfatah Said Mohamed provide first hand insights into cases they were personally involved in. They illustrate how some of the concepts and methods described in the previous sections look like in their real world application, and provide useful lessons for other practitioners.

Connecting Evangelical Christians and Conservative Muslims

Bob Roberts[1] interviewed by Simon J A Mason

Abstract

Bob Roberts, evangelical pastor of NorthWood Church, Texas, argues that there is no need to increase efforts at bringing moderate Christians and Muslims together in inter-faith dialog, since that is already being done, and many of these people already agree with each other anyway. Instead, there is a need to bring together conservatives of different faiths in multi-faith, joint social activities. "Start with the hand" means working together, and thereby you build trust and relationship. Only afterwards useful discussions about faith can ensue. All religions have cultural, tribal remnants that hinder people from communicating and relating with people from other faiths. If we are not to destroy each other, we need to learn to be in relationship with each other without giving up our faith. By building up relations with people from other faiths, people start looking at their own faith differently. Rather than compromising one's own faith, this can lead to a deeper, more authentic way of living one's faith. The world will be changed by people who are passionate about their faith, by respected influential leaders of the different Christian and Muslim tribes that are willing to open themselves and their congregations up to relationships.

Introduction

Simon Mason: Before I ask you some questions, let me introduce you to the reader: You are an evangelical pastor at NorthWood Church in Keller, Texas, with a congregation of some 2'500 members. The members of your church are very young, with an average age of 30 years. During the last few years, you have been working with people of other faiths in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Palestine. This has also included contacts with Hamas in Gaza.

One classic way of dealing with conflicts between adherents of different value systems is to avoid the tough questions and downplay religious differences. In contrast, you are proposing and putting into practice a different approach where you stick to and even deepen your faith, while at the same time you relate to, respect, and work with people from different faiths.

This leads me to my three questions: First, how do you deal with conflicts between peoples' of different faiths and value systems? Second, why do you engage in this work? Are you trying to convert people, or what exactly is your agenda? And third, how has this work affected your own faith, your congregation, and your vision for the world?

How you connect people: you start with the hand

Bob Roberts: To answer your first question in a nutshell: You start with the hand, not with the mouth. You engage in joint social activities, rather than theological conversations. What is happening right now on the whole Christian-Muslim issue is generally that more liberal or more mainline Christians are having conversations with Muslims, and some of these Muslims would consider themselves in their own world as more moderate. This is what I call inter-faith dialog. Inter-faith in a Western context is viewed as a watering down of what evangelical Christians believe about who Jesus is and what they believe he said about knowing him. "Interfaith" as a term can also communicate that to some imams. The majority of the imams that I know are fairly conservative in what they believe. There may be moderate Muslims, but most imams are more trained in the Quran and hold tighter to the text, which is also true for evangelical Christians and their views on Biblical scripture. So traditionally, we bring pastors and imams together and say: "We have different worldviews, but we have many things in common, can't we all get along?" This just does not work. There is a lot of frustration, they start talking theology, and

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1   Evangelical pastor at NorthWood Church in Keller, Texas

each will throw criticisms at the other: "Why don't you do this, why don't you do that." It leads nowhere. Furthermore, it does not do any good to bring together moderates who agree anyway, as the biggest point of conflict is between the evangelical and the more conservative Muslims.

In contrast to inter-faith dialog, you want to get those people who are diametrically opposed to each other together. So how do you get them to the table? What I discovered when our church began to work in Vietnam was that we were not there to talk theology with the Vietnamese government. We just started working in the city. Where were things that needed to be healed that both could benefit from? So our premise is that you start with the hand. Generally people will come together and collaborate on common interests. What can we agree upon that needs to be done? So it starts with the hand: It does not matter whether it is rebuilding houses, cleaning up parks, or working in public schools. Then our hearts are connected, and we begin to trust the other, we begin to share with the other, and finally, we are ready to have conversations about where we agree and disagree. What you have done is you have built trust and relationship before you have conversation. The other way, you are starting with a conversation without trust and without a relationship, and you have two opposite views of who God is. You are not going to come together on the basis of your agreement over God.

So it is important to have a multi-faith conversation, versus an inter-faith conversation. Inter-faith has been driven more by moderates, mainlines, and liberals, and that is why most evangelicals are not going to have that conversation. They do not want to compromise on their theology, agreeing for the sake of agreeing. Whereas if I say: "Look, we fundamentally disagree over who we understand Jesus to be, so let us not try to agree theologically. But in terms of him engaging the city and helping people, we agree on that so there is a basis for us to come together and work together."

The goal of multi-faith conversation is not the cleric; it is to get to the people. The reason you want those imams and pastors to get together is that they are gate-keepers to their congregations. But what you are really after is not the imam and the pastor. What you are after are the masses in those

congregations, to get them to connect. The problem is that we as clerics or imams have turned religious work into church work or mosque work, and that is not what Jesus did. He was feeding, he was clothing, he was giving water. If you read Matthew 25 that was what he did all day. For faith to make a difference in the world, it has got to get beyond the clerics. Clerics who only value Holy Scriptures and theology are the greatest obstacle to peace in the world – and that breaks my heart. You need to find clerics who are willing to take risks, open their congregations. But it is hard to get evangelicals to do it, because they are petrified: "What if my members become Muslim? What are the headaches I will have to deal with as a result of this?" There is a lot of fear. So if faith is to make a radical difference, we need different kinds of clerics today, of whatever faith you are. We need clerics who are willing to hold on to their faith and not compromise it. That may sound odd to you, but I want to know what a real Muslim believes. "Do not talk to me and be politically right, tell me what you believe, and I am not going to disrespect you, I understand, I value my Bible like you value the Quran." Or whatever your book is.

How do we choose the multi-faith activities in which we become engaged? I think it all comes down to calling. The reason we went to Afghanistan, is not because I wanted to go there. As a matter of fact, when our church first began to work in Vietnam, I was petrified to go there, because I had grown up thinking I had to go there and fight. They quit the war the year I registered for the draft. But I went to Vietnam because I got a sense of call thanks to this guy. He was an atheist who became Christian. As a doctor he wanted to go back there and do humanitarian work. I did not go because I had a relationship; I did not go because the Scriptures were telling me something specific; it all boiled down to a sense of calling, of inspiration. I remember thinking after 9/11: "I am so glad I work with Communists in Vietnam instead of Muslims in the Middle East or Afghanistan." And then the phone rings, and this guy says: "Would you help us?" And for me it was like Paul and the Macedonian call, it was as though God was saying: "You need to come and help those people." I was scared. But have I been excluded from the risk of death or suffering in the Scriptures? Not at all. Why do I think just because I am an American I can withhold good or I can withhold serving others because it is dangerous to

do so? Would Jesus go somewhere because it was safe or because it was dangerous? It did not figure in. I am wrong for viewing my faith as something to play safe. So the reason we get engaged is a question of calling.

How do you discern what is a genuine calling from God? It is easy. The following three steps are very helpful: First, you need to prepare yourself. Daily prayer and daily worship is a huge part of my life. I do that early in the morning. At least an hour a day I am praying and I am reading the Scriptures. I also keep a journal about what God is saying in the word of God. I read through the Bible every year. I do it for three reasons: First of all, it is my way of relating to God, going deep in spirituality, in my personal relationship with God. Second of all, it is a way of me staying right with God, from confessing my sins to growing in my faith, to learning different things about what it means to walk with Christ. And third of all, I do it because God is at work every day, all throughout the day. He has never stopped speaking to you and I. He is always speaking. The question is: Do we have eyes to see him and ears to hear him? And a lot of time, if we have not sensitized our heart spiritually, we do not recognize what he is doing. My heart has got to be ready for what God is going to do. Life is not happenstance and chance, just responding to crisis after crisis. As a Christian, I believe God is in control and he has a direction and a plan for this world, and he wants me to be connected to that plan and direction. So I am constantly saying: "Father, guide me, give the words, is this something you want us to do?" I am always praying: "God, shut doors if you do not want me there. Open doors if you do want me there." So that is the first step, preparing.

Second, you need to listen to divine interruptions. As we sensitize ourselves spiritually, we need to take special notice of things that happen that are unique, that are unexpected. Sometimes those things are incredibly common. They take time, but I call them divine interruptions. The question is generally: What is unique about it? I could tell you hundreds of stories about that. It is a gut feeling. But after a while, it becomes easy to recognize. Maybe nine years ago I realized I needed to understand diplomacy. So I bought this big, big book that Henry Kissinger wrote on diplomacy, and I got lost in it. So I prayed: "God, you got to help me because I am starting to deal with diplomats,

I do not understand all of this. God, send me a diplomat in my life, who can help mentor me." As crazy as it sounds, there was a guy who entered my life. And he taught me about protocol, all of this stuff, and he got me to read journals, books, and now I have about five diplomats that are constantly speaking into my life. So the second step of discerning calling is recognizing moments, recognizing divine interruptions.

The third step is a safety net. You need to talk to someone else you trust to see if your intuitions were really divine interruptions, or if they were just a wild guess. I talk to my wife. I am very much a risk taker, I always see the glass as half full, I see opportunity, I see the best in people, and I believe anything is possible. My wife is a lot of time more realistic. A few years ago, we were in the West Bank, and she was in Bethlehem in a hotel with me. All of a sudden out of the blue, all of these people were asking me to do some very significant things with some of the Palestinians, and I thought: "When I leave the room, my wife is going to kill me, because it is going to take all the time and where are we going to get the money?" So we walk out of the room, and I said: "Well, I think I know what you are going to say." And she said: "Yeah, I hope so." She said: "We have to do this. This is too unique; this is too rare, if we do not do this, this opportunity may never come again." At other times she will say: "Is there not someone else who can do that? Is this really unique?" Then I also have a group of what I call elders around me, at our church, and I am constantly sharing with them, what is going.

Before moving to your second question, let me wrap up the question of how you deal with conflicts between peoples with different values: You engage in social activities together. Because we can all agree we want schools, we can all agree we want security, we can all agree we want a functioning government, we can all agree we want peace. These multi-faith social activities are effective in connecting people. It is not about the clerics and the imams; it is about peple-to-people diplomacy. It is not about Bob Roberts building a school; it is rather getting educators of his church to connect with educators where the school is, to build the school, to get into a relationship. These relationships remain. Most people who carry out projects stay connected to the people. I just got an e-mail from my friend, who was a leading tribal leader in Southern

Afghanistan and who is now in the parliament for Afghanistan and member of the international relations committee. He wrote: "Hey Bob, this is what is going on, we need to connect." That stays pretty tight. It does not go away.

I think people are beaten down, and that is why some of them do not recognize the opportunities that God puts in front of them, and they feel: "I can't do that." The greatest story is what our congregation members are doing, from the lady who works in micro-finance with 50 women in Hanoi, or the guy who is a home builder who will make a few million dollars and then go spend it and build houses all over West Africa, teaching them how to do it, starting little companies. When everyday people begin to realize they can make a difference, then it goes viral. You can make a difference.

Reasons for connecting Christians and Muslims
Simon: Let us come to the second question: Why do you do this work, why do you want people from different faiths to connect with each other? Are you trying to convert them?

Bob: We do it for the good of the city and for the good of the world! Because the reality is there was a time when religion and faith was geographical, and tribal. That time is past. Every religion is everywhere; this state of affairs will continue. Muslims are not going to go away, and neither are Christians. If we do not resolve our differences, or at least learn how to build the City of God together, we are going to destroy one another. We are not going to trust one another; we are going to live with constant tension, fear, even violence. In the past, when religion was geographical and tribal, I could choose to ignore the person on the other side of the world. I can't do that anymore. The problem is we have a new world with an old way of relating to one another, and it is just not functional.

It is not as though we do not interact with people of other religions or no religion. We do it every day. So why should we not do that with Muslims? I understand there is fear in the West and particularly in America because of 9/11 and terrorism and so forth. I get that. But I view the way we relate to Muslims as the core civil rights issue that we are facing right now in this decade. And ultimately, it will win out, we will treat one another with respect. The only question is who will regret how they spoke to, related to, and engaged with people of other faiths and who will be considered the Martin Luther Kings. This is the new way of relating and communicating.

All human beings, irrespective of their faith, have a moral nature, and some people are simply more driven by the common good and morality than others, who are more imperialist in their views. I would say those who are imperialist in their views, generally, their theology may be accurate with respect to their religious scriptures, but the communication of that theology is not. We are not dealing so much with what people believe as with how it is communicated. I am a conservative, yet I am friends with so many people and we have candid conversations with them. The question is not so much my theology, but the way we communicate with each other.

Here is what you need to understand of Quran-believing Muslims and Bible-believing Christians: We are not relativist. That is why we are not secularist. We believe there is a standard of truth, and we are striving for that. Now obviously Christians and Muslims are going to disagree on the source of truth, be it the Quran or the Bible. We can look at one and another's texts and respect them, and even like certain things out of one another's texts. But at the end of the day, there are serious disagreements about who Jesus was and what he did and so forth. But that does not mean we cannot work together, communicate together, and build the City of God together.

The reason why we do this work is also because it is a way of freeing religion from cultural imperialism. What many evangelical Americans do not understand right now is how religion and culture are intermixed. It is because we are very isolated. That may sound strange coming from an American, but I am telling you we are an isolated people. We have two oceans on both sides, Mexico and Canada below and above us, with historical Christian vaues and mind-sets, similar value systems and similar world-views. As a result of that, we do not understand how the rest of the world really perceives us. We think they like us, are excited to see us, and the whole world ought to be like us. We suffer from a huge dose of ethno-centricity.

I get really frustrated at the way the evangelical church in the West looks at the rest of the world. They see it as a mission field, to go out and preach and pass on religion and start churches. Our response is: No! The gospel has freed us to live the life of Christ and serve humanity. Let us really talk about our faith, but not impose it on others.

It is not about converting people; it is all about relationship. I tell people right up front: "I am a Christian, I am an evangelical Christian, I want the whole world to know about Jesus." But here is where I would say I am different from some other evangelical Christians: If a person says: "Well great, but I never want that," I am still going to be in relationship with them, because I have a responsibility to do that according to the Bible and according to what Jesus teaches. So it is crucial to be up front with your agenda. This is why I like multi-faith and not inter-faith dialog. If I come across with "Ah look, all the things we agree on, we really are so similar, it is no big deal." Then, when we get to the hard questions and discussions, it is as though we have been – in my opinion – deceptive about what we are and believe.

My agenda is to love God and love people. Loving God is about my personal walk with Christ. To love people is to serve them in the name of Christ. We have a saying in our church, and I wrote a whole chapter in a book on this: "Serve not to convert, but serve because you are converted." Conversion is something that God does. Not something that we can do. We should never push, we should never pressure, we should serve and just naturally talk about our faith. That cuts two ways: Muslims get to do that as well. But it is not as though you are sitting down and having theological discussions where you go through this text and that text. Rather, you are building a relational model.

If my only motive is to get you to agree with my religion, and become the follower that I am, we are never going to get along. It is just not going to happen. We are going to be in head-to-head confrontation. But that does not mean that Muslims should not practice their law, or that Christians should not practice the great commission. The question is how it is practiced. In the past, faith was a presentation of a belief system. What is has got to come to is not just a belief system, but how we relate to one another.

And this has not been developed: How do different faiths relate to one another.

You have to put your values above any government. OK, as an American, I may be concerned about our troops in Afghanistan, but I must also be concerned about the Afghan people. There is nothing in the Scripture that cuts them out of an opportunity just like anybody else. For being ministered to and cared for. I think the imperialistic view of religion is based on a small view of God. If we say we believe in God, then he can take care of his faith, and we do not need to worry about it. I think it is fear, and I think it is something else that is huge, that we do not really understand, like we think we do: tribalism. Tribalism is huge, and faith is one of those tribal things. That is why you get something like the religious right: "This is my government and my religion". I think that is very dangerous. I read a book where the author argued that by separating religion and state, you push religion into a less tribal and more global approach. That is why Christianity, Islam are spreading around the world, and Buddhism and all these other faiths. Faith is becoming a far more global language. If those faiths are going to spread around the world, they have to be released from specific tribal restraints that hold them captive in a geographical, nationalistic, or racial way.

The impact of multi-faith work on one's own faith
Simon: My third question is about how your contact with Muslims has affected your own way of believing, if it does at all?

Bob: It does, it shapes it in many ways. First of all, it makes me look at Christ from a radically different perspective as an evangelical than I have historically. How did Jesus relate to people he disagreed with? It made me look at the ministry of Paul; what did Paul do with the Jews? He goes to the Synagogue. He is relating to everyone and he does not start by insulting them, neither Jesus nor Paul. Look at the story of Peter and Cornelius: He does not insult, he does not denigrate. If anything, he reaches out to them. It also says to me: people want to connect. The biggest obstacle to peace is our lack of willingness to be in relationship with others. Because if you are going to be in a relationship with someone, you will be impacted by it. It is going to drive a lot of things.

It has also impacted my theology. What does the Bible teach about the Second Coming? As an evangelical, I was raised with a view of the Second Coming of Christ that was tied to Israel becoming a nation and the Temple being rebuilt and all of this. I no longer hold to that. Because I was in relationship it forced me to ask: "Does the Bible really say that? Where do we really get that in the Bible?" So it forced me out of some cultural theological conclusions and pushed me towards candidly a more literal reading of the text. You can't mix and match text and verses for your convenience. It also forced me to reevaluate and look deeply on my view of the Trinity, my view of the divinity of Christ. All of these issues became very big for me. It made me think at a deeper level because I was being asked questions about it.

My vision is to make sure I can do everything I can so that people at least get to know who Jesus was. After that, it is up to different people to make their own choice about what they want to be, if they want to be a Buddhist or a Christian or a Muslim. That is their call. Nowhere in the Scripture have I been told to go out and convert the whole world. That is not even possible. But what I have been told in Scripture is to make Christ's name known, and to glorify God. That is what I have been told to do. There is not a religious imperialism in the great commission. It is really sharing the good news of Christ, in a very kind, non-offensive way.

As a Christian, I believe the only way you can go to heaven is through Jesus. Now, how God works that out is his prerogative. I do not sit in judgment. God is both just and merciful. That question is asked a lot by conservative believers of both tribes: "Come on, tell me what you guys really believe". I do not think it is a bad question. Because you are saying: "Here is what we believe, this is why we are evangelical Christians." And the imam will tell you: "This is why we are Muslims". I was speaking in Connecticut, St. Mary's University, with the imam here in Dallas. He and I have become very good friends. We were sitting on the plane, and I had told him my position earlier on, and I said to him: "Ok, be brutally honest, tell me what you all believe, if I have rejected Mohamed as a prophet". And he told me: "Bob, things don't look good for you." And I said: "Well, I understand. But help me understand why you believe that." So he did. Now look, God is God. God can do what he

chooses to do. I can say: "Christ is the only way." But what God does at Judgment and how he views individuals, and all of that, that is in his hands. Me saying who goes to heaven and who doesn't, that gets a little dangerous.

Once people from different faiths are connected, they are going to be conflicted. I am dealing with that with some of our own members right now. They are friends with Muslims, Jews, they are running around with them, and so forth, and things will bother them. So they say: "But Bob, I believe in Jesus, how do I respond to this?" The alternative at that point is: "This is too conflictive, I am going to break off the relationship, or I can hold on to my truth, and relate to people who are non-Christians the way that Jesus, Paul, and Peter did." The latter is what I would do from a Christian perspective.

So you can do two things when people are confronted with such conflicts: You go back to your sacred Scriptures, whatever they are, and you look at the relations with other beliefs. For example there are multiple examples of Jews and Christians – Jews in the Hebrew Bible, Christians in the New Testament – of how they related to people from other faiths in a very respectful manner. The second thing you do is to go to the history of your religion. For example, St. Francis was phenomenal in how he engaged Muslims, even leading him to trouble with the Roman Catholic Church. So you look at historical figures, in your own faith, and you also study contemporary models of where people broke new ground, and held on to their convictions and used their faith as a basis. So for me Martin Luther King is huge, Gandhi is huge, examples like them.

You have to appeal to the moral nature of the Holy Books, be it the Bible, Quran, Bhagavad Gita, or whatever. Because for a religious person, their Holy Books are going to be the basis of what they think, do and practice. That is the only objective thing they have. So go back to the Scriptures, go back to the history. I am not saying the Scriptures or history are invalid. I just do not view the Quran in the same way as I view the Bible. But I have read the Quran, there are many noble teachings in the Quran, there are many things I would agree with that I read in the Quran.

Conclusion

Let me conclude: The world is going to be changed by people who are passionate about their faith, because they have access to those who are conservative. The current methodology, where you get people who already agree with each other to sit down and talk, is not enough. Now you need the other mass. That is going to come from respected influential leaders in those tribes that are then willing to open themselves and their congregations up to relationships. Once again, that is why you start with the hand; joint social activities. That is doable. And here is the good news: it is going to happen. I promise you, it is going to happen. Now it may not happen with your and my generation, but these people who are in their twenties, and early thirties, they have a radically different world view, because of how they are connected. It is coming.

Tajikistan: Diapraxis between the secular government and political Islamic actors

Jean-Nicolas Bitter,[1] Dieter von Blarer[2]

Abstract

Efforts to support countries in the post-peace agreement phase are necessary to ensure sustainable peace. Many peace agreements fail within the first decade after signing. In Tajikistan, tensions were not "done away with" through the 1997 peace agreement; rather, the agreement enabled a process to begin, which had to be supported for a long time, i.e., eight to 15 years. Dialog can be used to support peace processes after the signing of a peace agreement, yet such an agreement calls for a specific type of dialog. Joint action between the conflict actors can be made a key goal of a dialog or negotiation process, rather than only dialog aiming at understanding the other side, or "talking for the sake of talking". The aim is to build confidence and help the actors make their "narratives" less problem-laden. Joint action, as in the case of Tajikistan, can involve an amended Law on Religion, school curricula for madrassas, training of government officials, or soap operas addressing politically sensitive issues. The benefit of "joint activities" are that they involve a form of communication that is much less likely to be misunderstood then just words. It is important in such processes to have a wide range of participants beyond the Track 1 level, and that local actors should also be involved in tasks such as facilitation. This allows for a co-creative process and local ownership of the process.

Introduction

The role and place of Islam in the process of nation- and state-building of post-Soviet Muslim countries has been an acute issue since those countries gained independence in 1991. Mistrust between some of the former foes – between secular elites from inside and outside government on the one hand, and Muslim elites on the other – is deep. On 27 June 1997, President Emomali Rahmonov, UTO leader Said Abdullah Nuri, and UN SRSG Gerd Merrem signed the "General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan" and the "Moscow Protocol" in Moscow, ending the war that had started in 1992 and had cost the lives of some 50'000 to 100'000 people. The compromise process between Islamic and secular forces that led to this agreement was the basis for subsequent engagements to support peace. However, the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC 1997-2000) failed to achieve a measurable rapprochement. Despite the peace agreement, there were tensions surrounding the distribution of political and economic power as well as legal issues, religious education, and the polarization of society along religious/secular lines. In general, those problems reflect the urgency to rethink what secularism means in the Tajik context and how this principle can be defined practically.

Engagement

Already in 2001, the Center for OSCE Research (CORE) started a project "Creating a Peace-Building Dialogue with Moderate Islamists in Tajikistan and Central Asia". It was designed by Arne Seifert, a former East German diplomat, and financed by the German MFA. It aimed to study possibilities for compromises between Islamic and secular forces. The project also entailed a process of discussion, documentation, and publication of the experiences of politicians and scholars from the Commission of National Reconciliation. During the process started by the CORE, the Swiss began to take on a supportive and then more and more an active lead role. This was welcomed by CORE, as it demonstrated to the German MFA that there was wide interest in the project, and was also useful in securing financial support. Switzerland's interest was twofold: First, to consolidate the peace process in Tajikistan as a logical supplement to – if not pre-condition for – its other cooperation engagements there. Second, Switzerland was also interested in the dialog process per se, to see how the process could develop, produce concrete

results and generate lessons for other contexts facing similar challenges. Switzerland, upon joining the Germans in October 2002, supported the CORE-led process throughout 2003.

During this first phase, the already existing process was called "Dialogue in the Center", as it took place in the capital. In 2003, this dialog resulted in a publication containing a joint analysis of key issues and suggestions to the government for Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), signed by the participants. The document established principles of co-existence and mechanisms of peaceful conflict transformation between both sides when dealing with religious, legal, and political affairs. Switzerland then also linked this "Dialogue in the Center" to two other related projects at the provincial level. The first was the "Dartmouth Dialogue", organized by the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue/Kettering Foundation and its local partner, the "People's Committee", funded by the Swiss DFA. The project carried out dialog sessions in seven regions of the country on "Islam, State and Society". The second project consists of the "Law and Religion" seminars organized by the OSCE in Soghd Oblast (a "hot spot" region) at the district/regional level. Some 25 four-day seminars have taken place in the Northern province, with a follow-up committee set-up to continue the dialog. Participants included representatives of the state, political parties, women's groups, mullahs, and other Islamic representatives. The three dialog processes and the links between them can be seen as a network to address confidence building measures at various levels of the society (Central, regional and local). The "Dartmouth Dialogue" was phased out after a while, however, as it was seen as duplicating the Dialogue in the Center. During the first half of 2004, projects were also suspended due to uncertainty of funding from the German side (a three-year limit had been reached) and also to finalize the 2003 publication in various languages.

The second phase from June 2004-2006 (without the participation of the German MFA) aimed to elaborate policy recommendations and projects to implement the CBMs adopted in phase I (December 2003). Two fact-finding missions took place in 2004 to sound out the participants' commitment to a continuation of dialog, as a basis for the decision to continue support, and also to establish the best way to do this. The participants felt that this was urgently required in order to avoid a rise in tensions between the secular ruling party and the religious spheres of the society.[3] The trips also showed that it was important to work towards greater local ownership of the process, as well as to focus more on concrete projects and policy recommendations, rather than on conceptual issues. Some new participants were also included after changes in the government composition as of December 2003. Three working groups were then established in October 2005, meeting on a monthly basis. The "Dialogue in the Center" acted as plenary responsible for the working groups. The working groups involved people from the "Dialogue in the Center" as well as additional experts. They were headed by locals and supervised by the Swiss. The first working group on "Religious education" started developing a uniform curriculum for madrassas (religious schools). The aim was to offer madrassas a curriculum of upgraded religious education that would include elements of civic education. The idea is to contribute to the integration of madrassa students in Tajik society. A key aspect of the project is that it is not imposed on the madrassas, but developed collaboratively with their re resentatives. The second working group on "Law, Politics, and Religion" agreed on a compromise list of recommendations aimed at improving the Law of Religion and submitted proposals to the President. The participants also assessed the relevance of providing legal assistance in the field of registration of mosques. One concrete output of this process was a booklet collecting all relevant laws for mosques, as it was found that daily law enforcement was often more strict than actually stipulated in the laws. Many laws are misunderstood or not known. The third working group on "Prevention of Radicalisation" agreed to work out and implement a project on "Confidence-building workshops for students at the Civil Servants Training Institute". They also began to participate in the development of soap operas addressing the issues of tolerance and cooperation between secular and religious outlooks co-existing in Tajik society. These are to be broadcast on Tajik radios in the framework of the "Silk Road Radio" project (UNESCO Tashkent office).

3   Central Asia: Islam and the State: ICG, Asia report 59, 20/07/2003. www.crisisweb.org/home/index.cfm?1=1&id=1251&sr=1

In 2007, a third phase was launched that basically aimed to continue and put into practice what had been started in the second phase (some working groups only really became active in 2006, because the elections had slowed down the process). The first working group finished the first draft of a uniform curriculum for madrassas. The council of the Ulema endorsed the curriculum in April 2007. Following this, the working group conducted a training of trainers' program for teaching the new curriculum. The project continued with a pilot madrassa testing the new program with a first group of students – men and women. In 2011, after three years of studying, they graduated. The second working group identified some amendments to the Law of Religion to support Khatlon Province in a response to a letter requesting legal assistance of registration of Mosques. Working group three developed five modules[4] on religious subjects and conflict management for reoccurring training of higher-level district and municipality officials together with the Civil Servant Training Institute of the Republic. As far as the soap opera sub-project is concerned, one storyline is in the process of being published.

The dialog series gave rise to the NGO Institute of Dialogue in Tajikistan. The institute is actively engaged in the question of women and Islam with UNIFEM, and it has been commissioned to organize a conference with experts on dialog from Central Asia and other parts of the world. So even after the Swiss disengaged, there was some form of institutionalization that helped carry on the work that had been started.

Conclusions

Confidence-building through dialog and practical cooperation can be a model for the wider Central Asian region and other world regions where the tension between state and religion or between different religious beliefs are a source of violent conflicts. The participants in the Secular-Islamic Dialogue acknowledged that many critical issues can only be pragmatically and suitably addressed through a cooperative process between representatives of the secular government and representatives of the religious sphere. The experiences made in the working groups in general, and in particular in the working group on prevention of radicalization, have shown that debates about values or world views tend to divide interlocutors, whereas the search for and implementation of practical means of co-habitation can help to build confidence and common ground. The Secular-Islamic Dialogue in Tajikistan confirms experiences learned in Swiss history and in other countries: In order to be successful, a dialog involving parties with different world-views – cultural, religious, or otherwise – should focus on and coincide with practical measures.

Methodologically, the dialog process therefore used and developed a "dialog through practice" approach, which can be explained with the concept of diapraxis, in an adaptation of a method proposed by Lissi Rasmussen (see methodological discussion on diapraxis in part C). A diapraxis approach can increasingly lead to concrete joint activities dealing constructively with issues that cause tensions in a society.

It is helpful if the dialog process includes key people from the government, opposition, and civil society, and/or people who have influence on decision-makers. During the process, an increasingly wider circle of participants should be aimed at. If dialog processes focus only on Track 1 actors in a post-peace agreement phase, there is a danger that the process may become so closely linked to the parties in power that when they change through elections, the dialog process stops. If participation is on a Track 1.5 and/or 2 level, however, dialog can continue even when power brokers change after elections. The governments in power must be informed and give their tacit assent in dialog processes before a peace agreement, but even more so after the signing of a peace agreement.

It is also important to have more and more local ownership of the process and outcome as the activities develop. A key aspect of this process was the close collaboration with local actors and the use of Tajik facilitators. This made it possible to leave the ownership of the process in the hands of the local population. Such processes cannot be planned from A to Z; rather, it is a question of navigation by sight, e.g., in the period before the

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4   1) Social dialog between Islam and the state of Tajikistan, 2) Role of women in the society: position of Islam and of Tajik society, 4) Ways of strengthening mutual relations between local authorities, religious organizations, and public communities, 5) Values of Islam and national statehood.

elections, the process slowed down, as everyone was waiting for the outcome.

Swiss Egyptian NGO Dialog as an Example of "Dialog through Practice" (Diapraxis)[1]

Corinne Henchoz Pignani[2]

Abstract

Facilitated by the RPC of the Swiss FDFA, two faith-based organizations, one from Switzerland and one from Egypt, engaged in a joint "dialog through practice" (diapraxis) project. Key steps in this process included recognition and acceptance of the other without trying to change them, co-creating ideas for joint activities, and joint implementation of the activities they agreed on. The project showed that the choice of partners is central and that those involved need to be open and interested in the explorative nature of the approach. Confidence-building takes time and is very much based on personalities; thus, continuity of people is vital. The project also showed that many differences stem from the different socio-cultural contexts rather than only from different value systems. Both partners stated that they had learned a lot from the project, which they could also use in different contexts.

Context and objectives of the project

Cooperation with Islamic charities – or faith-based civil society organizations – is relevant both politically (it fosters confidence-building and cooperation across the Mediterranean and beyond) and in relation to the future of humanitarian and development cooperation in Muslim majority countries (it promotes transparency and good governance in civil society). The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs' sector of activity "Religion, Politics, Conflict" (RPC) has therefore been engaged in practice-oriented dialog projects exploring the feasibility of cooperation between Western and Islamic faith-based organizations (FBO).

The idea of a project based on joint activities of FBOs with different religious background thus came after yearlong experiences of dialogs across the Mediterranean space. This experience showed that the exchange of views was not sufficient to build bridges and foster confidence and that more practical cooperation was needed. The Swiss and Egyptian Dialog Project (SEND) took into account these lessons and was conceived by RPC as a contribution to its efforts in promoting peaceful coexistence by seeking and testing innovative approaches to facilitate cooperation between FBOs from different part of the worlds and from different religious traditions.

The SEND project aimed at making two NGOs jointly develop and implement an activity without money being transferred. More generally, the SEND project aimed at contributing valid know-how and hands-on experience in the cooperation between non-governmental relief and development organizations with Islamic, Christian, secular, or other references, which came to be called "*intercommunal cooperation*" in the course of the project. The questions of political participation and pluralism (both religiously and politically understood) were also central issues that the project wanted to explore.

The participants to the project were an Egyptian NGO inspired by Islam and a Western NGO inspired by the Reformed Tradition of Christianity. Universal human rights and the Christian value of charity are the twin principles of the latter's frame of reference through which it strives to ensure that the dignity of human beings of all cultures and religions is respected. The Swiss organization saw its participation in the SEND project as an opportunity to challenge misconceptions about Islam's incompatibility with Western/international concepts and goals of development (democracy, gender equality, etc.). The Egyptian FBO is a confederation of grass-roots

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1   Formally, the project was conducted with the Centre for Cooperation, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of the Geneva Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies (GIIDS), in the framework of the "Religion & Politics: Initiatives and Applied Research" project. CCDP (and initially the Program for the Study of International Organization(s)) in Geneva coordinated the logistics and financing of the project; it also provided side-reflections, but did not take part in the dialog.

2   Religion, Politics, Conflict (RPC) theme of action of the Swiss FDFA.

social organizations operating in and around Cairo mainly for the youth and women. Commitment to faith is central to its mission and vision, guiding the ways in which its volunteers are trained to be active in the organization before playing a bigger role in their daily interaction with society. The Muslim NGO's main motivations for joining the SEND project related to the learning potential of the initiative and on expectations to develop the field of voluntarism in Egypt by training team members.

Chronology of the project

SEND was launched in 2007. In a preliminary phase (2006 – early 2007), contacts were established to identify two NGOs. In Egypt, the project was presented to different NGOs, until one declared its intention in principle to get on board. Both organizations were motivated by the idea of the project, but also by the opportunity to gain knowledge from "the other world". It is worth noticing that for the Egyptian NGO, the SEND project marked its first contact with a European organization. For the Swiss NGO, the set-up of the project was also totally new, in the sense that no money was to be transferred to the Egyptian NGO in exchange for a service and on the basis of a mandate.

In a second phase (August 2007-July 2009), confidence was gradually built between the two NGOs. Several meetings in Switzerland and in Egypt created a dialog dynamic. Each organization presented its operational work, which included field trips. The conversation was particularly complex and challenging when the two NGOs introduced the values and motivation behind their social and development programs. That led to moments of – sometimes deep – crisis and misunderstandings, almost to the point where the process broke down.

By the beginning of phase III (October 2009-March 2011), the two organizations had agreed on a joint activity. The joint activity would take the form of a summer camp for young women. The aim of the summer camp was *"to jointly develop an approach, applicable in Christian and Muslim societies, to instigate a self learning process which motivates to contribute to a just development"*.[3]

Phase IV (April 2011 – July 2011) of the SEND project saw the implementation of the joint activity and the reflection on the whole project by the different parties involved. The reflection included the identification of lessons learned for the organizations themselves, but also in the event that the project would be replicated. Plans and ideas on how to diffuse the lessons learned and recommendations to policy-makers and other potentially interested NGOs were also drawn.

Approach "dialog through practice"[4]

The SEND project was designed and set up under the assumption that words are not enough to create confidence and reduce divides, and that "dialogs through practice" (or "Diapraxis") – dialogs around practical solutions to concrete issues – are needed. The SEND project largely confirmed the validity of the assumption and of the underlying practice-oriented approach in the form of a "dialog through practice" that consists of three phases:

1. Recognition: accepting that one cannot understand the behavior or language of the other party entirely;
2. Co-creation: jointly develop mutually acceptable actions; and
3. Joint implementation: putting in practice what one has agreed to.

The organic process of getting through the three phases or operational steps opens up a mediation space[5] where a dialog towards a concrete joint action can take place. The two organizations not only managed over time to achieve this (*co-creation and joint implementation*), but also to avoid to mutually put in question the other organization's faith-inspired identity (*recognition*). The quite long trust-building phase, which already comprised joint activities, contributed greatly to that result.

Achievements and obstacles

The main achievement of the project consists in having successfully facilitated the implementation of a joint activity by two FBOs. The following

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3   Quote of the project document prepared by the two organizations.

4   See articles on Diapraxis in Part C and the article on the cultural-linguistic approach in Part B.

5   Mediation is understood here as "A process involving the creation of social spaces between divided groups, as opposed to a process lodged in the work of an individual or small team". Lederach, J. P. 2002. Building Mediative Capacity in Deep-Rooted Conflict. The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs 26(1): 91-101.

examples illustrate how the project supported the FBOs in their journey through the three phases mentioned above. Main achievements pertain to the recognition of each other's faith-based identity (or reference frame); the reconciliation of value systems; and the co-creation of actions.

a) *The reference frame*
A tacit understanding was reached between the two organizations on the following points:
• they do not express faith in the same way,
• they do not relate to faith in the same way,
• they do no refer to faith in the same way in their social activity.

At the same time, they agreed not to question each other in their (way of expressing) faith-inspired identity (*recognition: accepting not to understand*). The two teams recognized that ultimately, their action is motivated by values – themselves faith-derived – as well as the common vision of engaging with the poorest in the society. These two facts enabled and legitimized them to conduct a joint activity.

Once the integrity of worldviews had been established on each side (i.e., nobody would question or test what the other's worldview is and how it relates to one's action), joint work (*co-creation*) could start.

b) *Reconciliation of value systems through joint action*
It was a significant step when in a meeting the two teams once again[6] presented their reference frames. The Swiss team presented the notions of "equity, participation, and empowerment" in an interlinked triangle; the Egyptian team presented a "Spiritual Programming for Mind and Body, five traits of a successful personality and the meaning of life". Both teams managed not to question each other's reference frame, but in a joint exercise they managed to develop a third model out of their two reference frames. The Egyptian deliberately discarded some elements directly related to the Koran and the Muslim tradition. The third model was central in the preparation of the summer camp program and activities.

The concept of flexibility, which is part of the Egyptian organization's five traits of a successful personality, played a central role in the Egyptian team's involvement in the project. It legitimized the Egyptians to be involved in the SEND project – both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the skeptics in the organization, who time and time again challenged their involvement in the SEND project.

c) *Misunderstanding in communication*
At different points in the process, reasons for misunderstanding in the communication were discussed. The main assumption was that misunderstandings were the result of differences in worldviews or value systems. A review of the e-mail correspondence, however, revealed that the misunderstandings were the result of typical difficulties in communication between human beings, the type of situations where one sees a 6 and the other a 9. The two illustrations below show that the misunderstandings between the two teams had to do with living in different socio-cultural contexts and with communicating almost exclusively electronically.

• The need for the Egyptian partners to be accompanied when moving around Switzerland has to do with their socio-cultural background or "culture" and less with the specific worldview or a value system the an organization is referring to. For instance, during a joint dinner in Cairo, where we prepared the camp together with the participating young women, mobiles would start ringing at around 8pm, with parents asking where their daughters were. It was an extraordinary step for those parents to let their daughter go on a trip to Europe and a huge responsibility for their leader to actually do it. That is why a strict and binding set-up and program was expected on the Egyptian side. Changes created insecurity. On the Swiss side, the (strong) reaction when a change occurred was interpreted as rigidity and lack of flexibility, especially when it was noted that the same was not applicable to them – as Swiss – while in Egypt. The Swiss NGO has learned that when travelling in Switzerland, the particular needs of the Egyptian team needed to be taken for what they were (linked to their socio-cultural context: education and ways of living) and answered by the Swiss team in the spirit of welcoming a guest.

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6   This had been done several times in precedent meetings, leading to some crucial tensions and misunderstandings.

- When the Egyptian team wrote to RPC at FDFA's Political Affairs Division IV (PD IV) raising different issues related to the project, it was perceived by the Swiss team as a lack of trust and some of the questions made them feel unrecognized in their faith-based identity. That sparked off all sorts of speculations, such as the Egyptian NGO being reactive instead or pro-active or the suspicion that it was not genuinely interested in the project and looking for a way to quit it while blaming the other side for it. For the Swiss NGO, it was an occasion to spell out their doubts and frustration with the project ("not in our core business", "no return on investment", "too costly in energy", "always back to square one"). Pre-talks with key players led the two teams to understand that what was at stake was communication and decisionmaking processes related to different organizational practices. It also became clear to the Egyptian team that the need to be recognized and respected, if not partly understood, was very important for the Swiss team. That helped greatly the recognition stage and paved the way for the co-creation.

d) *Moderation*
Before the meetings where the joint activity had to be discussed and agreed upon, responsibility for the moderation of the meeting was intensively discussed per e-mails. The question was whether or not to involve an external party to do it. The Swiss and the Egyptian teams eventually agreed per e-mail that they would share the moderation of the meeting. By the end of the pre-talks that took place the morning prior to the meeting, both organizations demanded that a PD IV program officer do it as an insider partial. That opened up a mediation space where dialog in action (*co-creation*) could take place. By the end of the meeting, two people – one of each team – were appointed to draft the agenda for the next meeting.

Examples of how obstacles were overcome
On various occasions during the project, specific obstacles had to be overcome through the "dialog through practice" approach. The following three examples illustrate some of the difficulties.

Example 1: The Egyptian NGO refuses to be called a "faith-based organization"

The Egyptian NGO sent a clear message that it understood itself as a social organization based in the Islamic faith. Since it was registered in Egypt as a social NGO, it proposed for itself the label of "Islam-inspired social organization". The Swiss NGO reacted by saying that an Egyptian faith-based organization could be Christian as well. As a result of the discussion, the NGOs agreed that SEND is not a theological exercise. In SEND, both organizations have a reference and inspiration to the majority faith of their country. Consensus was thus found by using the terms "an organization with Muslim reference" and "an organization with Christian reference". The same reasoning was applied for PD IV objectives in SEND (instead of talking of "Muslim organizations", reference was made to "organizations with Muslim reference").

Example 2: Source of motivation to act
For the Egyptian NGO, living the instructions of the Quran leads to practice or action (from faith to action). Islam is seen as the reference for all they do. This implies that in fact, the members of the Egyptian NGO can hardly imagine working with an organization whose link to faith, and accordingly to practice faith is not clear. For the Swiss organization, having their roots in the Reformed Christian Tradition, it is easier to imagine work-ing with someone – while expressing and sharing their values (peace, justice, and integrity of creation) – for another reason than faith in God. The result of the discussion was the recognition that even with the trust at hand, some issues cannot be discussed; therefore, on a practical level, the frame and conditions (code of conduct/rules) have to be carefully agreed upon.

Example 3: restrictions for young Egyptian girls
During a discussion aiming at identifying the joint activity, the idea of the summer camp for young girls from Egypt and Switzerland was discussed. The head of the Egyptian organizations said: "The Egyptian context should be taken into consideration. Travel from one country to another is difficult. We will be dealing with young girls. To let young girls leave the countries provides a problem for us. In order to develop this project, we need to speak about differences on the cultural level existing by the people from Egypt and those of Switzerland who will be involved in jointly organizing and running the summer camp."

A Swiss participant answered: "If I respect myself, I also respect others. This means paying attention not to shock the other, but also to make sure that people can be themselves. We will not ask the Westerners to behave like Egyptians and not ask the Egyptians to act like Westerns." The head of the Egyptian organization replied: "If I enter a project, I would like to succeed. This seems very difficult. We can enter the project, but we have to speak about detailed rules. Otherwise the gap between us will widen." The two organizations agreed to write down a code of conduct that was then used during the running of the camp. The code of conduct helped make red lines clear for everybody.

Lessons learned

The choice of the partnering FBOs should not be taken lightly. Asymmetries in the institutional culture of the partner organizations are likely to exist, but should be taken into consideration from the outset of the "dialog through practice" process. Regardless of these differences, there are some prerequisites for the staff, members, and constituencies involved in intercommunal cooperation to fulfill, including a genuine interest in opening themselves to new experiences; an awareness of their identity in a way that they are able to enter into a dialog without denying their roots nor imposing them to the counterpart FBO; conviction that human beings of different religious and cultural backgrounds can share similar values; and a strong willingness to learn from experience. At the same time, *personalities matter the most.* Dialog and cooperation are first and foremost an exchange between people, which can be most easily sustained at the individual rather than institutional level. The participants in a dialog are the vectors of trust-building in and between organizations.

Confidence-building takes time and energy. Mutual familiarity, on which confidence can be built, requires time and sufficient sustained and regular contact. Trust should, however, never be taken for granted. It is better to avoid involving new actors during the process, because the difficulties and misunderstanding previously overcome may come up again; *and the dialog should be in a practice-oriented manner, and be linked to activities.* Exchanges should focus on practical issues, which allow differences of worldviews to be overcome. In practice, the higher the operational convergence and interest between the partnering organizations is, the more

likely it is that practice-oriented joint cooperation will work.

The importance of the difference of values should not be overstated. Often, problems arise on the relational level and should be addressed by clarifying roles, communication, and decisionmaking processes instead of interpreting the other's behavior based on assumptions about their different values. Therefore, instead of focusing on the values as such, it is wiser to look deeper into the practical meaning of values for the FBOs that relate to them and put them into play.

The modalities and practical arrangements should be defined at the outset of the dialog process and revaluated throughout. In order to prevent small misunderstandings from developing into problems and issues of mistrust, the roles, decisionmaking, and modes of communications need to be well defined. A reference frame including a code of conduct may prove useful for establishing the red lines that the organizations agree not to cross. The organizations involved must be ready to respect each other's red lines.

Addressing misunderstandings is key. Participating organizations are advised to discuss their expectations, frustrations, and also their positive views about the project openly and repeatedly. In particular, one should not shy away from acknowledging the existence of difficulties, since those are likely to feed into the learning process. Crises are about finding decisions and are hence beneficial to the process. *However, acknowledging the fact that complete understanding cannot be achieved is important.* Mutual knowledge grows gradually. Hence, it is crucial to refrain from interpreting statements and actions of the partner organization that are difficult to understand first-hand, to remain sensitive to changing realities, and to be ready for continuous learning, assessment, and reconsideration.

Recommendations by the participating organizations

The SEND project was a learning process for all the parties involved. At the end of the process, there was a broad consensus on the following ten recommendations for organizations with different worldviews that would work together in a joint project:

Take words for what they are (i.e., the practical consequence they have) not for what they might be (i.e., do not guess, ask); concentrate on the practical/concrete issues; rely on facts, not on hearsay or perceptions;

1. Accept that one does not understand (*recognition*); double-check what one does not understand instead of interpreting;
2. Misunderstandings are important because they make it possible to find out where we have different interpretations of the world and where we might have wrong ideas about each other. However, if misunderstandings are overcome and clarified, lasting bridges can be built;
3. Allow time for confidence-building and link it to joint activities; cooperation requires trust;
4. The notion of common ground before partnering for an action is misleading: The common ground must not be a prerequisite (accept the lack of understanding), but is created in common practice (*co-creation, joint implementation*);
5. Asymmetry between the two teams is certainly challenging for communication as well, and should be avoided as much as possible;
6. Check each step and each activity, to verify whether it is acceptable to the other, in practice;
7. Differentiate between objectives and motivation: The objectives can be the same, even if the motivation differs; there is a "reconciliation" on the practical level;
8. Pay attention to words that reinforce stereotypes: such as "Western", "Islamic", "Muslim";
9. Respect the other side's "red lines".

Conclusions

For the Egyptian NGO, the SEND project was a success because, despite difficulties and drawbacks, the joint activity took place. In their eyes, the "dialog through practice" they went through in the SEND project prepared them in a way for the new political situation in Egypt. The members of the Egyptian NGO have learned to cooperate with an organization and its members that do not share their worldview and their corporate culture. In doing so, the members of the Egyptian NGO were exposed to the "democratic game", which they define as "the practical search for consensus". In the current Egyptian political context, where identities seem to prevail above unity, the Egyptian NGO seeks to launch practical cooperation with Coptic or secular organizations. They see such actions as prevention to polarization.

As for the Swiss NGO, together with most of its partners, it uses the shared reference of the human rights framework to agree on working principles and shared projects (*human rights-based approach*). Should this framework prove to be inefficient with future partners, the Swiss NGO will definitely try to find common ground by referring to the Christian faith framework and/or by looking for shared values as the basis for cooperation, as they have learned to do in the SEND project.

It is indeed interesting to note that the "dialog through practice" has taught both organizations something meaningful for their own contexts and corporate realities. It contributed to remove preconceptions about the "others" and to develop an interest for and an understanding of intercommunal cooperation. For the Swiss FDFA, it was a confirmation that "dialog through practice" is a powerful approach that can build bridges between peoples and groups with different worldviews and foster confidence, and that intercommunal cooperation is not only feasible, but also "a must" in cotextswhere polarization represents a serious threat to stability and peaceful coexistence.

Communities Defeat Terrorism – Counter Terrorism Defeats Communities

The Experience of an Islamic Centre in London after 9/11

Abdulfatah Said Mohamed[1]
in discussion with Damiano Angelo Sguaitamatti

Abstract

This article explores an approach to mediating in the context of violent extremism that goes beyond the bi-polar notion propagated by the advocates of the US so-called "War on Terrorism" declared after September 2001 ("you are either with us or with the terrorists"). According to this approach, a space is required where those who support neither terrorism nor the "War on Terrorism" can meet. This space is created by the acknowledgement of each individual's responsibility towards society, shared values, dialog, and transparency. It was applied by an Islamic center in London after 9/11 to counter the fears of the non-Muslim population and channel the anger and frustrations of the center's own Muslim community. While successful during the first four years, efforts undertaken by the center were jeopardized after the 2005 attacks on the London Underground, as political pressure increased to isolate communities that did not subscribe to the "War on Terrorism" rationale. In order to be sustai able and re-open space for dialog, community leaders therefore need to reach out and engage in dialogwith local and national political elites.

Introduction

During the last decade, increasingly confrontational policies and rhetoric have dominated the relationship between what is usually called the "West" and the "Islamic World". Even though the Obama administration made some efforts to overcome this situation, most policies, in particular domestic counter-terrorism policies, are still very much the same – despite numerous reports indicating the limitations or even failure of this kind of approach towards violent extremism.

The aim of this contribution is to explore the positive role religion can play to overcome the confrontation and thus prevent the use of violence. The approach rejects the bi-polar notion of "either with us or with the terrorists" and gives space for criticizing Western policies, while working for the prevention of violent extremism. It thereby draws on religious resources to counter the violent extremists' arguments, explores common ground between different value systems and attempts to translate and navigate from one into the other.

This chapter illustrates this approach by describing the activities of an Islamic Center in London after 9/11. With a population 2.4 Million, the Muslim community in Britain is amongst the largest Muslim minorities in the EU. While tensions and failures on both the Muslim community's and the government's side tend to be highlighted by the press, promising efforts in bridging the divide were undertaken right after 9/11. The following contribution stems from conversations with the director of this Center, Abdulfatah S. Mohamed. It expresses the personal experience and views of Abdulfatah Mohamed that were collected during two conversations. Some key insights are:

- **The Divide:** Social marginalization, political grievances, lack of Islamic knowledge, and a crisis of (Muslim) identity are drivers of violent extremism. Actors with a confrontational agenda on both sides have utilized these drivers to increase the divide. **On both sides, people are hijacking their communities' values and beliefs to justify the use of force.**

- **Bridging the Divide:** The different communities need to acknowledge that the grievances stated above are not a problem of one section of society caused by the "other". These problems need to be tackled jointly by all and it is therefore important to overcome the either-or approach. **This creates the "meditative space" where differences can be dealt with without resorting to violence.**

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1 A former Director General and Trustee of an Islamic Centre in London

- **Religious Social Responsibility:** Since some violent extremists claim to act in the name of their religion, there is a need to reclaim the religious discourse and use it to promote non-violent and non-confrontational behavior. Violent extremists neglect their religious duty of social responsibility. Religious leadership is needed in order to promote the religious foundations for responsible political practice. **Religion thus becomes the basis for the prevention of violence.**

- **Dialogue and Transparency:** An open information policy and transparency, like the "Open Mosque" initiative, helped to foster trust and credibility. Moreover, dialogue can help British security officers to understand Islamic values and customs in order to adapt security measures as far as possible to the Muslims' needs. At the same time, Human Rights need to be translated into the religious (Islamic) discourse, in order to make it accessible for Muslim believers.

- **Common Values and Justice:** Instead of focusing on identity labels (such as "Muslim" and "Christians") communities can engage constructively on the basis of shared values. These values range from dignity of human beings, to truth, respect of treaties and agreements, and the acknowledgement and respect of diversity (in cultures and religions). **People from all faiths (and those without faith) may thus find many ways to jointly engage in peaceful political activities.**

- **Potential and Limitations:** Nothing within the "mediative space" is ever acquired for ever. Classical counter terrorism measures often jeopardize the achievements of such community based work and alienate the communities that are needed to fight violent extremism: "Communities defeat terrorism – counter terrorism defeats communities." Acts of violence and measures of security forces may undermine at any time the achievements within communities. **Reaching out to decision makers and stakeholders outside the local communities is key to sustain the efforts.**

1. The Divide: Grievances and Rhetoric
This first chapter describes the divide and confrontation between the so called "West" and the "Islamic World". On both sides of the divide,

legitimate aims, fears and interests intermingle with radicalization, confrontational rhetoric and violence. It is important to understand the context and dynamics of radicalization in order to address the underlying issues in a more constructive and sustainable manner. This context includes a variety of aspects, such as social marginalization, political grievances, or identity related questions.[2] There is no deterministic causal relationship between these aspects and violent radicalization. The aim is rather to depict a context that is "conducive to radicalization"[3] and that led to a confrontational rhetoric which up to now is still predominant in the public debate. We first look at the mainstream political rhetoric in the West, and then turn to the Muslim community in the UK.

a) Confrontational Rhetoric after 9/11
After the terrorist attacks on the New York Twin Towers, official statements urged to de-link terrorism from Islam and not to interpret the wars in Afghanistan and other Muslim countries as a war against Islam. Yet, even today, when surfing the internet, expressions of mutual fear and mistrust are ubiquitous. The many war-related verses from the holy writings (Quran, Sunna, Hadith) are cited and taken as a proof for the "real aims" of the Muslims, which are concealed by a "huge cover-up of Islamic doctrine" by American Muslim groups.[4]

Former US President George W. Bush, while confirming that the U.S. enemy was not Islam itself, stated that every nation had to decide, whether they were "with us, or […] with the terrorists".[5] This expression is symbolic for the confrontational approach that does not allow for a differentiated stance against the phenomenon of violent extremism. Even though the new administration has promised to move away from this stance, it remains yet to be seen to what extent Barack Obama is in a position to really change

2   See also H. A. Hellyer (2007): Engagement with the Muslim Community and Counter Terrorism. The Brookings Project on U.S. relations with the Islamic world. Analysis Paper Number 11, December 2007.

3   Dilwar Hussain (2007): British Muslims in the Anti-Terror Age. Global Dialogue Volume 9, Number 3–4, Summer/Autumn 2007—Europe and Its Muslims.

4   Robert Spencer (2006): The politically incorrect guide to Islam. Regnery Publishing.

5   Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People: http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.

US policies towards the Arab world. At the same time, Europe is experiencing a rise of right wing parties and islamophobia, be it in the Netherlands, in Denmark, or in Switzerland.[6]

From this confrontational perspective, political grievances, wrapped in a religious discourse, are but a pretext for violent extremism. The reference to Islamic traditions backs up the Western perception that Islam itself is the basis for violence. As a result, much of the debate is a battle of arguments and counter-arguments randomly taken from the holy writings, to the extent that the critics of Islam have started counting the words in a quest to prove that Quran is more violent than other religious texts.[7]

b) Heterogeneity of the Muslim Community
The Muslim community in the UK, on the other side, is quite heterogeneous and consists of four different strands of immigration. The first three are: Muslim soldiers fighting for the British army since World War I; Muslim workers in the rail industry coming from the sub-continent (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan); and students coming from Arab countries to continue their higher studies. All these people stayed as part of the community and got naturalized as time went by.

Their history does not differ much from that of Jewish people in Europe, Catholics or Black People in the UK. They all faced discrimination, racism, and xenophobia, and were seen as inferior, which left feelings of alienation and resentments within the families. Muslims are one of the poorest communities in Britain, in terms of housing, incomes, and education. Compared to other minorities, Muslims lag way behind in their school performance. As a consequence, there is a lack of positive and successful role models within the British society. Many young Muslim, like the Somali children in Totteham, saw the footballer Thierry Henri as role model because he was the best player at Arsenal. Yet, after 9/11, with the pictures of Osama ruling the airwaves, they saw

a person, who could defeat the US. This was a different role model.

A last strand of Muslim immigrants consisted of refugees entering the UK mainly during the 1990s, for instance Iraqi and Kurds fleeing Saddam Hussein; or Bosnians and Somalis feeling the wars in their countries. However, one key group that came to the UK during that period was the so called "Returning Arab Afghans". These people had been sent to Afghanistan on behalf of the West to fight the Soviets as part of the Afghan Jihad during the 1980s. In 1992, when the war ended with the fall of the communist government, these individuals went back to their home countries, e.g. Egypt or Algeria.

With the 1991 Gulf War their perception towards the West shifted, as this war was seen as an illegitimate interference in the holy land of Mecca and Medina. Moreover, the returnees perceived their home governments (be it in Egypt, Algeria or Jordan) as not following the religious traditions and becoming too much dependent upon a Western political agenda. As a consequence, these governments were facing a hostile community that challenged their alliance to the West. They reacted by prosecuting and jailing the returnees, who in turn fled to Western countries. Like other European countries, the UK granted asylum and allowed them to move and speak freely, as long as their political activism was directed against their home governments and not against the UK.

c) Grievances and Radicalization within the Muslim Community
Once the Returning Arab Afghans had been granted asylum in the West, they continued to be shaped by developments in their new and old homes:

Political Grievances: The rejection of the election results in Gaza in 2006, events in the Abu Grahib prison and the Guantanamo Bay Camp were seen as an expression of double standards and the West's hypocrisy. Through the prism of world events, Muslims dying while fighting against British soldiers, feelings grew that their brothers in religion were unjustly attacked and that their host community (e.g. the British society) was actually a hostile environment. The feeling of alienation was further nurtured after 9/11 through anti-terror

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6   Mason, Aroua, Aberg (2010): Mediating Tensions over Islam in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland. Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich and Cordoba Foundation, Geneva.
 http://www.peacemediation.ch/resources/documents/Mediating_Europe_Islam.pdf

7   Center for the Study of Political Islam
http://www.cspipublishing.com/statistical/index.html

legislation (such as "Stop-and-Search") that hit in particular the Muslim community.[8]

Crisis of Identity: This context exacerbated one of the main challenges for Muslims in Europe: the relationship between their religious and their civic identity. In "To be a European Muslim", Tarek Ramadan has written in detail on how the dichotomy could be dealt with and how it could be overcome. According to him, Muslims should not establish a parallel community, but engage within the mainstream and have Islam represented in the mainstream institutions. His work was quite influential amongst university students and thought to bring Islam into the context of modern societies. The European Fatwa Council and Scholars coming from Arab countries have issued regulations on this issue too, yet their impact was rather minimal.

In the UK, one issue is the status of Islam in British Society, for the Muslim's religion is not recognized as an official one like, for instance, the Sikh's. Thus, the Islamic law, the Sharia, cannot be part of the British personal law, as is the case for other religious communities. When religious laws are integrated into the British law, it means that different regulations may apply on specific issues depending on the community one pertains to. While some demands have indeed been put through law, there are other more controversial issues, such as the balance between freedom of speech and defamation of religion. Muslim may also request their children not to take place in swimming classes. The Islamic leadership in the UK contacted other communities early on in an inter-religious dialogue. Such dialogue was very fruitful, and most catholic schools respect the needs of Muslim pupils (more than state schools, as their teachers are more aware of religious customs).

Lack of Islamic Knowledge: Above all, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge of Islam. Due to the absence of meaningful answers to the identity crisis of young people, some preachers – notably amongst the Afghan returnees – had a space to fill. These people spoke out loud on specific issues on Jews, issues related to the West and preserving the identity of the Muslim youth. And they also spoke out very loud on the issue of Jihad. They felt that they had become the brokers and recruiters of Jihad in the West, without recognizing that Jihad is not something that anyone can wage at anytime. It is only the head of the state who calls for the Jihad to defend the Muslim community against an attack. These rules were quite neglected: Jihad has been made a "do-it-yourself" practice.

d) Hijacking Value Based Discourses for the Confrontation

The political and social alienation as well as the lack of meaningful answers within either the religious or the civic identity was utilized by radical scholars to further their political, confrontational aims towards Arab governments and their Western allies. At the same time, Western politicians nurtured the confrontation by propagating slogans like "you are either with us or with the terrorists".[9] The confrontational rhetoric was self-sustaining in that each statement of "crusades" by the West legitimizes the "Waging of Jihad" and vice versa. While the U.S. was waging war to spread democracy, violent extremists were waging Jihad in fulfillment of their religious duties. In this way, both sides were hijacking their communities' values and beliefs to justify the use of force.

One of the main arguments of violent extremists in favor of their actions is that they want to prevent others from doing an evil e.g. against the Palestinians.[10] Violent extremists can easily point at Palestinian suffering and Egypt and Saudi Arabia are doing nothing! As a consequence it is their religious duty to wage Jihad. And since Egypt is just a tool in the hands of the "powerful snake" (the West), instead of attacking the tool, they call for attacking the "head of

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8 See also reports on StopWatch (http://www.stop-watch.org/about.html). What has been observed by Muslim Citizens was that after 9/11 the "Stop-and-Search" was first focusing on Arabs and North Africans. Down the line, after the invasion of Afghanistan, the focus became more the youth from Central Asia.

9 Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.

10 "Enjoying the good and forbidding the evil" is a key component to Islamic activism. It means that one should encourage people to do good and prevent people from doing evil things. It is done on three levels: by the hands (means by superior power); by tongue (which is speech power); or by heart (that you do not like it even if you are in the midst of it). These levels must be assessed and tested in terms of the position you are and the context: if you prevent the evil by hand, does it lead to a bigger evil? So you weigh between the benefits and the costs associated.

the snake", which is the US. This is the rationale for 9/11. The Islamic rules for waging Jihad were totally neglected in their discourse.

2. Bridging the Divide

As a consequence of the confrontation, many young-sters started asking whether it is right or not to serve for this society, e.g. become a Police or Army officer. The answer we gave at the Center was "yes, you can join the Police and even the Army, as long as the Army is not fighting for injustice." For instance, a Muslim cannot follow Tony Blair saying we are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even many non-Muslims were not convinced that this is a just war. So as a Muslim soldier you back off. And as a Muslim police officer, if you see acts of injustice even towards a non Muslim community committed by the police institution, you have to back off. All these questions have to be put in perspective: it is not about "us vs. them", but about finding ways to promote Justice.

At the same time we said to our fellow police colleagues: look, we have an argument to put in front of you. Justice is independent of religion. You say whatever you say. We do not believe that your wars are just; we do not think that the "Stop-and Search" is of any help. This is our position on your policies, the position of mainstream Muslim community leaders. It is a position regarding principles of justice, not regarding a religious community. Yet, this does not mean that we would allow an act of violence happen on the domestic level. Acts of terrorism are against our beliefs, no act of violence against civilians for whatever ends is justified. This is based on our religious convictions.

We state our differences, yet we remain committed to fight for justice within the political system of the UK. This is the space we intended to open for our work, based on our religious convictions. It is similar to what has been called a "meditative space"[11], a space, in which people can meet to find common ground and explore ways to manage their differences in a non violent manner. This space can only be opened, if we manage to overcome the dichotomy of "either with us or with the terrorists".

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11 Lederach, J. P. 2002. Building Mediative Capacity in Deep-Rooted Conflict. The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs 26(1): 91-101.

a) Religious Foundations: Social Responsibility

In order to convince young Muslim people to be part of a non-confrontational approach, it was important to counter the violent extremists' arguments as stated above. We had to show that it is not a betrayal of the Muslim identity or Islam. The religious duty of "enjoying good and forbidding evil" does not mean you have to commit acts of violence, for two reasons at least: First, there is the respect for agreements: one cannot enter a community on the basis of an agreement (e.g. the Visa or the grant of asylum) and then commit an act of betrayal. This was true even at the time when the Prophet was fighting the "non-believers". Second, this kind of betrayal has brought the Muslim community to what it became after 9/11: a suspect community. Violent extremists have done what they have done; the Muslims have lost Afghanistan and have lost Iraq, civilians were killed. Yet, instead of weakening the US or its tools, you weakened the very community you wanted to support: the Muslims.

Contrary to the stance of violent extremists, who perceive their host communities in the West as fundamentally hostile and therefore feel no obligations towards it, religious leaders point at the *religious obligation* for social responsibility. A parable of the Prophet, reported by An-Nu'man bin Bashir serves to illustrate this:

"The example of the person abiding by Allah's order and restrictions in comparison to those who violate them is like the example of those persons who drew lots for their seats in a boat. Some of them got seats in the upper part, and the others in the lower. When the latter needed water, they had to go up to bring water (and that troubled the others), so they said, 'Let us make a hole in our share of the ship (and get water) saving those who are above us from troubling them. So, if the people in the upper part left the others do what they had suggested, all the people of the ship would be destroyed, but if they prevented them, both parties would be safe."

Three main conclusions are drawn from this parable: First, even though the people in the lower part of the boat might have had good intentions (not to disturb those in the upper part), their solution would have led to disastrous results for all people. Second, everyone has the duty to assess his or her own actions in the light of their long-term impact for the entire community. Third, since the people

at the bottom might not have had the necessary oversight, it is the duty of the people at the top to explain to those at the bottom that they would rather be disturbed than to drown. As a consequence, the leaders of a community have the duty to encourage social responsiveness by all the community members (which is the so called Hisba, the self-regulatory of communities).

Communities Defeat Terrorism

These principles of responsibility towards the community are valid, no matter what community one lives in. As a consequence, if there is a religious duty to promote socially responsible behavior and prevent community members from committing acts of violence that would destroy the community (such as terrorist acts), the community becomes the most important tool for prevention of violent extremism – from a religious perspective. When talking to the police we usually integrated a saying in our presentations:

"Communities defeat terrorism, counter-terrorism measures defeat communities"

The police usually agreed with this saying. In the police there is a long standing tradition of community-police relationship. Communities help prevent and investigate criminality. The work of the police is much harder in a hostile environment. By neglecting community relationship, the police would have much more difficulties in fighting organized criminality, let alone terrorism. To ensure the community's support, terrorism needs to be tackled differently than other crimes.

We were raising this issue because of the "Stop-and-Search" policy of the government. Instead of winning the community, such traditional "fishing expeditions" increased the gap. In addition, the center was also visited by informants from time to time – some were asking weird questions about Jihad, other were just taking part in the prayers. This did not make sense, because it contradicted the spiit of partnership and was an expression of deeply rooted mistrust.

The implementation of an alternative approach aiming at strengthening the role of the community and partnership with the institutions was the major concern of the Islamic Center after 9/11. The following chapter gives some insights into the activities of the Center and its achievements both within its own community and with the security institutions.

3. Filling the Mediation Space: Experiences from London

The engagement of the Islamic centre was based on religious convictions, i.e. on the obligation for social responsibility: as a director of the centre, it was important to relate to the religious discourse. The religious foundation for filling the "mediation space" is central, for it challenges the violent extremists' arguments with in the Islamic identity framework young people are looking for. Based on this argumentation, the centre could engage in a variety of activities, aiming at bridging the divide and showing that the world was not divided in those committing acts terrorism, and those fighting in Iraq; that there was a large Muslim community that associated itself with the many Europeans and Americans who rejected war and terrorism.

The center is quite unique in London. Most of the centers are just mosques. This particular one not only has a mosque with a congregation of over 1000 people every Friday; it includes also a primary school, a shop, a restaurant, a hostel, a social department (for counseling), a center where Zakat is collected and sent overseas as well as a discovery department (mainly for non-Muslims who want to learn about Islam, yet offering also lectures, seminars and courses related to the season, e.g. on the rules during the month of Ramadan). The centre also addresses the needs of Youngsters who come and do sport exercises: there is a small gym and a space for martial arts, boxing and so on. The centre is also engaging with other mosques, as well as with the national bodies representing the Muslims. The center has a director, who may also do the Friday prayer and who leads the community also in spiritual issues.

a) Dialogue and Transparency

One of the first things that happened after 9/11, before the first Friday congregation, was a visit from the Criminal Investigations Department of the London Metropolitan Police (Scotland Yard). They told us about certain guidelines on what the centre should be equipped with, for example CCTV cameras. They took care of us, in case there anything happened to the mosque as a counter-reaction

to 9/11. Hence, the first visit of the police was about how to protect the community, it was a positive first encounter. They did not come to us to investigate us, but to assist us to make sure we our measures were appropriate.

In essence, we adapted our own self-regulatory system to the new rules and regulation after 9/11. Since some centers in the US were investigated whether the suspects went to this or that mosque, we wanted to make sure to comply with the regulations. In the London centre, we started our own investigation whether anyone of the suspects stayed in the accommodation, whether any of these people or some related people came to pray or to buy certain things, or seek advice or a fatwa, or whether they had been working here. We asked ourselves these difficult questions. Are we clear or not?

After that we invited the Borough Police to the Iftan dinner during Ramadan, which is the fast-breaking after sunset. We wanted to show the hospitality of the Muslim community to our fellow neighbors, as well as some of our traditions, such as fasting. When the prayers began, we went downstairs to pray, and we put chairs at the back of the prayer hall for the Police to watch us while praying. After the prayer, we would go upstairs for dinner, and we started to break the ice.

The idea of this 'open mosque' was that it would ease the relationships. This was the first idea for conflict transformation: If the mosque is closed and the media is writing something about it, suspicion would increase and hence we would not be helping to solve the conflict but adding more fire to it. However, some community members were frightened, since most Muslim immigrants do not see the police with the same eyes as a Western citizen. For someone who came from Somalia or Iraq Police is brutal. Hence, one of the things I was trying to communicate to the police was the need to understand the trauma these people had passed. Allowing the police to come into the mosque was basically a way to rehabilitate them as actors of peace. And the police of course was quite happy about this idea.

On such an occasion it was suggested to the police that the center could organize an Islamic awareness course for the recruits. The idea was

that, when police officers are in front of a Muslim woman, they know how to handle the situation in a peaceful way without causing more problems. This was of particular importance in the context of the "Stop-and-Search" regulations and other security legislation that conferred more power to the police. The recruits would come to a senior staff of the centre and visit every department of the centre. They would see every corner of the centre. By doing this we wanted to give them reassurance that we were not hiding anything: transparency.

The recruits were informed about prayer times, for instance: a mosque has five times prayers a day. You have to open up for the Muslim community in the early morning. In the summer this is about 3 o'clock! What does it mean for the police when they see a group of people at that time gathering? Another example would be: What does it mean for you as police when you knock at the door and you see a woman inside who does not want to open for you? The woman is not opening because Islamic law forbids women opening a door to strangers. But in your security paradigm she is refusing to open the door in order to hide something. Understanding the peoples' fears and needs helps devising operational rules that are less detrimental to the police-community relationship.

Some recruits admitted that their perception before getting into the mosque and their feelings after were totally different: "We were quite worried; we had this paranoia, even though we are the police. But the way we were welcomed and the way our questions were answered, the fact that you have a school with kids and that the teachers are sisters, who are looking after them according to the child protection act; this is quite sophisticated!" Thus, the courses eased the tensions, the center became transparent and people started to appreciate its work. The center was the first one launching initiatives like the "Open Mosque" and the "Islamic Awareness Courses". These courses were later taken up by other institutions and integrated in the recruits' curriculum.

b) Human Rights and Justice
At the same time the Center was also working with its own community. Two examples serve to illustrate the attempt to build a bridge between communities on the basis of the notion of social responsibility. Both examples are directly related

to the grievances of the young Muslims in the UK and their feelings of alienation prompted by the UK government's foreign policy and counter-terrorism measures. Acknowledging the grievances and discontent with some UK policies does not mean to accept or justify acts of violence. In both instances the emphasis was on finding the common ground with the British society and bridging the divide based on common values. The first example concerns the reaction to the war in Iraq, the second one is about perceived discrimination in the UK.

Before the war in Iraq started, there was an urgent need for the young people to present their views and their disagreement with the UK foreign policy. We pointed at the structures and means to protest against the government: "You are not the only ones in this opposition against the war. There is already a coalition of them. You can join them and go into the streets and say things within that kind of context." In order to transform the conflict, we were exploring what is in the Western system, and try to bring it to the attention of our people who have a position, to rally these masses.

The aim was to give the people a solution. This way you channel the anger of the youth in a positive way, which conforms to the system. Some of course were saying what is the point? The government is going to war anyway; they are not going to back off. We said maybe they are not going to back off, but if you back off you are not going to win anyway. If you say this is injustice you do not keep it for yourself, you do not keep your anger in your heart you bring it out. This way you are trying to address the grievances. And in the other way you are sending a message that you are not happy with the government's foreign policy.

The role of the director was to coach the youngsters in the conformity of the system of this country. To show the means given to individuals, based on what is called freedom of expression and assembly. All these liberties you have to take into account. If you see something that is against human rights, you can say this is an abuse! All of a sudden, the Muslim community had counter arguments that were understood by the larger British mainstream. And at the same time, the young Muslims are less attracted by other ways of fighting against injustice. You are winning them and you are winning their parents too by saying you have an option.

For once you saw Muslim and non-Muslim coming together on one platform, calling the government not to invade another Muslim country with false justifications. This in itself was quite new. That there is a possibility of solidarity based on values across the communities. This is a key learning. What was important was to bring in the notion of values, because the values are common. Of course, the Muslim community does not share all values of the West. Maybe we do not go to the streets with the wider community on issues like fox hunting. But when it comes to this case, at least we are together. This also gave a better understanding to the Muslim community about the wider community. You cannot put all the Brits into one basket!

The second event happened in the early morning, in December 2003: the security forces arrested number of young people. This was a key event. One of them was arrested quite brutally, he was kicked, thrown on the floor and one of the police officers even said "where is your god now to save you?" There were bruises on his face, and one of the most disturbing elements of the situation was that there was no evidence whatsoever for the crimes the persona allegedly committed. He happened to be on a US black list. In fact, he was soon released with no charges.

His mother and father came to us and spoke to the scholar at the center, the Sheik. They asked what they should do. As the community leader the director had the responsibility to react to this humiliation. We called in a meeting with number of Muslim leaders to say enough I enough. Muslim leaders have been quite active when it comes to foreign policy but what about the domestic? The director also spent a lot of time discussing the case with the young community members. They had a lot of questions about what to do. The idea came up that this was an opportunity to establish some sort of a human rights group with the aim to support people who are in prison. Whether they are in Guantanamo or Belmarsh: you stand with your brothers. You cannot do anything wrong. Like in the case of the Iraq war, you try to bring your case forward by finding a way within the structure.

At the beginning we started a campaign saying "Stop Police Terror". What we wanted was to send a message to the police and to the youth. The message to the police was "control your guys" the message to the youth was "find a way to prevent humiliation". This is an incident where you can see a conflict that could become highly emotional and potentially be taken forward into something wrong (e.g. violent retaliation). What we did was to manage the situation by encouraging them to be part of this "Stop Police Terror". Later it became "Stop Political Terror" and then it became a group called "Cage".[12] Today, it is a well known group. It is a group which defends brothers and sisters in prison.

We also met police officials and requested that there should be an investigation. During a meeting, about a week after the young man had been released, they invited someone who was responsible for the crown prosecution, from the complaints department of the police. He told us the result of their internal investigation. The director of the Islamic Center was in the meeting to challenge the complaint department when they said nothing had happened, nothing established. Indeed, they were in a total state of denial.

I left the meeting before it ended to join a big gathering at our centre. Some 500 people came together at the Center on December 10, 2003. We had invited the Muslim community and the Islamic human rights community in the UK to come and give talks. The meeting should become the launch of the platform "Stop Police Terror" and take this case as the symbol. The aim was to call upon Muslims to engage in a human rights discourse, to prevent humiliation and to translate the grievances and the anger into an active role of protesting within the system.

It was new for the youth to engage in Human Rights. For a long time they thought it is not for us, it is Western. However, religion is a powerful tool to promote Human Rights. The interfaith group "London Citizens" used the term "Stand for Justice". Moreover, Islam and the Human Rights system are not incompatible. In fact, Islam and Human

Rights in many ways are compatible. There could be some areas, scholarly speaking, where there are differences. In Islam they talk about Human *Dignity*. The issue is that human dignity is not superior to God, because God created human beings and *gave* them dignity. In the West, however, God is not present anymore in the Human Rights discourses. What we are trying to do as Muslims, is to say: "God is present in Human Rights". This means we have to make sure all issues of Human Rights are embedded in the religious discourses, not against it.

In essence, that event helped to use something which is good in the system, which is based on solidarity with people in need of solidarity. You may call it Human Rights, Stand up with Your Brothers or Stand for Justice. And the fact that we were able to manage 500 or 600 people in the centre and pass a message that you have to be constructive, certainly gave us credibility amongst the security establishment. We were good mediators.

4. Potential and Limitations
The following three considerations point at the potential and limitations of the work within the mediation space: First, there needs to be leadership within the communities and partnership across communities; second, while focusing on the immediate neighborhood of the community, it is important to reach out beyond it, in order to ensure a durable impact; Third …

Leadership within the community, partnership across communities
It was important that we could show that we have influence in our community. Not like the big bodies and councils. We in our locality we can really handle it. To achieve this, you need authority. The director was at the level of leadership. An imam is an authority in Islam, because he is leading prayers and people pray behind him. He is benefitting from this kind of leverage. He is reciting the Koran, he is interpreting the Koran and he is a man of knowledge. So he is at a higher level than the recipient audience, at least to some extent. But he is also intermingling with them, socializing, eating with them. In the restaurant: "How are you Mohamed, how are your studies? I did not see you for some time in the Mosque, are you having a love affair?" So you intermingle socially. But at the same time when serious things happen (e.g. the prayer) they see you as somehow higher.

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12 See www.cageprisoners.com. The previous websites www.stoppoliceterror.com and www.stoppoliticalterror.com no longer operate, yet by entering the website's URL on replay. www.waybackmachine.org, it is possible to trace the group's activities prior to 2005.

This was all the more important, because we were saying that it is the lack of Islamic knowledge that causes some of those young people to be violent, not the opposite. With the youth I was talking to them about how to really become good Muslims and good citizens. It is about respecting the neighbors, respecting those who have achieved, but also connecting to their own history, to Islam. Good Muslim does not mean weak; it means that he or she is going to use his or her energy only for good causes not for violence. However, there are limits to this influence. There are events taking place which provide good justification for the use of force: Palestine, injustice in Afghanistan and Iraq. So at some point the young people might say "Imam, stay where you are, I am going to fight now!"

The work with the police was a totally different pair of shoes. With the police we were really trying to make it equal. But in many cases of course the police set the agenda, they had the issues and they wanted you to contribute to those issues. The police basically either called for a workshop or a conference to discuss issues or talk about certain things like radicalization in prisons or issues of Muslim youth; or there was a one-to-one conversation, where we gave our perspective on issues or where we passed your expertise to new recruits.

With the police the relationship evolved over time. The encounters with the Police were more formal. At the beginning, we were prudent, as we did not want to say something that could be misunderstood. Unlike with the Muslim youth, we were not coming from the same paradigm, the same frame of reference (even though the director of the Center was quite accustomed to the Western discourses). You cannot bring a verse from Quran or Hadith for justification like that. Since the Police represented first and foremost an institution, personal relationships had to be developed gradually. Yet, as time went by, some of the members of the specialized units within Scotland Yard became good friends of ours.

Sometimes we were challenging the authority of the police, their approach or what they have done. While the people sitting in these units did not necessarily know Islam, they were interested in knowing more and able to listen. Due to their decade long experience e.g. with the Irish conflict,

they knew this kind of cases and they wanted to understand. Not everyone within Scotland Yard was on that same level of understanding of the causes of conflict. To have such specialized officers, who are able to cross frames of reference, is a key factor for successful partnerships across communities.

b) The challenge of reaching out nationally

Despite the challenging events, we kept our activities ongoing, also with the neighborhood, with other churches and schools. We reached the Neighborhood Watch Group and had even a group of Geography students who conducted a study on our relationship with the neighbors. We started to be more aware of security regulations, in particular when people stayed overnight or gatherings took place. In a sense the whole situation helped us to become a safer place for our community members and for our neighborhood. Through 2004 and 2005, our neighborhood had become quite sensitized and accustomed to our activities.

After the Madrid experience we realized the need for reaching out beyond our neighborhood. As a consequence I invited the key members of the police in the centre to a meeting called "What if anything happens in London". It was like a scenario planning. They informed us that usually, when an event of such scale happens, we have to engage with the "Golden Group". This is where the key officials of the police as well as church leaders and members of the council meet, e.g. to send one message and communicate alerts.

In order to make this mechanism more effective, we planned to reach out to other Islamic centers. We therefore offered to the police that we could help to go to Islamic centers and be some kind of a mediator, helping to talk to each other. We went to some Centers to try and craft a coordinated response: there should be one spokesperson, a committee who looks after the families of arrested people, and another group that talks to the neighbors, and so on. Of course not everyone would take this quite seriously, and we had no authority whatsoever to impose any measures. Some would just listen to you and it goes by, some would go forward and establish an emergency committee.

The importance of reaching out to other centers can also be illustrated by the events surrounding the North London Mosque, which for a long time

was used by Abu Hamza for his preaching. Now, this is a long story; in the end, it was raided by the Police and Hamza was arrested. The Muslim community, on the one side, was disturbed by the raid on a sacred place. To raid a mosque was a precedent we were not happy with. On the other side, we saw that case as a point of weakness in the Muslim community too: because the Muslims had not been able to kick Abu Hamza out of that Mosque. In a way it was far away from our Center, but it affected us. The heavy handed approach increased negative feelings within our community and the whole incident led to worrying islamophobic reactions.

c) After 7/7

The Northern mosque event shows that nothing within the "mediative space" is ever acquired. Elements on both sides of the divide are constantly working for the clash, for the confrontation. And to reach out to all of them is virtually impossible. We worked with the media, explained our work, yet from time to time we were ourselves depicted as "faith invaders"[13] and accused of trying to convert Christians to Islam.

Even though we were thinking of such an event for some time, 7/7 was a shock. Any of us could have been one of the victims. The violent extremists behind these acts were from outside London and we had not been able to reach those communities. As a reaction we hoped the government would strengthen our work and build on the positive experiences of the Centers that were successfully cooperating with the security institutions while preserving their independent opinion and opposition to certain government policies. The reaction was quite the opposite.

The Preventing Extremism Together Program (PET) was a move by the UK government after 7/7. While part of it was intended to intensify community work and strengthen the relationship with Muslim communities, the effect was rather negative. In fact, by providing financial means under certain conditions, the system was soon discredited. It confounded intelligence work with community relationships, thereby putting Islamic centers

in a dilemma of being either suspects or informants. Already before 7/7, certain community members saw the engagement of their community leaders with the police as discrediting the Imam: "Police are going to use you; you will become their agent, a tool in their hands." With PET, the space for cooperation was even more reduced.

Instead of building on both religious and secular opposition to violence, the government chose to select a new representation for the Muslim community in the UK, which was friendlier to the government's policies. However, you cannot work on social conflicts and use these conflicts to sideline a group and promote another one. This promotion of Sufi thought does not represent the mainstream within the Muslim community. Instead of promoting selectively certain likeminded groups, you should build on religious knowledge of community leaders (whether it is Salafi or not), who share the rejection of violent extremism, even though there might be disagreement on certain policies. That way, the Muslim community would join the quest against violence – because it is against OUR religion. And we have to do good and forbid evil.

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13 ee Cristina Odone: Faith Invaders. In New Statesman, 18 April 2005 (retrieved 1 April 2011 on http://www.news-tatesman.com/200504180017).