United States Institute of Peace

Certificate Course in

Interfaith Conflict Resolution

Produced by the

Education and Training Center

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1: Introduction

About the Course

This *Certificate Course in Interfaith Conflict Resolution* is one in a series of courses developed by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) to make its conflict management expertise and experience available to the widest possible audience.

This course has been created in response to a need expressed by a wide range of professionals in the field of conflict management, including but by no means limited to lay leaders and clergy, who wish to be better equipped to deal with situations of conflict, whether local or global. It arises out of two convictions:

- That faith traditions themselves offer significant resources for healing broken relationships at the personal, community, national and international levels; and
- That these resources, combined with skills in conflict resolution, equip leaders of faith communities to become effective managers of conflict.

Certificate of Completion

Throughout the course, you will be prompted to test your understanding of terms and concepts. When the course is complete, you will have the opportunity to take a certificate exam. When you pass the exam, you will earn our *Certificate of Completion* for this course.

1.1: The Role of Religion in Peacemaking

Killing in Nigeria

In recent years in Nigeria, tens of thousands of Christians and Muslims have been killed in violent conflicts.

The country's Plateau State has been particularly hard hit. In Yelwa-Nshar, in the Shendam local government area, almost 1,000 individuals were killed in one month alone, provoking reprisals in both Kano State and Southeastern State.

Many factors are important in this conflict, including ethnicity, economic differentials, land ownership, migratory patterns and political power. At the same time, substantial tension between Muslim and Christian faith communities has contributed to the violence, and the conflict has often been characterized as a religious one.

Interfaith Dialogue

Yet faith communities have also made substantial contributions to peace. For well over a decade, a local evangelical pastor, James Wuye, and a local imam, Mohammed Ashafa, have contributed to peacebuilding efforts throughout Nigeria.

In 2004, they brought together for the first time key leaders from the Muslim and Christian communities in Yelwa-Nshar. In intense, emotional meetings, they used a combination of interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution techniques to promote reconciliation. Their work resulted in a peace agreement between the two communities that has been supported by the governor of Plateau State and celebrated by several thousand people throughout the region.

With a tentative peace holding, Wuye and Ashafa turned their peacemaking attention to the city of Jos, capital of Plateau State, where a similar peace accord was reached and signed. Their work continues to this day.

Armed Conflict in Guatemala

During its decades-long conflict with guerrilla movements, the government of Guatemala conducted a bloody campaign against a leftist, mostly Mayan insurgency.

There were widespread human rights violations, thousands of forced disappearances, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons, and approximately 200,000 deaths. Later commissions determined that most of the victims were Mayans, and the majority of the blame was assigned to the military government's counter-insurgency operations.

This Central American country, home to one of the first advanced civilizations in the Western Hemisphere, had become a society of painfully sharp racial and economic divisions, with the Church, as it had been for centuries, for the most part clearly on the side of the powerful.

Religious Leaders as Third Parties

Yet though religious prejudice can be counted among the long-term causes of violence in Guatemala, modern religious leaders played a significant role in the breakthroughs that led to peace.

With the dedicated assistance of a joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic delegation, leaders of the Guatemalan government and an alliance of rebels signed the *Basic Agreement on the Search for Peace by Political Means*, which began a six-year process culminating in the *Peace Accords* signed in 1996.

The first breakthrough occurred late one night in Oslo, in a series of emotional apologies by leaders from both sides. These unprecedented and extraordinary testimonials occurred in an environment of apology and forgiveness created by religious peacemakers.

Religion and Peacemaking Throughout the World

These two examples show how faith-based conflict resolution efforts have helped to bring peace in two of the world's most difficult conflicts, one on a local level and the other on a national level.

In fact, there are many roles that faith-based communities can and do play in conflict resolution. Consider the following:

- A mosque in Virginia, USA, has been spray-painted with hate-inspired slogans, such as "terrorists" and "Islam is evil." The imam gathers the congregation for Friday prayers. A local newspaper carries the story on the front page.

  How might the community respond to this, especially Christian and Jewish religious groups?

- Following the Israeli-Arab war in 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel, Palestinians living in towns around Haifa and Tel Aviv were forced to move to refugee camps on the West Bank and Gaza. Their homes were either destroyed or taken over by Jewish immigrants who had fled the Holocaust and persecution in other countries.

  How might the intense, lasting bitterness between Israeli Jews and both Muslim and Christian Palestinians be overcome?

- In Mozambique an extremely brutal civil war was waged for decades between the ruling FRELIMO party and the rebel RENAMO. The conflict resulted in tens of thousands deaths and severe casualties.

  In the face of this history can there be any chance for peace, reconciliation and the building of a single, unified country? Is there a role for faith-based groups to play in achieving this reconciliation?

- In Iraq following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the rise of insurgency movements, long-standing rivalries between Sunni and Shi'a sects have spawned a bloody struggle for power and influence. There is a heavy toll in civilian casualties in Baghdad and throughout the country.

  How can the vicious circle of violence be broken? What might be the role of religious communities inside and outside the country?

These examples are very real. Some are relatively small in scope; others have convulsed entire countries and regions of the world. Some have been resolved; others continue to rage.

These conflicts may have to do with economic and political power, with real and perceived injustices, or with disagreements over land, water, energy sources, and the like. But all these conflicts also have a religious element, if only because religion frequently provides the ultimate source of a group's identity and reason for being. And in all of these conflicts religious leaders can play a central role in advancing the cause of peace.

Perspectives

You know, there are two aspects to religious peacemaking; more than two, but fundamentally two. One is where religion is a source of conflict and so it's particularly incumbent upon religious communities and religious leaders to play a role in addressing the conflict. But even in those situations, almost universally, where we describe a conflict as being about religion—it really is about much more than religion. Religion may be a surrogate for other factors; whether it's ethnic conflict, and the ethnic divisions may overlap with the religious divisions; whether it's that one religious group is better off economically and there is resentment against that group; whether it's in places in Africa where it's conflict between pastoralists and settled agriculturalists and the pastoralists may be Muslims and the agriculturalists may be Christian. Religion may be used as a means of mobilizing a movement against the other group, but it's very frequently not religion per se that is motivating the conflict or what lies behind the conflict. So, even where there is religious conflict, it is much more than religious conflict, or religion is much less a driving force than is often thought to be the case.

But the other role that religion can play in peacemaking is where religion is not a source of conflict. South Africa is a good example of that, where in the struggle against apartheid, it was religious leaders (particularly in the black community, in the African community –but also in the white community, among some liberal whites) where religious leaders were at the forefront of nonviolent protest, of pushing for change, of trying to break the conscience (the Christian conscience) of those who were underpinning the apartheid system. Or in the case that we have highlighted in this course, in Central America, where conflicts have not been religiously motivated, not divided along religious lines, but where religious leaders have played a part in bringing about peace. Mozambique is another such case in Africa where most of the population was Christian and it was Christians who played a role in bringing the civil war to an end in 1991. It wasn't a religious conflict, but religious organizations and religious leaders were at the forefront of bringing peace there.

-David Smock

Interfaith dialogue has traditionally been viewed as work done by clerics when they have free time, on their spare time, to foster a dialogue between communities and to get to know each other. And it's traditionally been that way, especially in the west, in the United States and Western Europe and some parts of Eastern Europe. Essentially it's a way, if you think of it in the bigger picture, for communities to move beyond superficial understanding of each other and to really penetrate and understand each other's histories, each other's concerns, each other's concerns during conflict, which is the issue. We often think of interfaith dialogue as an avenue where communities get together during times of peace, but we find that it's very much needed during times of war and conflict, because that's when you need collaboration and cooperation between faith-based communities to understand their roles, their pivotal roles in conflict reduction and conflict management. So, interfaith dialogue is not necessarily about understanding each other's scripture at that time –during conflict – but, what does one's tradition say about peace and peacemaking and working as a peacemaker?

-Qamar-ul Huda

Although religion is an important, salient aspect within a lot of conflicts around the world, and although there's growing recognition of the important role that religious leaders and communities can play in addressing conflict and in promoting peace within their communities, there is still, at large, a general lack of understanding about the important role that religious leaders can play. They continue to be marginalized from a lot of peace processes at the Track I, official level of negotiations, but in grassroots initiatives as well. But oftentimes, religious leaders in conflict zones are eager to participate and are eager to weigh in to some of the central issues that are at the heart of the conflict. Religious leaders can be involved throughout the conflict cycle, in conflict prevention, in conflict resolution and in post-conflict stability and reconciliation. They have important roles to play in all aspects of the conflict cycle.

So in conflict prevention, the particular role they can play is…because they have access across the swath of the country, because they are located in even the rural reaches, and in fact when there is instability and conflict arising, it is often faith-based organizations and religious leaders who are the forefront of the lines of response, providing humanitarian relief. They have a general sense of social and political dynamics throughout the country, so religious communities can form sort of an early warning and response mechanism for conflict prevention. They can recognize when instability is arising, when tensions are arising that have the potential to erupt into violence. They can issue warnings up, either through their institutional structure, or issue warnings up to political actors or international organizations that can have a response, to prevent violence from breaking out. They can also respond, if they have the skills and training in conflict mediation and response, to deescalate tensions as they are arising, as a means to prevent violence from breaking out. Within conflict resolution and mediation, once violence has broken out they can, again, because they are located in these areas throughout the country, they can be some early responders to violence when it's broken out. They can serve as mediators between armed parties in conflict. So, for example, in Colombia, you'll have local priests who have served as mediators between armed groups within the region and local populations, to attempt to create sort of pockets of peace, to create protection for civilians within particular villages.

They can also serve though as mediators at the official level, and there are examples of this in Mozambique, again in Colombia – you have the churches doing this – where they will officially mediate between the head decisions makers of the parties at conflict. So in Colombia, between the government and between the FARC, or the paramilitary, or the other guerilla groups. Within post-conflict stability and reconciliation, again, religious leaders and faith-based organizations can play an important role here, because what is really at stake and a lot of the reconciliation, is not just political and social and economic transformation to create new structures that can address the root causes of injustice that led to the conflict's outbreak, which is important and in which religious leaders can play a role in. But it is also about restoring relationships, and addressing the past. To some degree it is about repentance and it's about starting a new process forward. Religious leaders can plan an important role, both at the national level in promoting the work and narrative of reconciliation, but also at the local level with local communities coming together to address the past and to make reparations, in the sense of social reparations, of

healing the social fabric that was torn throughout the conflict, and moving people into a new relationship and a new future that can promote greater transformation.
-Susan Hayward

1.2: Challenges and Opportunities

Difficulties in Religion and Peacemaking

It may be clear that religious leaders can play a role in peacemaking, but such efforts are never easy.

There are substantial challenges in incorporating religion into a peacemaking effort, several of which are listed below:

1) Religious narratives are often perceived to be incompatible with one another.[1]

2) Even if religion is not a primary cause of conflict, religious cleavages often reinforce or complicate other causes, such as ethnic-racial identities and/or economic-power differentials.[2]

3) Religious institutions that proselytize can seriously exacerbate conflicts, especially when they proselytize in polarized countries.[3]

4) Some groups will simply not engage in interfaith dialogue, either because they believe such encounters are not permitted by their faith or because they hold severe animosity towards other faith groups.[4]

5) Secular governments, including Western governments, may be nervous about engaging with religious institutions.[5]

6) Interfaith dialogue and other forms of religious peacemaking may open old wounds.[6]

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[1] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 128.
[2] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, PeaceWorks, no. 55, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 37.
[3] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, PeaceWorks, no. 55, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 37.
[4] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 131.
[5] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, PeaceWorks, no. 55, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 36.

Those who would attempt to incorporate religion into peacemaking efforts are advised to proceed carefully. In the words of David Smock, "The depth of passion that accompanies interfaith dialogue and religious peacemaking also carries with it liabilities. Sharing at the deep level of religious conviction can generate resistance and defensiveness."[7]

Perspectives

Every person who feels that they are spiritual, or they work within their faith-based community, will always say firmly that "our tradition is about peace," and, "I am a peacemaker." I think they will affirm that with unambiguous terms. The reality is that each tradition has some component of conflicts, has some component of stereotyping the other. The problem is to realize, the theory of what's been taught, of what individuals have internalized and what's on the ground—what's the reality of being a faithful Muslim, Christian, Jew, Hindu, and so forth? What is the reality in terms of what sort of biases we have on a daily basis of the other? How much of my own identity is based on, exclusively, against someone else? The traditions will say, in theory, in theology, "We are peaceful," and the honest peacemaker will first take stock – inventory – and assess his or her own understanding of their tradition. And say, and ask very hard questions, existential questions, about why is it that as a Muslim or Christian I still view you as so and so and so? …or a less-than person?... even though I may come across as a respectable person and I respect other traditions. But inside there's a sense that the other tradition is still a less-than, is still not as important, or has some wisdom to offer to all of us.

I think peacemakers, the true peacemakers, ask those questions and move on to the next step and ask – well, I must work on my biases. I understand I inherited these biases. I must learn to think about not transferring these biases to other friends and the next generation. And in that same question – line of thought – we must ask what is the wisdom that other traditions offer, and am I open to learning that without compromising who I am? I think that is the work of a peacemaker, to realize that one can traverse and work with different groups of traditions and peoples without feeling that there is a competitive world and one is subtracted and becomes "less-than" in learning from others.
-Qamar-ul Huda

Some of the challenges to faith-based peacebuilding can be when some religious leaders have decided that they want to become involved in promoting peace. If some of those higher up in the hierarchy in the religious tradition are against this – and this can be the case, for example, in Sri Lanka I have seen it occur, where some of the higher ranking Buddhist teachers support the government in its work to combat the LTTE and they support the military intervention. So when other Buddhist leaders who are underneath them want to promote peace and want to promote political resolution to the conflict, they can go up against those within their own faith tradition, and they can go up against their own superiors, and that can create conflict within their own community. It can also, if

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[6] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 128.

[7] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 128.

those superiors respond to them by criticizing them, it can delegitimate them. It can take away their very authority as a respected religious leader within their community.

In terms of mobilizing an inter-religious peacemaking effort, that will face a number of challenges, particularly in areas where there is the conflict divide between religious communities, where there is a high level of mistrust between communities. Oftentimes, those who seek to become involved in inter-religious peacemaking activities, inter-religious dialogue, or inter-religious collective action to advocate for human rights or good governance, or a peace process; sometimes those who become involved in it, again, can be branded as disloyal to their religious tradition. Again, in Sri Lanka, there is a great deal of mistrust between the Christian and the Buddhist religious communities, which doesn't necessarily correlate to the wider conflict divide which pits a government that is seen as representing a primarily Buddhist Sinhala majority against the rebel insurgency group, the LTTE, which purports to represent the primarily Hindu Tamil population. But there are still these great levels of distrust between the Buddhist and the Christian communities, so that when Buddhist monks become involved in inter-religious activities, they are delegitimated by some of those who are against inter-religious peacemaking by branding them as partners to Christian, as becoming Christian, as moving away from their Buddhist roots and their Buddhist identity.
-Susan Hayward

This work is difficult. It requires, first of all, knowledge about your own faith tradition. It's very helpful if people have a basic understanding of the other faith tradition before they engage in dialogue. Emotions get stirred up. Prejudices get expressed. Anger can be expressed, particularly in places where there's…where religion is a source of serious conflict. It can get very difficult, and I remember in some situations where we've had to have police standing by in case things got out of hand, because the sensitivities were so close to the surface. So, it can be a volatile situation. And, while there's potential for growth and understanding and improved relationships, some dialogues just end up in greater conflict if they are not handled well and the participants are not really good listeners to the other side. It can end up in disappointment and frustration and anger. So, dialogues need to be carefully planned, participants need to be carefully selected, the methodology needs to be carefully thought through by both sides – by the leaders on both sides – and anticipate the kinds of issues that might generate hostility or anger and figure out ways to manage that anger, and maybe use it in creative ways for deeper understanding.
-David Smock

Opportunities in Religion and Peacemaking

Yet for all these challenges there are even more reasons why religious leaders can be effective as emissaries for peace.

Consider the following:

1) Interfaith dialogue and other forms of religious peacemaking may reveal that religion is not a primary cause of conflict, even if it has been purported to be.[8]

2) In most societies, there is a general expectation that religion can and should contribute to peacemaking, an expectation that often helps open doors for religious peacemakers.[9]

3) Within most religious traditions, peacemaking is considered a sacred duty, and the peacemaker holds an exalted position. Appealing to these traditions, various methodologies, including interfaith dialogue and religiously inspired third-party efforts, have been developed to ameliorate conflict and advance reconciliation. Religious leaders can be great role models.[10]

4) Religions often have pre-existing structures and processes to resolve conflict and promote peace. As Renee Garfinkel notes, "Most religions are committed to working for justice and peace, and have well-established structures and processes for doing so." Religious traditions typically have guidelines or rituals for reconciling relationships, and these may have application across religious boundaries.[11]

5) Religious traditions and beliefs tend to encourage adherents to look beyond self-interest to a greater good, a tendency that can encourage conflicting parties to seek common ground.[12]

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[8] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 127.
[9] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 127.
[10] 10 David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 127; David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, PeaceWorks, no. 55, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 38.
[11] Renee Garfinkel, *What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs*, Special Report 123 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004), 5.
[12] Renee Garfinkel, *What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs*, Special Report 123 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004), 5.

6) In some cases, different faiths or sects share sacred texts. For example, Islam, Judaism and Christianity share certain sacred texts, and the study of them can be particularly helpful in understanding and identifying shared values.[13]

7) Interfaith dialogue carries with it the benefits of other types of dialogue, but as Smock states, it also has "the potential for deeper and more meaningful engagement because of the possibility for spiritual encounter. This in turn may enhance the participants' commitment to peace work and social change."[14]

Progress made in interfaith dialogue can have implications in the wider society. In Smock's words, it is sometimes "more productive for religious leaders to consider emotionally divisive issues than for them to be debated in secular/political contexts." This may be particularly true in societies where there is an officially sanctioned faith commitment, even if the faiths themselves differ.[15]

Perspectives

Frequently, religious leaders, if they're not extremists but are tolerant and have a deep commitment to peace, with…based upon their faith commitments, they can be seen as leaders who are not promoting themselves, as people who can approach peacemaking from a disinterested – not an uninterested, but a disinterested – perspective, a compassionate perspective, an understanding of the point of view of the other side. So, that they hopefully have a moral authority and an objectivity and a compassion that they can bring to the peacemaking process, that can make them effective peacemakers and can make them acceptable by all the parties in the dispute as peacemakers. In those situations where religion is one of the sources of the conflict, then I think people look particularly to religious leaders, to both interpret what the conflict is about, and to reach out to leaders in the other faith community. If peace can be made by leaders of the different faith communities, then that's going to go a long way towards bringing peace more widely within the community, because the religious leaders are seen as models. They can live out tolerance They can live out reconciliation. They can live out a model of peacemaking that then will be emulated by their followers within their religious communities.
-David Smock

Any faith-based tradition certainly has within it an emphasis on love and care for people, not only one's own group, but also extending beyond that to other people and other groups. One of the things I like to say, that indicates a challenge as well as an opportunity, is that when you are dealing with religion, you have to balance the quest for

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[13] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 131.
[14] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 128.
[15] David R. Smock, "Conclusion," in *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, PeaceWorks, no. 55, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 37.

truth versus the call to love, and that every tradition faces that kind of question, internally, within itself. How does it hold true to its understanding of what the truth is, and how does it respond to and care for people, not only within its own tradition, but outside of it. And that becomes both an opportunity and a challenge. Therefore you can draw upon, many times, various aspects of religious traditions in order to help bring people to the point of being responsive to peacemaking.

I'll give you an example. Talking about confession of sin, for example, with Serbian Orthodox in Serbia. In one particular workshop, right near the border of Bosnia, right after the war, we got to this point in a particular workshop that I was leading, and I wasn't sure exactly what would happen. I attempted to approach it fairly openly and sensitively; there were people, not only Serbian Orthodox, there were Muslims as well as other traditions present. And this deputy of the bishop began talking, and he was saying…he told a story of a man who came in confession of sin to him as an Orthodox priest, a man who had committed atrocities in Bosnia against Muslim population. And at the end of the story he basically said, "we have a lot to account for in that war. Not only our government and military, but also our church, for having legitimized this whole process of war." So he was basically tying in the need for confession of sin with the Serbian Orthodox tradition that called for that, and coming up with a challenge to his own people, that most people in the West, I think, would be surprised to hear, and certainly the Muslims in that workshop were extremely surprised to hear. But it was being able to tie in with that self-understanding of what it meant to be a good Serbian Orthodox person, as well as the willingness of this particular official within the Serbian Orthodox church to be a bit vulnerable, that made that successful.
-David Steele

I think one of the reasons why the role of religion and culture and peacemaking is so relevant all over the world, is that religion is always a part of a one element of people's inner lives and their outer behavior. Even if they have become secular, it is often, there are religious values which inform their positions, and inform the culture's positions. In my experience, there is not a conflict in the world where religion and religious values, and understanding more deeply the possibilities of that religion moving either towards or away from peacemaking, is a critical component of understanding the dynamics of the conflict. That doesn't mean that economics is not central, and politics is not central, military issues; all of them are interactive, but when you eliminate the religious component, you usually lose an understanding, in every conflict in the world. It doesn't mean that religion is at the center of the conflict, but it means that it's a piece of at least some people's motivations, and therefore it must be a piece of at least some people's motivations towards peacebuilding. There are insights that you can gather from every religion in the world, whether its indigenous peoples, native American, Islam, Buddhism. It's not just where the religion is prominent in the conflict, in Sri Lanka or other places, or Northern Ireland. Its that it is always a component that helps you with deeper insight into how to move populations into coexistence, into a way of shared values that can help conceive of projects that are going to work across enemy lines.
-Marc Gopin

Course Assumptions

This course is designed for a wide range of professionals in the field of conflict management. The discussions presented here should be relevant to all whose work takes them into areas of conflict, including diplomats, military professionals, law enforcement professionals, other government employees, private sector leaders, leaders in non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations, civic activists, and others. It will be of special interest to faith-based communities that are committed to employing the resources of their own tradition to help resolve conflicts by addressing underlying causes.

It combines these inherent resources with the best practices in conflict-resolution theory and practice.

1. Although this course deals primarily with the Abrahamic faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, many of the principles and dynamics discussed are applicable to other faith traditions as well.

2. This course seeks to respect the integrity of every faith tradition and acknowledges the fact that each has arisen out of its own unique history and is expressed in its own theological and liturgical terms.

3. This course is based on models that have worked in actual situations of conflict where disagreements have produced anger, violence and alienation. In some cases the conflict itself had a specifically religious component; in other cases religious actors have been instrumental in helping to resolve violent conflicts that have had no specifically religious component.

4. This course is designed to be used in all countries and cultures. It recognizes the fact that, to some extent, each culture has its own unique ways of conducting business, making decisions and dealing with tension and violence; yet it assumes that there are dynamics within the conflict-resolution process (e.g., listening, truth-telling, goal-setting, forgiving, reconciling) that remain constant within the vast diversity of cultural expression.

5. Many so-called "sectarian" conflicts are in actuality not based on religious disagreements at all, but on a complex of factors such as perceived threats to ethnic identity, claims to property, the desire for political or economic power, and the like. This study is designed to help identify and clarify such causative factors.

Perspectives

This course is largely based upon relationships among the three faith traditions that we call the Abrahamic faiths. These are Islam, Judaism and Christianity. And they're considered the Abrahamic faiths because all three faith traditions look to the figure of Abraham in their religious texts; in the Hebrew bible, in the Old Testament for the Christians and in the Qur'an. Abraham is lifted up as a founding figure, as a leader, as a beginner of monotheism. And so all three faiths can turn to Abraham as a point of shared commitment, of shared model. There are other prophets in the three traditions also, that

are understood and accepted by the three faith traditions, but Abraham is the first, and thus we can talk about these three faiths as being Abrahamic faiths, based upon the monotheism that Abraham espoused.
-David Smock

I think the course started with the Abrahamic traditions because it's the work that we've been – the work that the religion and peacemaking program has been working with in the past twenty years. It's the place that all of the directors and program officers have done some wonderful work in conflict zones. It's a place that seems to be an area where there is a great deal of necessity. Those individuals who are not particularly tied to the monotheistic, Abrahamic traditions, they can see this course as window of an opportunity to see how this – the skills, the particular information – can apply to their tradition. While we begin with the Abrahamic tradition as the focus of examples, as the focus of real interfaith dialogue, it doesn't limit itself to these traditions. Dialogue is essentially crossing these traditions and it can be used between Hindu and Muslim, Buddhist and Christian, Confucian and Buddhism, and so forth. I think the skills, the essential core ideas and theories will be used, and can be used, in different traditions.
-Qamar-ul Huda

Outside the Abrahamic tradition, there are things that people in non-Abrahamic traditions have much to teach to people in Abrahamic traditions, and to the whole secular world of negotiation and conflict resolution. You can learn a huge amount from the legacy of Maha Ghosananda in Cambodia, who just died, who was the supreme patriarch, a senior cleric, and who managed to find a way, in a very dangerous and unstable situation, to offer healing in the symbolic ways in which he walked through the country, and got even Khmer soldiers to come out and greet him and transform, sometimes right in front of his eyes, because he offered them something, he offered them the possibility of change and forgiveness in deeply symbolic ways that made sense in that culture. So we can learn from that, what it is, the power of symbol, the power of walking, and the powerful way in which even the worst of criminals can be transformed. And there is no peace without criminals being transformed; there is no peace without that. So, we have a lot to learn from non-Abrahamic traditions, and we have a lot to learn from Abrahamic traditions, and they all have a lot to learn from each other.
-Marc Gopin

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Sequence

In the next chapter, we will discuss interfaith dialogue, a particular form of dialogue open to clergy and lay leaders within faith traditions. We will define what interfaith dialogue

is, then review lessons that we have learned over the years about how to conduct it effectively. In the third chapter, we will review the Nigerian case study, discussing how general principles that we have covered have been put into action. In the fourth and fifth chapters, we will review the Guatemalan case study, focusing this time on the role of religious leaders as third parties. This course will end with a series of self-study exercises and a final exam.

Whether providing the ultimate rationale for a group's identity and mission, or a cover for a group's political aspiration, religion very often plays a role in conflict. We argue that religion can and should play a role in peacemaking.

2: Phases in Successful Interfaith Dialogue

Definitions

Before we begin, we will provide some basic definitions relevant to our subject matter.

In this course, the term "religion" will be used to express the following dimensions of the religious phenomenon:

- Institutional, i.e., the teachings and activities of synagogues, churches, mosques and other places of worship
- Experiential, i.e., the life of faith, the sense of transcendence, the role of confession, love and forgiveness
- Metaphysical, i.e., the primordial structures of meaning that are common to human experience, expressed in myths, stories and rituals

We will also describe some general characteristics of conflict and principles of conflict resolution:

- At the heart of most conflicts is an issue of justice, that is, an issue of one or more parties' feeling they have been wronged, dealt with unfairly, discriminated against, violated, or denied their legitimate rights.
- Conflicts at every level involve people. Whether we are dealing with ideological or geo-political conflicts, with disagreements over territory or with diverging ethnic, religious or racial claims, we are dealing with people, human beings with fears and anxieties, hopes and dreams.
- Behind the slogans, positions and claims of every party involved in conflict there are interests and needs. The challenge is to discover what these interests and needs are—and which ones might be shared by both sides of a conflict.

- Most violent conflicts involve a vicious cycle of recrimination, retribution and revenge. For the most part, this kind of cycle can be broken when at least one party is willing to admit to faults and confess to failings. This rarely happens, but when it does, a new dynamic can take place, one that is able to break the vicious cycle and allow for healing to take place.

- For the eventual healing of a community, honesty about the past is required. This is a difficult issue because of fear of prosecution and other legal implications, but public disclosure of what happened in the past (truth-telling) is typically viewed as a prerequisite for genuine healing.

In defining interfaith dialogue, Smock states,

> At its most basic, interfaith dialogue is a simple concept: persons of faith meeting to have a conversation. But the character of the conversation and the purpose of having the conversation are not simple to describe or categorize since they cover a variety of types.[1]

This chapter should give a sense of the variety that Smock describes. There are no cookie-cutter approaches to interfaith dialogue, but this chapter should also give a general sense of progression in how efforts such as these unfold.

Some believe that interfaith dialogue has become a necessary component in the life of a faithful person. Scholars of contemporary religion agree that the 21st century is the "interfaith dialogue century." Diana Eck, along with others in the field, asserts that global developments have brought together faith communities in new and exciting religious encounters.[2]

Perspectives

Interfaith dialogue is more than a conversation in several regards. One is, to say a "conversation" implies a kind of tranquility that is often absent in interfaith dialogue. A conversation suggests that two people are engaging in a discussion about something which they don't necessarily care passionately or don't necessarily disagree fundamentally with each other; but interfaith dialogue is more than a conversation in that it can generate deep-held emotions, it can touch at the very depths of people's being and their orientation toward life and toward the divine. But in addition, it's more than a conversation – if it's handled well – because it goes beyond talk: it goes to shared activities; it goes to attending each other's religious services; it goes to explaining to each other particular religious practices; it can entail joint activities where they're engaged together in some faith-based activity addressing some justice issue, or some human need

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[1] David R. Smock, "Introduction," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 6.

[2] Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 2002), 24-25.

together. So it goes well beyond the conversation. It can be Palestinian Muslims going to Auschwitz to understand what Jews feel about the Holocaust and what a tragic, horrible event that was in Jewish history. Or it can be Jews going with Palestinians – Muslim Palestinians – to understand what they are experiencing in occupied territories, where they feel that their holy sites are being violated. So it goes beyond talk, it goes to activities, it goes to shared commitments, it goes to things that they can do jointly.
-David Smock

I think there is greater interest today in inter-religious dialogue because there is greater awareness of the ways in which religion has propelled conflict in the past, and there is greater interest in how to engage religious leaders and religious resources and religious organizations in efforts towards promoting peace. Oftentimes in the past the religious dimension of conflicts was ignored in efforts towards conflict resolution, and that meant that those religious actors and organization who were potential partners for peace, were also ignored. There is greater recognition now, following the identity-based conflicts during the '90's in which religious nationalism sometimes played an important role, following September 11th, which clearly drove home in the United States the salience of religion in international affairs and in conflict, and given a number of events which have taken place going in to the 21st century, that religion is an important dimension that informs political policy, that informs international relations, and that it needs to be engaged, and there are plenty of resources within the religious realm, that can be engaged to promote peace and good governance and human rights around the world. When there are there divisions between religious communities and there are not avenues for engagement between them, this exacerbates distrust between communities that can lead to violence, and so there is a need for creating these avenues for engagement, these relationships between communities as a way to prevent violence on religious grounds from occurring again.
-Susan Hayward

Interfaith dialogue, once it's conceived by a group of leaders – religious leaders – it's a major task. It's a systematic approach to thinking dialogue thoroughly, to a point where you are asking individuals to think about their core values; what it means to be who they are, and how they relate to other people. To do this may sound like it's a conversation, but it is a very systematic approach. If you take a subject, a theme – and most dialogues are based on themes – you'll have a church and a mosque who's very interested in poverty, in helping the children refugees in a conflict zone. They first have a dialogue; they think about why should Christians and Muslims be committed to children refugees in Darfur let's say, Sudan. Why should they be committed? They'll speak about the historical issues, but then they'll get to the real issues. What is the praxis? What is the essential approach on the ground that we need to do? So the dialogue will then lead into steps, as two groups coming together. How do we help refugees? Where do we find local partners to save them? Where do we find clothes? How do we distribute those clothes? How do we protect them? Which politicians can we work with – that can help us – and we see them as allies to help in our program protecting children who are refugees? So the dialogue might start as a conversation, but when it comes to a particular theme that

hits home to conflict communities around the world, it's very structured, it's very systematic and it's very real in saving people's lives.
-Qamar-ul Huda

2.1: Laying the Ground Work

The Importance of Clear Goals and Objectives

Before anything else, those who contemplate engaging in interfaith dialogue must clarify their goals and objectives.

To be effective, the dialogue must have clear purpose. In general, the overarching goal of interfaith dialogue is achieving understanding and reconciliation among the groups involved. Within this broad aim, interfaith dialogue can serve a wide range of more specific objectives. A clear definition of purpose enables the facilitators to prepare a strategically designed agenda and to organize a focused discussion. Merely bringing different religious communities together to talk will rarely achieve anything of value.

The Varieties of Interfaith Dialogues

There are several types of interfaith dialogue, and it is critical for participants who are involved in this endeavor to distinguish the varieties of dialogue. In the words of Stanley Samartha, "Dialogue is part of the living relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies as they share in the life of the community."[3]

He identifies four primary modalities of interfaith dialogue.

1) **Dialogue of Life**: In this dialogue participants are more concerned with issues that pertain to daily living, common interests in the community and the common values that bind each of the participants. Participants want to explore how common values, such as education and civic responsibility, can bring a better understanding.

2) **Dialogue of Action**: This dialogue involves a greater emphasis on social justice and the value of working together on a common project in order to make a contribution to the community. For instance, participants in the dialogue for action model will collaborate together to fight poverty, homelessness, HIV/AIDS and poor health care. Participants in this dialogue assert that action against injustice is the strongest expression of faith.

3) **Dialogue of Experience**: The dialogue of experience stresses how faithful people experience their faith on a daily basis. Participants in the dialogue are interested in

[3]3 Stanley J. Samartha, Between *Two Cultures : Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 50.

the human expression and experiential aspect of a faith, and how an individual of another faith understands the holy in his or her life. There is a desire to understand a personal interpretation of faith instead of a textbook version of conviction.

4) **Dialogue of Experts**: This dialogue is called the "experts dialogue" because it involves participants interested in theology and philosophy of the faith traditions. Participants will center their dialogues in texts and doctrines, and the dialogue often reflects a process of mutual theological inquiry.[4]

Determine an appropriate modality. These four modalities of dialogue provide a framework for students of interfaith dialogue. It is critical first to understand the modality of the interfaith dialogue and assess the dialogic assets and weaknesses of the participants. By first assessing the participants' objectives in the interfaith dialogue, one can decide on the appropriate dialogue modality to implement and which approach will best cater to dialogue participants.

Determine the optimal duration of the effort. By clarifying objectives in this way, dialogue organizers can determine the optimal structure and duration of the effort. Sustained impact usually requires a long-term commitment. One-time dialogue sessions are often of only limited value. A series of sessions is desirable, along with follow-up activities.

Select an appropriate venue. Interfaith dialogue can take in place in different venues—the space and time of dialogues can shape the way members begin to understand one another. It is important that organizers of interfaith dialogues first discuss whether they want neutral spaces or shared spaces in their respective institutions.

Selecting Participants

It is crucial to select the right participants. Dialogue organizers should look for those who are sincerely committed to peace and who will be good listeners. Participants need to be well grounded in their own faiths and to be positioned to influence the thinking of members of their wider faith communities after the dialogue ends.

Assess leadership qualities. Interfaith dialogue is frequently organized by those in each community eager to reach out beyond their own group to connect with those in other faith communities. These initiators, who can be termed “boundary leaders,” operating on the borders of their communities, need support from their own communities and from each other. This can be a lonely and challenging undertaking. Religious leaders should be encouraged to utilize their skills as empathizers and conflict resolvers to reach out to other communities, as opposed to reinforcing community boundaries.

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[4] 4 Stanley J. Samartha, *One Christ, Many Religions: Towards a Revised Christology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 88.

Be careful of extremists. Interfaith dialogue is possible when leaders understand such activity to be consistent with the fundamental values of their faith traditions. A severe limitation of interfaith dialogue is that many faith groups are not willing to participate, either because of the dictates of their faith regarding interactions with members of other faith communities or because of the level of animosity they bear toward the other religious group. Unfortunately, it is these groups that are often the chief protagonists in the conflict. It is primarily extremists who create interfaith conflict but they are rarely willing to engage in dialogue. Their encounters with the other communities are more likely to be confrontational.

Consider a range of participants. Dialogue should not be confined to clerics. The most promising participants are those with the potential to develop a commitment to peaceful coexistence and mutual enlightenment. The role of women as potential religious peacemakers needs to be recognized.

Perspective

Inter-religious dialogue can involve several different sorts of participants. You can bring together high-ranking religious leadership; the bishops, the high rinpoches and mahanayakes, within Buddhist tradition, the grand muftis within Islam. When you bring together the high ranking you'll have particular questions that you might address, such as "How do we guide our religious institutions in a way that can promote peace?"

You have the potential in bringing together the high-ranking religious leadership, of creating more kind of widesweeping or greater change within the religious institutions to promote peace. But you can also bring together mid-level or even low-level clergy, those who are involved more in local communities, who might have a greater sense of some of the constraints and some of the opportunities on the ground for promoting peace. You might bring together religious scholars, educators in seminaries and madrassas and different religious schools. When you bring in scholars, you might have a different set of questions that you are seeking to tackle, such as: "How do we educate about other religions within our religious school? How do we create theologies and support religious education that promotes conflict resolution and peacemaking?" And then you might bring together faith-based organizations, so, people who are involved in development, reconstruction, relief work, who are driven by their faith perspectives. You might bring them together from different religious traditions, in order to get a sense how different religious traditions teach about and understand the role of development and relief work and poverty in addressing conflict. And finally, you might bring grassroots lay people together. And there again, you'll have a different set of questions and a different sort of angle you'll be addressing. It might be popular understandings about the other religious tradition within communities, within families, within schools. You might then, as a result of it, create festivals, or do different sorts of grassroots projects that can promote inter-religious understanding.

Another important thing to keep in mind is that oftentimes, clergy around the world are male. So, those who are recognized as the authorities within religious institutions, that tends to be more men than women. So it can also be important to emphasize the role of

women religious, both nuns, but also lay women who are driven by their religious convictions, or women scholars, and religious institutions, and to create separate spaces for women religious peacemakers, but also to ensure that you have gender parity within your interfaith dialogue, when you are doing kind of the more encompassing interfaith dialogue.
-Susan Hayward

It's a serious limitation of interfaith dialogue if this is confined to clerics. It happens that most dialogue probably takes place between clerics or among religious scholars, but it has very limited utility if it is confined to those groups. They're not necessarily people who have a wide following. If they are, and they do have a wide following, they can share their learnings with their wider following; that's a great asset and benefit in the ripple effect of dialogue, but you really need to have people participating from the very grassroots of religious congregations, all up through the middle ranks of church leaders, of public figures, of public officials and up to clerical leaders or to religious scholars. But it's very important that all segments of religious communities be included because they have different interests. They will listen to things in different ways, and it's very hard for this to trickle down necessarily from religious leaders to their followers. It's important for the rank and file of the religious communities to participate themselves. And just the numbers involved, you can have many greater numbers involved when you're targeting the rank and file of the communities rather than just the top leaders.
-David Smock

Challenges to Interfaith Dialogue for Individuals

In our introduction, we discussed some of the broad challenges encountered by faith communities in their efforts at religious peacemaking. When preparing for a specific event, such as an interfaith dialogue, it is also necessary to consider the challenges that participants will face on an individual level.

With greater interactions and movements around the globe, with greater freedom to explore faith in non-threatening environments, it is clear that people of different faith traditions are exposed to each other more today than any other time in history. This exposure is not merely new information about the other traditions; rather, scholars of religions have noted that laypersons involved in interfaith dialogue have become active seekers of knowledge of themselves through the process of dialogue.

However, along with these opportunities, there are real challenges to participating in dialogue with other faith communities. These challenges are complex and often combined with fear of the unknown. Several of these challenges to participating in interfaith dialogue are summed up below:

1) Participants fear being wrong in front of strangers and in front of their own congregation.

2) Taking risks in dialogue can open participants up to unyielding criticism.

3) Being criticized for saying something that is not entirely accurate may make participants feel inferior and ashamed.

4) There is a fear that interfaith dialogue forces participants to compromise their faith traditions.

5) Participants fear misrepresenting their own faith traditions and appearing ignorant to others.

6) Participants do not want their faith, identity and core values undermined or contested by others whom they do not know.

7) Participants lose the "adversarial other"—which means there is no one else to blame for the world's problems. The "adversarial other" may be an accepted norm in the faith tradition and to disrupt this notion would challenge other areas in the participants' traditions.

8) Participants may be labeled as ones who are willing to compromise their faith in order to appease others.

9) Interfaith dialogue may go against the consensus of the community and religious leadership.

10) The local religious leadership may approve the work of interfaith dialogue, but regional, national and international hierarchies may not support these efforts.

11) Religious leaders and institutions may speak of the importance of interfaith dialogue as one of their primary values, but do not allocate enough funding or support to it.

12) Participants may lose their jobs because of dialogue or become marginalized in their community.

13) There is a fear of real physical harm by extremists who are adamantly opposed to any encounter with other traditions.

Meet separately first. Organizers of interfaith dialogues must be attentive to these concerns and challenges because they inhibit participants from freely exploring their potential in dialogue. It may be advisable for faith communities to meet separately first, to lead honest discussions prior to any commitment to interfaith dialogue, to explore the participants' positions on controversial issues, to establish group identity and, most importantly, to ensure that their religious leadership is involved with this dialogue.

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples where interfaith dialogues were canceled because faith communities that were heavily engaged in the effort did not have the full consent and support from their religious leadership. In order to avoid the danger of losing support from their religious institutions, organizers of interfaith dialogue need to

develop a joint strategy to address this potential problem with a timetable to use as a guide for dialogue.

Perspectives

There are a lot of barriers to interfaith dialogue and to authentic, engaged interfaith dialogue, one of them being that some feel that it will be a threat to their own tradition if they go in, and just the very vulnerability of interfaith dialogue, as well. These ideas, religious convictions, beliefs about the self, about reality, about what is best for society; these are precious, deeply held convictions. To go into an inter-religious dialogue where you are to surface some of these beliefs, and potentially be challenged on them, to explain them, to say how your actions are aligned or not aligned with those convictions, to understand what your own religious convictions mean, vis-à-vis somebody else's religious convictions, which might be different from your own. This is a vulnerable, sensitive process, and not everyone will want to be a part of it. There will be some barriers to it in that sense. I think some of the means to address some of those barriers are the work that's done before you have the inter-religious dialogue; you don't want to just jump into it and expect great things to emerge from it. There should be some trust-building going into it.

There should be intra-religious discussions, so if you are bringing together Christians and Hindus and Muslims, each of those faith communities should meet before the inter-religious dialogue takes place, to make sure that they have common visions, to make sure that they have a chance to air some of their fears and concerns before going into it and to address them constructively. I think that if you have somebody who is facilitating the inter-religious dialogue, who has a relationship with all the communities and who understands their concerns, and in whom the participants have trust, that that will help create an environment of trust for them to participate in it. And I think you can also…you would never want to start an inter-religious dialogue by addressing the particularly sensitive issues that divide the community, but there needs to be some building of relationship, some building of trust through the dialogue process. So you can address common grounds first, or you can address from a slightly different angle, not going straight into the heart of religious belief, but addressing, for example, governance, and having the people from the different faith communities talk about what their religion teaches about how societies should be governed, about the responsibilities of political authorities and of the state. And this can be a way to address some of the issues that might be at the heart of a conflict, if this is in a conflict environment in which there has been poor governance that has propelled the conflict, but it can also be a way of bridging religious understanding, in that the different religious communities will be talking about their religious beliefs and will be talking about their religious tradition, as it relates to the issue of governance, so that there can be greater religious understanding between the faith communities.

-Susan Hayward

People can face a variety of difficulties when they engage in interfaith dialogue. One of the most fundamental for people who are not really secure in their own faith – who have not thought through carefully their positions on many religious and theological issues – is that they are likely to be challenged. I don't mean that in an aggressive way, but members of the other communities are going to ask questions about what the other people believe and why they believe it. It can often be very threatening to be challenged in that way, to have questions posed in a way that nobody's ever questioned your faith before. So it is very important that participants be well grounded in their faith before they come there, so that their own… it can be an illuminating experience for participants. I know the participants in many youth activities – the interfaith youth core based in Chicago has had – they have found that, contrary to the fears of many of the parents of the teenage participants, that many of the teenagers are reinforced in their own faith commitments by going with and up against people who believe different things; but it's important that you understand your own faith first.

Second, it can be challenging just to hear what other people believe about things, and this can be shaking, to realize that there are people who have different world views. There are many prejudices afoot about…on the part of some faith communities about others, that may exaggerate differences, but there are very real differences, ethical differences, theological differences, differences of religious practice. It can be quite threatening to realize that someone who is living next door may have very different world view or perspective on things – that can be challenging too. But also, it can be challenging to realize the varieties of perspectives within your faith community. Often people in particular congregations don't raise tough questions with each other. They just go through their normal religious rituals and practices without challenging each other, or without raising some fundamental ethical and theological issues. So, it is often in interfaith dialogue that these differences within the communities come out, and can often be quite threatening to people to realize the variations within their own communities.
-David Smock

Some of the challenges in doing interfaith work in your community, whether it is a time of war or peace – it varies from your particular faith community. But some of the general challenges appear to be when an individual or group of people would like to do it, but there are obstacles within the leadership of that church or mosque or synagogue or temple. The leadership find themselves to have their hands tied in moving forward from this because of some other hierarchical issues. Other challenges are that some may find the very subjects of interfaith dialogue too open to compromise. It may be interpreted to giving in concessions of oneself. Some individuals may hesitate because they are essentially taking a risk in participating in a dialogue in an open forum; they may not sound very knowledgeable at times, they are taking risks in putting their knowledge forward to other people and it may be inaccurate, they may feel ashamed that it's not accurate – that they don't know their tradition as well as they should. So they may feel ashamed to take that risk. Another challenge to interfaith dialogue is the fact that all traditions have very strong opponents to dialogue, thinking what they have is exclusive, and what they know is exclusive and all the other traditions are essentially wrong or misguided. So you have this extremist thinking, or interpreters of extremist thinkers in

each tradition, who say dialogue is essentially wrong because it's compromising. And you're compromising one's tradition with another tradition that's not even accurate. So those are some of the obstacles in interfaith dialogue.
-Qamar-ul Huda

2.2: Learning About the "Other"

Listening and Understanding

Once preparatory issues have been addressed—and, in many cases, groups have held separate meetings—the groups then come together for the first time and the dialogue begins. Typically, dialogues focus initially on learning about the "other."

Explore similarities and differences. The dialogue can fruitfully explore both the similarities among the participating faiths and the core differences that divide them. Members of opposing religious communities are frequently unaware of the components of their faiths that are shared. To explore these shared commitments and beliefs can be illuminating and provide a basis for fruitful dialogue. Interfaith dialogue can productively focus on exploring the concept of peace and the nature of spirituality in the participating faith traditions.

Share sacred texts. Participants can read sacred texts to educate, inform and achieve deeper understanding of each other and, in turn, enhance interfaith relations. This also builds awareness of textual linkages that exist among the faith traditions (particularly evident in the three Abrahamic traditions) and expands opportunities for cultivating interfaith linkages and identity.

Perspectives
Learning about the other is an important and very crucial component of interfaith dialogue. The reason that is, learning helps the various individuals, the participants, to open themselves up and say: "these people, this other group of people, we live with them for centuries – maybe more than a thousand years – and, all we know about another group, or about the other is from hearsay, from stereotypes, from inherited stories from the media and so forth." But, once you are involved with interfaith dialogue and that component of learning about the other is integral in the dialogue – in the process – you are saying, "I am actively going to take charge of this information and I am going to assess what I really understand and I am open to educating myself by listening to the other community; listen to their voices, not interrupt them, not try to subtract the value of their statements, not try to outdo their understanding of the world." So learning about the other in interfaith dialogue is very crucial because it erases or sometimes helps individuals to move forward in a real dialogue.
-Qamar-ul Huda

It is very difficult to balance faithfulness to your own convictions and your faith tradition and be open to hearing what others have to say about very different points of view. The most rich and illuminating kinds of interfaith dialogue are where somebody can rub up

against differences, hear differences and have those differences deepen somebody's own understanding of their own faith – illuminate and enrich their understanding of their own faith. But also in many other situations, you can learn from other traditions in ways that don't threaten your tradition but enhance it and broaden it. New meditation practices, or new prayer practices that may not be traditional in one faith tradition, can be illuminating and enriching to another faith tradition once they're exposed to it or, just having Christians understand that a faithful Muslim is expected to pray five times a day. Not many Christians pray five times a day; maybe that would stimulate Christians to be more faithful in their prayer life. It doesn't mean that they are going to pray the same prayers, but that they're going to be more committed to an active prayer life. So it can illuminate and enhance without threatening.

It's also essential that people are prepared to be honest and forthright with each other. I conducted an interfaith dialogue between a group of liberal Christians and a group of Saudi Muslim scholars, and the Christians were so committed to trying to be understanding and empathetic that they missed opportunities to talk about the issues that divide them. This was an ideal opportunity to get down to some of the important issues that have concerned Americans about Islam and Saudi Arabia, but these opportunities were lost because the Christians were so bent upon demonstrating empathy and understanding for these Saudis who were present. So people have to be prepared to be open and frank and to get the issues out on the table, without being acrimonious, without being judgmental, but at the same time without avoiding the issues.
-David Smock

The Importance of Language and Rhetoric

It is critical for the dialogue's organizers to be sensitive to the language being used throughout the effort to ensure that it encourages the kind of listening and understanding implicit in the dialogue's goals and objectives.

Language reflects our state of mind and heart. Even when those who participate in interfaith dialogue are well-meaning, serious about their faith and interested in learning about the other, the rhetoric used in the dialogue often limits real dialogic engagement. People generally do come to interfaith dialogue with the best intentions to understand the other's faith tradition, but in the process of dialogue, the words used often fall short of mutual learning and openness. Here are five categories of rhetoric that organizers need to pay attention to:

1) **Exclusivism**: In the context of interfaith dialogue, this type of rhetoric reflects the idea that one's religion contains exclusive truths, and one's tradition has no links to other faith traditions. Exclusive rhetoric is used in an attempt to contrast superior traditions to inferior traditions. By the explicit or implied reasoning of exclusive rhetoric, inferior traditions are based on false beliefs. Dialogues with exclusive rhetoric do not encourage an open atmosphere of learning, nor do they build trust with the participants.

2) **Inclusivism**: This rhetoric reflects the mentality that one is open to dialogue with the other, that one is interested in being inclusive of other cultures and religious beliefs, but that one's beliefs still prevail as the ultimate truth. Inclusivists want to know the other because they want to know the weaknesses and flaws in the other's tradition to use against him. They often present themselves as tolerant and accepting of others; however, although they value other paths of religious traditions, inclusivists do not believe there is any intrinsic truth to the other traditions.

3) **Parallelism**: The rhetoric of parallelism acknowledges the truths of other faith traditions and reflects openness and tolerance toward other traditions. Through dialogue, this rhetoric affirms a view that all religious traditions have parallel creeds, histories, doctrines, and ultimately that there is a common human pilgrimage in our faith traditions. Advocates of parallelism respect other traditions and attempt not to judge others. They are not interested in syncretism or affirming universalistic conclusions about all religious traditions; rather, parallelists want to deepen their own understanding through the process of dialogue. That is to say, they believe that to be a better Christian, Jew or Muslim, one should find wisdom in the other's tradition; the other can be a resource for enrichment.

4) **Interpenetration or Mutualism**: The proponents of "interpenetration" or "mutualism" are experienced participants and thinkers in the interfaith dialogue process. They have participated in dialogues for a long time and come to what they see as a grander realization about religious traditions. Specifically, they believe that other faiths are not independent of their own faiths. The "interpenetrations" or "mutualists" do not view other religious traditions as competitors to win over, but rather as traditions that complement or in some cases supplement some of their own beliefs. To them dialogue allows one to truly understand the "intra-connectedness" of traditions, and other religious traditions help in the consciousness of oneself. Proponents of this rhetoric will speak of a mutual interpenetration, essentially saying, "We need each other's tradition to be ourselves." This rhetoric aims to touch the spiritual growth of the members and frames interfaith dialogue as a means to develop mutual enhancement.

5) **Pluralism**: The rhetoric of pluralism in interfaith dialogue contests the absolutism of all faith traditions and attempts to acknowledge the manyness of cultures, religions, ethnicities, tribes, countries and languages; each group has valid insights to offer. Advocates of pluralism do not want to win over any one group, but their aim is to encourage the love and understanding of each other. Since everything is intelligible, the dream is to understand everything. As rational beings, proponents of interfaith dialogue and all types of dialogues need to achieve rational knowledge and loving awareness of others. Critiques of the "pluralists" assert that they minimize the uniqueness of religious traditions, but pluralists think that dialogues need to move participants beyond dogmatic thinking, believing and acting.[5]

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5 Raimon Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999),

The categories of interfaith dialogue rhetoric described above exemplify the basic attitudes and posturing that appear in the dialogic work. This is not an exhaustive assessment; in fact, human encounters between faith communities are usually far more complex than we have described. Organizers will benefit from recognizing the rhetoric at work in interfaith dialogue because it may direct or influence the direction of dialogue. In addition, organizers of interfaith dialogue need to pay attention to the dynamics of the group and actively listen to the dialogue in order to see which direction the language is taking the interfaith dialogue.

Perspectives

What interfaith dialogue is, most essentially, is an avenue for engagement. It's the means to create a space for communities who might be divided in a conflict environment, to come together to engage authentically and deeply, in a potentially transformative way, that can lead towards peace and reconciliation. At the heart of this is an assumption that what propels conflict is not only political and economic interests and dynamics, but also social, psychological, and cultural dynamics, so that there is suspicion between different communities that lead them to break off their connections with each other. So in a protracted conflict environment, the different communities will have different schools, they will have separate organizations, they will have separate ways of functioning, so that over time, there is less and less opportunity for them to build relationships with each other. Now, when that happens, what becomes easier is the demonization of the two groups, the "othering," as its called, which is essentially a dehumanizing of the two groups; it's seeing one's own group's suffering, and not necessarily seeing or paying credence to the suffering of the other community. It is a sense that the other community is the "enemy," is instigating the suffering that the community is facing, and this allows for violence to become possible. It is ok to inflict violence against the enemy because they are the enemy; because you do not have share stories and shared suffering. Because they are essentially "other." So inter-religious dialogue is a means to try to create a space through which, if there is a religious division that pushes these two communities apart, it creates a space for them to come together, to begin to hear the stories from the other side. To begin to understand the suffering that the other side has faced. Not to dismiss your own group's suffering, but to understand as well the suffering of others, that have potentially happened at the hand of your community. It is a way to build relationships so that in the future, violence becomes less tenable, so that there are avenues through which, if conflict comes to the surface between the two communities, between the religious communities in this instance, there are already relationships there. They can address that conflict in a non-violent way. There are narratives and there are ethics that have been surfaced and have been promoted that support non-violent engagement with that group. It's a way to combat barriers and stereotypes that proliferate during conflict.
-Susan Hayward

Let's say there are two types of religion and religious leaders. We see it all around in the world today. One is a very codified, defined set of religious faith-based principles that one is asked to accept if you would follow this way. There's another tradition that says

all of these doctrines, history, principles, these are basically windows through which we are allowed to glimpse and to touch a dynamic that changes people and community.
-Paul Wee

2.3: Developing Empathy

Emotional Understanding

Interfaith dialogue can help faith communities better understand each other and their shared histories and religious experiences. With insight into each other's religious traditions, faith communities can build relationships that seek to develop common interests.

As members of different religious traditions become more knowledgeable of each other, they forge important bonds for peacemaking. Faith-based peacemaking entirely depends on strong relationships that are built on trust, empathy, and care.

Raimon Panikkar, a Catholic priest from southern India who has worked extensively in Hindu-Catholic and Buddhist-Christian dialogues, writes,

> The aim of interfaith dialogue is understanding. It is not to win over the other or to come to a total agreement or a universal religion. The ideal is communication in order to bridge the gulfs of mutual ignorance and misunderstandings between the traditions of the world, letting them speak and speak out their own insights in their own languages.[6]

Dialogue allows one to hear the wisdom of other religious, cultural and social perspectives and gain an insider's view. This perspective gives insight into the other's worldview and how important their faith is in daily matters.

Build trust through empathy. At the very core of any trust-building program must be empathy. Authentic trust cannot be built without convincing demonstrations of empathy emanating from both sides. Each community needs to be convinced that the other community genuinely feels its pain. Sometimes this can be achieved through role playing, having members of each community articulate the perspectives and pain of members of the other community.

Perspectives
Developing empathy is a key purpose of – it's both a purpose and it's also a channel for – effective interfaith dialogue, and in the first instance, even to have people encounter each other from another faith. I was at a conference recently in Nigeria, bringing together Muslims and Christians and there was an Anglican priest that I sat next to at lunch and we were sitting across from a very prominent Muslim leader from Nigeria. Both of them

[6]Raimon Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 12-19.

being Nigerians and both sophisticated, in a country where approximately half the population is Christian and half the population is Muslim. And, we are engaging in some discussion about a fairly mundane thing and this Anglican priest said, "You know, this is the first time I've ever engaged in any conversation of any kind with a Muslim." And all of a sudden, he put a human face on a Muslim in a way that he'd never been able to before and this can be so illuminating to somebody – to just realize that a person of another faith goes through many of the same daily routines and has many of the same concerns and loves their family and is concerned about making a decent living and overcoming illness. But going beyond that and listening carefully to what the basic life purposes, the deep human aspirations, of the person in the other community, of hearing what their strivings are for themselves, for their families, for their communities and internalizing that in a way that recognizes the shared humanity, the shared aspirations. This can be a powerful, transforming experience, and this is what we would hope to get out of interfaith dialogue as a basis for broader understanding. And when a conflict arises, to remember that this is a fellow human being that has many similar orientations and commitments and desires that you have, that you may disagree about a particular political issue but that you're both human and that you share a lot in common as well as having some differences.
-David Smock

Interfaith work – interfaith dialogue, and interfaith conflict resolution – have always involved mini-crises of the people who are engaged in it, because they confront for the first time, people who they had a preconception of, that was an important part of their religious construct of the world. So, it is a major challenge, getting involved in this work, for people's faith. I just sat, just a few days ago, had a very deep conversation with a delegation from Yemen. At one point, somebody from the delegation, because they were very moved by what I said about the Palestinians, and about other things, and he said to me, "You know, I never thought I would sit across the table from a Jew." Other people were a little embarrassed by that, but I thought it was a very honest moment of how much, because there is such a deep war in the Middle East, that just by sitting with me, and us having a deep moment of meeting, his world had been changed. He had to reconstruct his notion of who is good and who is bad, and focus it on issues and policies and countries, rather than a person, rather than another religion. And that is exactly our goal, is to humanize the other, to focus on issues of right and wrong, rather than on evaluating somebody, another human being, as right and wrong. So, the engagement, the relationships, always cause crises.

Now, there are very conservative people in interfaith conflict resolution, and then there are very progressive people in this work. There are people in this work who believe that many religions have truth, and there are others who believe that "no, my way is the best way," and they still engage in this work. So, I have seen very strong people of faith, who are very conservative, who absolutely believe that their religion is the best way, and they proceed in this work and grow and have crises but stay with that. And there are others who come to kind of take from one religion and from the other, and they grow into a kind of combination of religious beliefs and values, and that happens also. So, it's not simple work. It's almost like we're forging a new spiritual concept of humanity, as we meet

each other and greet each other in this work. Mostly, I've found that it is very liberating for people on a spiritual level, but complicated in terms of their communities, because, by meeting the "other," it places them in a more complicated space from their group. And that is true of all conflict resolution, because when you meet the enemy/other, it places you in a new community, as it were; a new community of peacebuilders.
-Marc Gopin

Share stories. It is valuable to spend time on healing and acknowledging collective and individual injuries, or walking through history. Some of the most effective interfaith dialogue processes focus on storytelling—giving participants an opportunity to share their suffering and to be assured that their hurts are being taken seriously by the other side.

For example, in his work in Bosnia and other parts of the Balkans, David Steele has developed an effective methodology that builds on storytelling and having participants share their deep pain and fears.

Develop shared mourning processes. It is valuable to develop shared mourning processes surrounding death, destruction and injustice resulting from conflict between the participating communities. This can aid forgiveness and reconciliation.

When a group of Palestinian Christians and Muslims approached a group of Israeli Jews and said they wanted to jointly visit Auschwitz as a means of comprehending the Holocaust and feeling Jewish pain, it was a dramatic step toward reconciliation.

Perspectives
Sharing personal stories is probably one of the most powerful methodologies for interfaith dialogue. We've seen this work time and again in the Balkans, where a Muslim will tell a story about the pain and suffering that they experienced during the war in Bosnia, at the hands of Serbs for instance, and the trauma that they underwent. And Serbs will listen to this, and hear this, probably for the first time, and they may not have been a party to the attacks or the trauma that this person has experienced, but to realize the level of pain and suffering that those attacks caused that person can be transforming. And then to have the Serb tell the Muslim his or her story about the pain and suffering that he or she has gone through at the hands of Muslims. Again [this is] illuminating and eye-opening for the Muslim. Then, often to do role reversals, and to have the Muslim tell the story of the Serb, and to have the Serb tell the story of the Muslim, so that these stories are really internalized and so that they can articulate it in a way that is authentic, to the point that they feel what the other side felt and continues to feel. This can often lay the basis for forgiveness, or at least deeper understanding, and some understanding of where the hatred came from, of how the trauma was rooted and played out. And then discussions about how they can live together in the future, and move beyond the trauma, and live a common life together as Bosnians in Bosnia. These can be very powerful means of achieving a level of reconciliation that will permit peace to become more deeply rooted.
-David Smock

Again, the techniques are again applied in a structured environment and a well thought-out program of interfaith dialogue. The techniques to share stories, one doesn't just randomly share stories, one doesn't randomly share personal things. It may happen, but we would like it to be in a particular thematic issue. For instance, if we have two groups and both groups have suffered from ethnic and religious violence, maybe, at this moment, what the shared stories should be is what it's like to lose a brother, a sister, a family person. What it's like to lose when you don't expect to lose your child or a parent. What it's like to visually see a loss of life. What it's like to physically take a life. Those shared stories, in a dialogue format, help bring people to hear the power of feelings in that moment that's being recovered, in that recovery of that memory too. It's not just a story anymore, it is an experience that this person is bringing to the table and he or she is asking, I have had this experience and I want to share this experience but I want you also, to take this experience. So, it's very engaging, it's a shared experience. Someone opens and shares a particular experience. It's an expectation that what I am saying, I am hoping you will reciprocate by sharing something else. This moment of reciprocity is important.
-Qamar-ul Huda

2.4: Admitting to Problems and Shortcomings

Mutual Apology and Forgiveness

It is enormously valuable for persons of each community to hear members of the other communities confess the problems and shortcomings that they experience.

Communication of humility and self-criticism can go a long way toward healing, understanding and mutual respect. This can take the form of each community admitting to and apologizing for past offenses or for the fact that their community includes extremists who have committed violent acts.

This is a very important principle that will be apparent in both the Nigerian and Guatemalan case studies that we will explore in subsequent chapters. In the peacebuilding process in Plateau State in Nigeria, the Christian participants made charges against the Muslims. The Muslim leaders responded by admitting that all the charges were true. Then they apologized and asked for forgiveness. The Christian leaders then admitted their own failings and apologized to the Muslims. Apology and forgiveness can be powerful components of interfaith dialogue.

Similarly, in Guatemala concrete breakthroughs on the peace agreement only became possible after individuals from both sides found it within themselves to admit to failings, seek forgiveness and grant forgiveness to others.

Perspectives
One of the most powerful means of encouraging the other side to open up and be empathetic and to really listen to what you're saying and to admit their own shortcomings, is for you to admit the failures on your part, or the failures on the part of your community. When a northern Sudanese can say, as a Muslim, "I pushed Islam too energetically among the Christians of southern Sudan. I shouldn't have done that. I was

insensitive. I should have recognized that you have both traditional faith traditions and many of you are Christians, and I should have accepted that we can live with our religious differences and I apologize for that." That, inevitably, will open the ears of the southern Sudanese, who will then, very frequently, will respond by saying "I shouldn't have been so angry at Muslims. I shouldn't have been so prejudiced against all Muslims. I took the behavior of a few extremists to represent the behavior and orientation of all Muslims. I shouldn't have done that. That was prejudicial on my part and I ask your forgiveness." This is a way of deepening listening and opening both sides to empathetic understanding that is very powerful and enriching.
-David Smock

My experience is that mutual apology – apology and forgiveness – have a radically transformative effect on human relationships. At the same time, it can't be forced, and it is very easy to make it into something that you force people to do, based on religious dogma. So, it is almost like it is the *summum bonum*, it's the great goal of this work, to have an apology and forgiveness, but it is also very dangerous because people can sometimes try to provoke it or push for it when people aren't ready to do that. It's also complicated by the fact that when somebody does apologize, are they apologizing in the name of their group, or in the name of their people or are they apologizing for themselves? In my experience, this is where a lot of cultural miscommunication takes place. It is very important, in my biased opinion, that processes of apology and forgiveness be limited to an individual and his role and his sorrow over what his group may have done, but to not expect to get forgiveness in the name of an entire group. People get very upset about that, and you really have to feel your way very carefully in every situation as to what people are ready or are not ready to do when it comes to apologies and forgiveness.
-Marc Gopin

: Building Relationships

Engaging Individuals and Communities

A central goal should be the building of relationships between the participating individuals and between communities.

This goal can be served by addressing misperceptions and breaking down stereotypes that each group holds regarding the other.

For example, this kind of relationship building has been dramatically achieved in the interfaith workshops organized by the *International Center for Religion and Diplomacy* between Muslims and Hindus in conflict-torn Kashmir.

The process should seek to achieve greater consensus about the truth relating to divisive issues. Total agreement on divisive issues is rare, but helping the participants to move away from extreme interpretations can be a significant achievement.

In another example, the Middle East Teachers Association has been effective in helping Israeli and Palestinian educators to teach about divisive issues in a way that is not offensive to the other side.

Perspectives

The end result that you hope to achieve through almost all interfaith dialogue is better understanding, leading to reconciliation, leading to a greater likelihood that the two communities – and the individuals in those communities – can live more productive, more cooperative, less stressful, less conflict-filled lives with each other. Building empathy, listening to each other's stories, apologizing, offering forgiveness; these are all steps in the journey toward reconciliation, which in turn provides the basis for a peaceful society.

-David Smock

It can be very difficult, at times, for people to relate very openly with other faith traditions, particularly in contexts where there's a great deal of vulnerability, in the midst of terrible violence. I'll give you an example from a workshop I led in Sarajevo, during the siege of Sarajevo. In this particular workshop, we were asking people to look at the needs of all the groups, and a Muslim imam responded to this by not only talking about the terrible experience of his own people, where he himself had been in a community like Srebrenica, that had been overrun by Serbian forces, and the experiences were terrible for his own people. He certainly was angry about that. At the same time he began to express what he thought were the concerns and needs of the Serbian population as well. It was really a remarkable moment within the workshop itself, where people were able to reach, in fact, across some of the divisions. However, what happened was that someone apparently leaked this. It ended up being reported in a newspaper in Croatia, not even in Bosnia, and word got back to his superiors within the Muslim community in Bosnia, and there was significant static that he got, as a result of that. In fact, word came to me that he had actually then been denied some certain positions within the Muslim community, because of the fact that he had expressed any kind of legitimacy to the concerns and needs of Serbian people.

So yes, that's a very dramatic example. There are many other cases too, where one has to be very careful, if one comes from a particular faith community, how one approaches acknowledging the needs of other people. And in terms of leading workshops, I think we need to be careful about that. That taught me an important lesson about being very careful in terms of journalism, and what kind of coverage there would be of any activities that I was involved with.

-David Steele

2.6: Addressing Justice Issues

Testing New Relationships

The long-term goal of dialogue must go beyond building relationships to address the justice issues that may have provoked the conflict and the structural issues that have generated the grievances.

At the base of most interfaith conflict lie issues that relate to justice for each community. Dialogue needs to address these issues in hopes of creating greater mutual understanding or even joint efforts to achieve a more just society.

For example, a dialogue between Saudi Muslim scholars and American rabbis held at USIP was very effective in going beyond relationship-building to addressing the divisive issues relating to peace and justice in the Middle East. Both sides presented their perspectives with force but also with civility, and both sides left the dialogue with a deeper appreciation of why the other side adheres to its perspective. Participants even made some progress toward agreeing on some common strategies to achieve peace in the Middle East.

When USIP co-hosted a delegation of religious leaders from Iran, we discovered that that Iranians were more willing to discuss the issues that divide the U.S. and Iran when these discussions were held in a religious context or at a place of worship, even if that place was Christian or Jewish, than they were in a secular or political context.

Address Asymmetry in Power Relationships. It is important to find ways to overcome the asymmetry in power relationships. This has been a severe problem in many dialogues.
For example, interfaith dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians tends to be initiated and dominated by Israeli Jews and held in Jewish locations, which may alienate Palestinian Christians and Muslims. On the other hand, there are inspiring stories of Jews and Muslims who have found ways to overcome these power disparities and interact as equal interfaith partners.

Perspectives
Effective interfaith dialogue can address the justice issues. Taking the case of Sudan again, partly because of communication between Muslims from the north and Christians from the south, there became a greater awareness that, fundamental to resolving the north/south issue was the need for a constitutional provision that would provide for freedom of religion – free religious practice. The Christians and traditionalists in the south had felt that, quite understandably, that the government in the north was promoting Islam too aggressively and there were ways in which the rights of Christians were being infringed because not all Muslims wanted Christians to be able to practice their faith freely. So, one result of these interfaith exchanges was that in the comprehensive peace agreement – that was signed between the north and south – there was a provision that provided for freedom of religion, and it's an enlightened and a very strong statement

about freedom of religion which hopefully will provide the basis for improved relations between the communities. But out of the dialogue came a focus on a particular, political, even constitutional issue that could be addressed to improve relations between the two communities. And it happened and hopefully provides the basis for progress in the future.
-David Smock

You'll often find in inter-religious dialogue that some of the power dynamics that exist in the community at large surface within the inter-religious dialogue itself. So if there is a power asymmetry in terms of political power, economic power, or even just the power of numbers, majority population versus minority population within the society at large; that these dynamics will surface within the inter-religious dialogue. That the minority group, or the group that has less political or economic power, may come to the dialogue table with those concerns at hand, and will be particularly sensitive to those dynamics within the dialogue. So there needs to be a great deal of care taken to ensure that there is parity between the groups at the dialogue table. From even the planning stages of the inter-religious dialogue, in terms of the selection of participants, in terms of determining what's going to be discussed, in terms of determining the hoped-for goals and outcomes of the dialogue. That should be a process in which both religions, or if there are more than two religions, all the religions, participate in, so that there is a balancing of dynamics, and then within the dialogue itself, you want to be sure that there is equal airtime given to the different communities, that the facilitators – you might want to have somebody who is either not of that religious tradition, or to have two facilitators, one from each of the religious traditions, as a way to ensure that sort of balance of power as well.
- Susan Hayward

2.7: Acting Together

From Dialogue to Tangible Action

It is not necessary for every exercise in interfaith dialogue to result in action, but to the extent that peacebuilding is an objective of the effort, participants should attempt to find tangible expression of the gains they have made in learning about the other, developing empathy, building relationships, and addressing justice issues.

Joint efforts might address long-standing community problems, such as attempts to improve public services. They might also include attempts to mitigate the effects of violence, or to address root causes of violence.

An example would be Jews in the Middle East helping to rebuild damaged mosques and Muslim cemeteries, and Muslims mourning Jews killed in political violence. When two faith communities can come together to jointly adopt a justice agenda or jointly organize a service program, this is an effective means of improving interfaith relations and understanding, while providing tangible benefits to each.

When cross-boundary ties have been effectively forged, interfaith teams can be formed to enter situations of conflict and tension as peacemakers. For example, the *Sudan Inter Religious Council* has organized such teams to go as peacemakers to all of Sudan's conflict-prone regions. In other countries confronting religious tensions, there are plans to organize interfaith teams to engage in early warning and go on short notice when conflict breaks out to defuse tension and work with the groups in conflict to resolve the issues or identify nonviolent mechanisms to address them.

Perspective

Out of interfaith action can come common action, and this might be action to address an issue that has divided the two communities, where something has been a stumbling block to improve relationships and reconciliation, and so addressing that can help overcome the difficulties. For instance, so many Christians and Jews in this country have complained and complained, particularly after 9-11, that Muslim leaders were not attacking, criticizing, and condemning the 9-11 attack or other terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists. They weren't aware of many of the condemnations that had been made, but even so I think Muslim leaders recognized, through these dialogues, that they needed to be more open, more explicit, more regular and quick in their responses condemning these acts. But also, common action can come where, on issues where religion is not a dividing point…where it's not where the communities are in conflict with each other, but where they share a commitment. Whether it's jointly providing relief, and this has happened recently in the case of the earthquake in Pakistan, where Muslim and Christian humanitarian organizations joined together to provide relief in Pakistan and Kashmir where earthquake damage had been done. So, that through this joint action they were able to solidify their relationships, and through the cooperative effort, they were able to improve their relationships.

-David Smock

When I was working in Bosnia, I was really faced with the question of what could religious communities do after the war was over. I remember even during the war, beginning to ask religious leaders and lay people that I met, but particularly religious leaders, what they did. During the war, the answer that I got was, they conducted funerals more than anything else. Which was astounding to me, as having been the pastor of a church, I have conducted funerals, but it was never the predominant thing that I did. I began then asking some of those clerics, Muslim as well as Christian, "How can you begin to look at the funeral itself, or the mourning and grief process, as the very first step in a reconciliation and peacebuilding process within your country?" because unless people are able to come to terms with their grief in a positive way, they are going to be caught in a cycle of grievance and revenge. And how can you as a religious leader begin to help shape and change that process in a constructive way. How can you use your faith traditions to do that? I think that is an example of the kind of thing that religious leaders can begin to do very, very effectively within their communities. They can begin to do it during a war, in fact, but it becomes even more important after a war. How do you really help change the mentality of people so that they are not caught within cycles of victimhood and revenge?

-David Steele

3: Case Study: Interfaith Dialogue in Nigeria

Introduction

With a population of 140 million, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, and one of the continent's most fortunate in its endowment of natural resources. Nevertheless, the majority of Nigerians are poor, and the nation has suffered through a number of bloody conflicts in its recent history.

Nigeria has proven difficult for successive regimes to govern. Poverty and corruption are complicated by the country's great diversity. There are over 300 ethnic groups in 36 states, and the population is nearly evenly divided between Muslims and Christians. The Muslim population is concentrated in the north, while Christians and followers of African traditional religions live predominantly in the south.

Speaking of the great divide between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, Robert Ruby and Timothy Samuel Shah write:

> The importance of that divide is well illustrated by the fact that religion–not nationality–is the way in which most Nigerians choose to identify themselves. In a May-June survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 76% of Christians say that religion is more important to them than their identity as Africans, Nigerians or members of an ethnic group. Among Muslims the number naming religion as the most important factor is even higher (91%).[1]

Whether Christian or Muslim, Nigerians find great strength in their religious and cultural heritage.

Perspective

The principal drivers of conflict in Nigeria are religion – the tensions between the Muslims and the Christians. Nigeria is roughly 50% Muslim, 50% Christian. The religious divisions in the country have erupted many times into violence. There are statistics that show that since 1999 to the present time about 13, 000 people have died in civil conflict in Nigeria. There is the problem in the Niger Delta. About 90% of Nigeria's foreign revenues come from the oil that is produced in the Niger Delta, but that region is probably the poorest region in Nigeria, and that economic and political marginalization has, in the past few years, led to a spate of kidnappings, and other violence, including threats of secession and just really been quite problematic for the country. Tensions over resources, land resources, groups that live side by side might have different uses of land, and also tension between ethnic groups, all drive different conflicts in Nigeria.
-Dorina Bekoe

Robert Ruby and Timothy Samual Shah, "Nigeria's Presidential Election: The Christian-Muslim Divide," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, March 21, 2007, http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=182.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and been one of the most volatile, and one of the most difficult to govern. There are over 200 language groups, there are extreme ethnic divisions, there are economic disparities. There are many ways in which Nigerian society is divided. Nigeria is also divided into religious communities. Practically 50% are Muslim and practically 50% are Christian.
There are a range of conflicts that divide Nigeria. Twenty, thirty years ago, these conflicts did not revolve around religion; even though there were the same religious divisions, they were more focused on ethnicity, on economic conflicts and competition. In more recent years, where these ethnic conflicts and economic competition have overlapped and been reinforced by religious differences, religion has become the surrogate for these conflicts and has been a mobilizing force for opposing sides in competition for resources or competition for political power.
-David Smock

3.1: Tension Between Christians and Muslims

A Difficult History

Relations between Muslims and Christians have often been tense.

[Map showing ethnic divisions]

In the eighth century Islam had already made major inroads into the north of the territory that came to be known as Nigeria. The trend continued in later centuries as northern areas, traditional home to the Hausa ethnic group, came under the control of the Fulani who were intent on imposing a pure Islamic social order. In 1830 the Fulani established the Caliphate of Sokoto and continued to spread an Islamic political, social and religious order across the northern areas.

If Islam came to Nigeria through the north, Christianity arrived in the country via the southern coast. The initial contact with Christianity occurred around the fifteenth century through the influence of Catholic Priests who ministered to the Portuguese trading community along the West African coast. But Christianity only began to make effective inroads into southern Nigeria in the nineteenth century, with the arrival of Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian missionaries from Britain, Europe, and North America.

These missionaries contributed to the suppression of the slave trade, the provision of schooling and health services, and the rise of indigenous African churches, which developed to challenge the association of Christianity with western cultural and political imperialism. These churches, along with the mainstream Protestant and Catholic missions, have spearheaded a massive evangelical spread of the Christian faith throughout southern Nigeria and the northern Middle-Belt, but have had only a very limited impact in the historically Muslim Hausa-Fulani far north.

In the 1950s Islamic *Sharia* law made its first inroads into the federal legal system. Twelve northern states eventually adopted some form of *Sharia* law, alienating Christians, particularly those living in the north. In 1986, under a Muslim military leader, Nigeria became a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, further angering many Christians. On the other hand, in 1992 Nigeria restored full diplomatic relations with the state of Israel, which had been broken off in 1973. This move, which had the general support of Christians, angered many Muslims.

Religion is not the only source of tension in Nigeria. The country earns substantial revenue from the oil industry, which constitutes 95% of foreign exchange earnings, but the lack of equitable economic development is another major destabilizing factor. Other sources of tension include issues of ethnicity, property and land use. Yet regardless of the origins of disputes, they frequently find expression along the deep fault lines of religion. Tens of thousands of people have perished in Nigeria during the period from 2002-2008 in violence between Christians and Muslims.

Perspectives

You know, the tensions really didn't develop into a major national challenge until the late 70's when there was a debate between the Christians and Muslims over an attempt to create a federal sharia court of appeal, and the sharia is the Islamic law. The idea was to create a federal sharia court of appeal that would treat appeals coming from the lower courts on Islamic personal issues. The Christian position was that sharia or Islamic law should be left at the sub-national level for states or regions where the Muslims constitute a predominant proportion of the population, and should not be introduced at the national level. This was the first major flashpoint in the country, when you had Christians and Muslims really in an open conflict over a very sensitive, symbolic religious issue.
-Rotimi Suberu

A lot of the outlines of religious conflict in Nigeria has to do with whether or not states can adopt sharia law, and who is subject to sharia law. Sharia law in Nigeria is one of the aspects of religious tension. Sharia law refers to law that is based on Islam, law that is based on the Qur'an. And Christians are usually exempt from sharia law, but there is always tension in communities and states that have adopted sharia law when there are also Christians living in those states. Currently there are 12 states out of the 36 that have adopted sharia law, and in some instances, that has caused friction between the Christian population within the state and the Muslim population within the state. There are also religious dimensions to state power in Nigeria. Very roughly, the north is mostly Muslim and the south is mostly Christian, and there are historical agreements about which region should govern, whether it's the north, largely Muslim state, or the south, largely Christian state, and that power struggle, that regional power struggle, has also manifested itself into religious tensions.
-Dorina Bekoe

Conflicts in Plateau State

The worst of the violence has occurred in the country's Plateau State. Recent Christian-Muslim conflict in Plateau State occurred in Yelwa-Nshar, in the Shendam local government area, where nearly 1,000 were killed in May 2004.

The killings in Yelwa-Nshar provoked reprisals in both Kano State and Southeastern State. To subdue the unrest in Plateau State, 25,000 soldiers and security personnel were deployed. The administrator of Plateau State convened a peace conference that resulted in recommendations for resolving the conflicts, but the Muslim community rejected them.

As in other parts of Nigeria, to characterize these conflicts as Christian versus Muslim is only partly accurate. Other sources of tension include land ownership and use, cattle rearing, and political power. Religious identities frequently overlap with identities of ethnic groups, local people (primarily Christian), and migrants (primarily Muslim). In addition, Muslims in Plateau State tend to be better off economically than Christians, generating class conflict. Yet as in other parts of Nigeria, even when religion is not the most basic cause of conflict, it is frequently used to incite one or both sides to mob violence.

3.2: Religious Peacemaking Negotiations

The Imam and the Pastor

Although Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria are usually tense and too frequently violent, a local evangelical pastor and a local imam have been forging peace in Yelwa-Nshar and other parts of Nigeria.

The story of Pastor James Wuye and Imam Mohammed Ashafa is a narrative of religious peacemaking. In 1992, they fought on opposite sides of a religious conflict. Wuye lost his right arm, and Ashafa lost his spiritual teacher and two cousins in a Muslim-Christian clash in Zongon Kataf.

But in 1995, they recognized that their two faiths both contain warrants for peace. They established the Inter Faith Mediation Centre, and committed themselves to work collaboratively to promote interfaith reconciliation. In 1999, they coauthored a book titled *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict* (Lagos: Ibrash Publications, 1999), which describes their experiences and sets out the biblical and Qur'anic mandates for peace. Since then, they have helped bring religious peace to the troubled city of Kaduna.

At the invitation of the administrator of Plateau State, in November 2004 Wuye and Ashafa carried their message and skills to Yelwa-Nshar. They gathered key leaders for five days of sharing and negotiation. This event was the first time the two communities were brought together for a face-to-face encounter. As facilitators, Wuye and Ashafa used a combination of preaching and conflict resolution techniques.

Perspectives

The story of Pastor James Wuye and Imam Mohammed Ashafa is truly an illuminating and inspiring story. They are two individuals who were leaders of their respective youth movements in Kaduna in northern Nigeria, the Imam being a youth leader of the Muslim youth and the Pastor being a leader of the evangelical Christian youth. And when conflicts arose between Christians and Muslims, they actually fought on either side of the conflict. James had his right arm, had to be amputated because of injury and Imam Ashafa had two of his cousins killed in this conflict. It's an inspiring story over time how they each had an epiphany at about the same time; that Christianity is a religion of peace and Islam is a religion of peace, and they shouldn't be engaging in religious warfare, much less leading religious warfare. A mutual friend got them together and they eventually formed an organization called the Interfaith Mediation center based in Kaduna, and for the last 10 or 12 years they have committed themselves to interfaith peacemaking.

They are very effective in doing peacemaking, in the first instance in Nigeria, but now they have been traveling to places like Sierra Leone and Senegal and Kenya, and carrying their methodology and their inspiring story. In the first instance, they are effective because of their life stories, of how they were transformed from militant religious extremists, one Christian, one Muslim, into religious peacemakers. To see them interact with each other and to see the Christian pastor quote from both the Bible and the Qur'an and to see the Imam quote from both the Qur'an and the Bible, and to see how they work so seamlessly together as peacemakers is inspiring to those who are in conflict. They live out the example of how peace can be made between religious communities. In addition to that, they have a carefully worked out methodology, partly based on western conflict resolution concepts and practices, partly based on traditional Nigerian practices, but inspired by religious exhortation and by citations of religious texts that point to the ways that Christians and Muslims could and can be peacemakers.

-David Smock

The way their story is understood in the popular imagination is that you have two leaders, of course, two leaders of the different faith communities. Two leaders who had been previously involved in a major destructive conflict, coming together in a country that is under constant threat from ethnic, regional conflicts; these leaders coming together to, in a way, construct an example – an example of the potential and the promise and the value of reconciliation – of accommodation – across ethnic, religious divides. So, I think that's the way in which this resonates across the Nigerian citizenry. These are two people with an experience – a previous experience of violence, a confrontational conflict – in a part of the country that is also very prone to ethnic and religious conflict. Coming together as an example, as an example to show that interfaith reconciliation and interfaith accommodation is possible. I think that is the message and the way that these two remarkable individuals resonate across the Nigerian citizenry.

-Rotimi Suberu

Principles of Interfaith Dialogue

While retaining its own unique characteristics, the product of years of experience, Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa's work with groups such as those at Yelwa-Nshar illustrates many principles of interfaith dialogue that we discussed in the previous chapter.

Meeting separately. Wuye and Ashafa have developed a very effective technique of meeting separately with Christian and Muslim participants before bringing them together. In the separate sessions the participants are able to talk in a more unrestrained manner without offending the other side. After venting their emotions, the participants are usually better prepared to listen to the other community rather than just make accusations.

Learning about the "other." In some cases, facilitators of interfaith dialogues avoid history because it can be divisive; however, the opposite has been the case for the pastor and the imam.

They quote with favor the first premier of northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, who addressed the first Nigerian president, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, as follows:

> Let us forget our differences. No, let us understand our differences. I am a Muslim and a Northerner. You are a Christian and an Easterner. By understanding our differences, we can build unity in our country.[2]

In order to bring these differences into the open and test mutual perceptions for accuracy, Wuye and Ashafa typically ask the participants from their respective faith communities to articulate the perceptions that each faith group has of the other. They then offer perspectives to rebut negative stereotypes. They conclude:

> Many of these erroneous perceptions have been immediate causes of the various intra-religious and inter-religious conflicts that have culminated in devastating wars, threatening the very foundation of human existence.[3]

Sharing sacred texts. The most remarkable feature of their process is the pastor's frequent quotes of the Qur'an and the imam's references to the Bible.

Wuye and Ashafa are determined to counter false perceptions of the religious "other" by reference to the major sources of the faiths, the Bible and the Qur'an. Within these sources they have discovered surprising similarities, central among them the fundamental affirmation of the absolute sovereignty of the one God of justice and peace. In their workshops, they discuss numerous ways in which Christians, Muslims, and Jews share elements of a common heritage.

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[2] Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and James Movel Wuye, *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict* (Lagos, Nigeria: Ibrash Press, 1999), 13.

[3] Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and James Movel Wuye, *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict* (Lagos, Nigeria: Ibrash Press, 1999), 13.

Perspectives
Well, the particularities of Plateau state is that it has a Christian majority. It's in the north, it's in the northern part of the country, which is predominantly Muslim. The whole of the northern region in Nigeria is predominantly Muslim. But Plateau is one of those so-called minority or middle-based states that have a predominant Christian population. So in Plateau state you have a predominant Christian population and a minority Muslim population. So it's a very challenging situation in which a regional majority, and in fact, some would call a national majority, is a minority in this state of the federation, and in which the Christian majority also feels a bit insecure, by the presence of this minority which is regionally and nationally dominant.
-Rotimi Suberu

Probably the most dramatic case of peacemaking that the Pastor and the Imam have been involved in, and I played a small role in reinforcing their work, was in Yelwa-Nshar in Plateau state. In May of 2004, about 1000 people were killed in this small community. Christians killing Muslims, Muslims killing Christians; actually, more Christians killing Muslims, than vice versa. And people didn't understand what the conflict was about; outside people didn't understand what the conflict was about, but I read about it in a news account, and I approached the Imam and Pastor and said, "Why don't you go and offer your services as peacemakers, as mediators?" And so they did; they checked with the governor of Plateau state to see if he would have any objection, and he had tried a peacemaking effort of his own and had failed, and so he was happy to have others try and see if they would be more successful. So we provided financial support, and they went in and spent a couple of months doing background research on what the underlying issues were, and the issues were that the Christians were the indigenous community. The Muslims had moved in more recently. The Muslims were better off economically; they tended to be the traders and business people. The Christians tended to be farmers; the Christians were the ones who selected the main chief, and the Muslims didn't have a leader of that variety. That was another source of tension. There were questions about markets, and whether a mosque should be built in the market, or whether it should be separate from the market. There were a whole range of issues.
-David Smock

3.3: Apology and Forgiveness

Mutual Empathy and Understanding

Wuye and Ashafa's work also illustrates the importance and the power of apology and forgiveness in interfaith dialogue.

The atmosphere at the outset was tense and confrontational. By the end of the third day, however, the two sides agreed on the core issues that provoked the killing. On the fourth day, they addressed each of these issues. The first issue was the Christian complaint that Muslims, who migrated to the area from Northern Nigeria, failed to respect local traditions and leaders. To buttress their claim, the Christians leveled specific charges.

The principal Muslim leader responded to these charges by agreeing that all of them were valid, and that the behavior of the Muslims was unacceptable. The Muslims then apologized to the Christians and sought their forgiveness. This unexpected response stunned the Christians. In turn, they asked the Muslims to forgive their own unacceptable behavior. Tears flowed on both sides.

Perspective

So, the Pastor and Imam went to Nshar and I went with them, and we spent a week working with the two communities. First of all, two days with the Christians meetings separately, the Muslims meetings separately, with the Imam with the Muslims and the Pastor with the Christians, and then coming together and identifying the key issues that separated and caused the conflict. And then focusing on how these issues could be resolved. There were seven issues on each side. The first issue that the Christians identified was a lack of respect for the chief, which was a Christian chief, and that his car had been stoned by the Muslim youth, and when he tried to speak, that he was shouted down. The Christians took great offense at this, and that was one of the reasons that they fought against the Muslims. So they went through this explanation of complaint, and how hurtful this had all been, and the leader of the Muslim community got up, and after a lengthy silence, said, "You're absolutely right. We did all those things. We shouldn't have done them. We apologize. We are going to work hard that we won't do them again." And he turned to a Muslim youth leader, and said "You were involved in some of these activities?" and he said, "I was. I was one of the ones that threw stones at the chief's car. I will not do that again. I will work with the youth to make sure it doesn't happen again."

The Christians were so stunned by this and surprised by these admissions of failure and apologies that they in turn apologized for their own shortcomings and failings. Tears were shed and we turned to all the other issues that each side had identified, and over the next three days, either resolved the issues, came to agreement, or at least on an approach to resolve the issue. After this agreement was signed, and then there were two months of consultation with the wider community to make sure everybody was on board. Then there was a grand celebration that the adoption of this peace agreement, which has held for the last three years, and has been a model for other communities in Plateau state where there was similar conflict, often bloody conflict. .
-David Smock

The work of the Pastor and Imam, you know, is one that is relevant for Nigeria, and one that is not only desirable, but achievable. And the reason is that nobody wants the country to disintegrate; Muslims and Christians recognize that they have a lot to lose from the division or disintegration of the country. And beyond that, both religious traditions actually include principles – they include principles, they include doctrines that make interfaith accommodation possible. Both faiths condemn violence, they condemn oppression, they condemn exploitation, and they promote religious tolerance and religious coexistence. The example of the Yoruba in Nigeria, a community which is equally divided into the Muslim and Christian faiths, but where you've had very

impressive levels of interfaith coexistence, show that actually, such interfaith coexistence is not only desirable, but also quite achievable. .
-Rotimi Suberu

Acting Together

On the final day, the two sides worked through all the remaining issues, either agreeing on a resolution or a process to find a resolution ultimately acceptable to both sides. They drafted a peace affirmation, which was subsequently shared with the two communities, an excerpt of which follows:

Peace Affirmation

In the name of God, the Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate, we the representatives of the Muslims and Christians of various ethnic nationalities in Shendam local government area of Plateau State who have gathered here pray for true peace in our community and declare our commitment to ending the violence and bloodshed that deny the right to life and dignity.

1. **LEADERSHIP**: We the representatives of this community hereby acknowledge the paramountcy and rulership of His Royal Highness the Long Goemai of Shendam. We condemn the use of derogatory names to the paramount ruler by anybody within the community.

   We hereby resolve that His Royal Highness the Long Goemai of Shendam be addressed by his title and be acknowledged and respected as such. We acknowledge that lack of central leadership in Yelwa had contributed to the disharmony in Yelwa community. We resolve that the issue of chieftaincy of Yelwa be referred to Shendam traditional council for urgent steps to be taken, without prejudice to the accepted and approved method of the government.

2. **RELIGION**: We hereby affirm our belief and faith in the sanctity of all religious places of worship, whether it is a Mosque, a Church or a Shrine. We condemn in strong terms the desecration of all places of worship, killings in the name of God, and call on all to refrain from incitement and exhibition of religious sentiments and or the instigation of such sentiments for selfish ends.

   We resolve to create an atmosphere where present and future generations will co-exist with mutual respect and trust in one another.

   We pledge to educate our young ones to embrace the culture of respect for these values.

3. **ETHNICITY**: We acknowledge our ethnic and tribal diversity. We condemn in strong terms their negative application in our day-to-day life.

We resolve that our ethnic and tribal diversity should be a source of our unity, strength and also a source of our economic and social development.

4. **PROVOCATION**: We acknowledge the existence of the use of derogatory names toward each other in the past.

   We condemn in strong terms the use of derogatory names to each other.

   We resolve to collectively respect and trust each other, and call upon all to refrain from this. We resolve to collectively respect and trust each other, and call upon all to refrain from the use of such derogatory names like 'Arna', 'Falak Muut', ‘Jaap nhaat Yelwa, ‘Gampang’, etc. as perceived to be derogatory by groups concerned or affected.

   We resolve to refrain from the use of the media to cast aspersions and give incorrect and misleading information about our community. We call on the media to always cross check and balance information they publish in relation to our community.

5. **INTIMIDATION**: We acknowledge and condemn the unruly behavior of our youth due to high rate of illiteracy, unemployment and exploitation of the youth as thugs and hangers on by politicians. We call upon all stakeholders, i.e. religious, community and political leaders, to put hands on deck to reverse this trend.

   We also resolve that the use of parallel markets in Yelwa-Nshar and the conversion of houses into market square in Yamini be referred to the local government council.

6. **INJUSTICE**: We acknowledge and condemn the conversion of residence and places of worship into markets and other uses. Having so observed we are appealing to the parties concerned to in the name of God vacate those places for their rightful owners.

7. **INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)/MISSING PERSONS**: We note with concern that some of our brothers and sisters are still at large having been displaced. We therefore appeal to the authorities to take adequate steps to ensure their return and necessary rehabilitation. We also resolve that a joint search committee be constituted between the local government council, the Shendam traditional council and the law enforcement agents for the search of the missing members of the community.

8. **GOVERNMENT ROLE ON EVEN DEVELOPMENT**: In view of the prevailing circumstances existing in our community, i.e. the non-functioning government structures and organizations like NITEL, Ministry of Agriculture (M.O.A.), Plateau Agricultural Development Project (P.A.D.P.), Water Board, Electricity, Schools and Primary Health Care (P.H.C.), we passionately call on the government to resuscitate these institutions as they were prior to the crises in the community.

9. **CONCLUSION:** We resolve to work collectively with the security agencies to maintain law and order in our communities.[4]

Perspectives

Well, the peace affirmation was a public recognition of the adoption of this peace plan by the wider community, particularly by the chief who did not participate in the mediation – his representatives were there but he didn't participate – and the endorsement by the state governor, who accepted all the principles of the peace plan. So, it was an affirmation of the agreement; it was a public celebration of peace. It was a turning event in terms of people who had fled the community, residents who had left because of the conflict, feeling that now is the time that they can return to the community and live there safely. It also got press coverage, so it was more widely disseminated throughout Nigeria. It was also a statement to the wider communities in Plateau state that had experienced similar types of conflicts; that peace is possible, that there is a way that we can overcome these difficulties, that we need to avoid conflict, and there are ways that we can go about avoiding conflict, if we follow the same approach that was followed in Yelwa-Nshar.
-David Smock

I think they are definitely making a contribution to peace, in Nigeria, in Kaduna states, in the volatile parts of the country, because apart from Plateau state, after the deadly riots, again over Islamic law in Kaduna in 2000, these two leaders were in the forefront of a major declaration of interfaith reconciliation and accommodation. So in spite of the fact that these conflicts are a regular occurrence in the country, the fact that these people have intervened severally to at least calm down things and to create some kind of basis for a sustainable accommodation among the conflicts in religious constituencies, is one that has contributed positively, sometimes to preventing conflict, in several other cases to containing conflict, and to providing some kind of basis – some kind of a platform – for post-conflict reconciliation and accommodation. And I think this is a lesson that is very relevant in other parts of the country, and that will be very useful in at least showing the example that interfaith reconciliation is possible and is achievable and desirable. .
-Rotimi Suberu

Celebrating Peace

On February 19, 2005, several thousand people celebrated the peace agreement, including many of those who had fled their homes the previous May and now felt sufficiently safe to return and resettle.

The governor of Plateau State and many other dignitaries attended and declared their support for the peace settlement.

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[4] David Smock, "Mediating Between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State, Nigeria," in *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, PeaceWorks, no. 55, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 18-20.

Only time will tell if this peace will hold, but the two sides amazed themselves at the reconciliation they achieved. The Yelwa-Nshar experience demonstrates that even the bloodiest religious conflicts in Nigeria can be addressed creatively. Moreover, progress would not have been achieved if the pastor and the imam had not combined religious exhortations with well-tested conflict resolution techniques. The reconciliation process in Yelwa-Nshar instructively parallels the reconciliation the pastor and imam experienced 10 years previously.

Wuye and Ashafa subsequently turned their peacemaking attention to the city of Jos, capital of Plateau State, which had experienced comparable religious violence. After three days of interactions between representatives of the Christian and Muslim communities, a similar peace accord was reached and signed. They have also worked in the towns surrounding Yelwa-Nshar to train youth, women, and elders in religious peacemaking, and to resolve incipient conflict to avoid repeating the past violence in Yelwa-Nshar elsewhere.

Perspectives

Well, you know the work of the Interfaith Mediation Center in Kaduna has definitely been very useful in other contested, in other conflict-prone parts of the country, and you have many of this in the north, you have it in Kaduna, of course, in other parts of Kaduna, you have it in Plateau state, you have it in places like Adamawa, like Taraban, and very recently, into other places like Bono, which have had, relatively, some experience of interfaith peace, but are now coming under the challenge of ethnic and religious animosities, not to talk of places like Kano, where confrontations between Christians and Muslims occur very regularly. So I think the work of their Interfaith Mediation Center is one that has been used very creatively across these flashpoints that you have in northern Nigerian and beyond. .
-Rotimi Suberu

Their work has had an increasingly wide impact. Their first work was focused on Kaduna, and they came up with the Kaduna declaration, which has really brought religious peace to Kaduna, which is a religiously divided community and in the past had considerable religious violence. For instance, when the case of the Danish cartoons came up, and Muslims had taken offense at these cartoons, thinking that they were blasphemous against the prophet; there were more people killed in Nigeria over the Danish cartoons than in any other place, with the Muslims killing Christians and then retaliation. But in Kaduna, nobody was killed, and that came about as a result of the Kaduna declaration and the work of the imam and the pastor. Then their work in Plateau state and following, the work in Yelwa, then with our support, they worked in other communities to help prevent violence, and in a couple of cases, to reach peace agreements where there had been violence. More recently, in February of 2007, we cosponsored, with the Pastor and Imam, a conference for top religious leaders in Nigeria, to work toward the creation of an interfaith council for Nigeria as a whole, with a focus on eliminating religious violence, in the first instance, in the elections of April 2007. And while there were killings in Nigeria, none of these killings were religiously motivated, or it wasn't killing between Muslim and Christian.

This case illustrates several of the principles we've been talking about. First of all, that what's called "religious conflict" is often not fundamentally religious in character. It's not a dispute about theology or about religious texts, sacred texts. It can be about much more mundane issues that happen to get reinforced by divisions between Christians and Muslims. Secondly, this story reflects the power of the example, the example of the Imam and the Pastor. The way they have been transformed from extremist militants to peacemakers. And the way they work together and collaborate with each other, a Christian and a Muslim leader, in a country where religion is often a polarizing factor. Third, it illustrates that interfaith dialogue doesn't have to be about religion either; it doesn't have to be talking about religious differences or about religious texts. It can be talking about differences that happen to divide Christians and Muslims. They can be economic issues or political issues or social issues of a variety of types. It illustrates how creative it can be for religious leaders, or a Pastor and an Imam in this case, to take the lead in peacemaking in a conflict where it is seen as dividing Christians and Muslims.

The secular governor was a failure at resolving this issue, partly because he is a Christian, and he was seen as being too biased by the Muslims; but you have a team, you have a Muslim imam and a Christian pastor who are taking the lead, and are truly balanced in their approach, and in a way that was very reassuring to both the Muslim and Christian populations. This case also illustrates the degree to which religious orientation – exhortation, citation of religious texts – can be merged with and reinforce more conventional conflict resolution methodologies; that they don't have to be mutually exclusive, that you don't have to have either a secular approach, or a religious approach, that you can merge the methodologies in a very productive and synergistic way.
-David Smock

4: Faith-Based Third-Party Efforts in Guatemala

Introduction

We began our course with a focus on interfaith dialogue for resolving conflict, concentrating on the interrelationship of faith-based communities themselves.

[Map showing divisions]

Now we turn to a related but somewhat different focus, namely, how faith-based communities, working together, can serve as third parties in helping to resolve conflict between two or more disputants. This is not interfaith dialogue as such, but involves many of the same principles. We will examine how faith-based communities working in third-party roles helped to bring an end to the 36-year internal armed conflict in Guatemala.

This story can be introduced with two questions:

1) How did it happen that a broad range of religious communities—indigenous Mayan, Roman Catholic, Jewish, and evangelical—were able to work together to help bring an end to the devastating internal armed conflict in Guatemala? How did it happen that leaders of these faith traditions, who have so often engaged in competition, were able to work together for the goal of a negotiated peace settlement?

2) Is there something that faith-based communities in other countries might learn from the Guatemalan experience? In what respects might the Guatemalan experience contain elements of a model for peacemaking to be employed elsewhere?

To answer these questions, we will set the stage with a brief historical sketch. Next, we will look at the peace process and the role of the faith communities within it. Finally, we will summarize lessons learned by the faith communities, focusing on those that might prove helpful for others.

At first glance the violent armed conflict that engulfed the Central American country of Guatemala between 1960 and 1996 might seem very different from the smaller-scale conflicts that arise in local communities. To be sure, the Guatemala conflict, which was formally resolved on December 29, 1996, with the signing of the *Peace Accord*, involved an entrenched military, four guerrilla organizations, and the concerted efforts of governments, the United Nations, and the NGO community. Yet the principles at work in bringing this costly conflict to an end are, in many respects, the very same principles at work in smaller conflicts that are less complex.

Perspectives

Not in every dispute are religious leaders going to be accepted as third-party mediators or peacemakers, particularly in places where there may be a religious component to the conflict. If it's a Muslim-Christian conflict, a Christian acting alone may be considered too partisan and might not be recognized as a disinterested peacemaker because of his sympathies for the Christian community, and might have prejudices against Muslims. But there are situations where leaders from each of the faith communities working together can be peacemakers - or situations like South Africa, like Guatemala, like Mozambique, where religious leaders in each of these cases happened to be Christians in predominantly Christian countries – and have been able to take the lead and be particularly effective peacemakers.

-David Smock

The efforts from faith-based communities to promote peace in Guatemala take on different angles because there was a complex phenomenon going on. To people on the outside world, meaning the outside world of the militarized context of the conflict, the Guatemalan society was perceived to be one that was conflicted over issues related to indigenous rights, human rights, political deprivation of rights for the whole of society, and economic inequality. So, different organizations and different movements will take

on a position on one of those issues. So you see different faith-based communities coming to Guatemala to advocate for example, to an end of the war, because of the effort to increase indigenous rights. Another group will come to focus on the issue of human rights. They say the indigenous people are harassed but this is a humane, a national aspect that not only deals with indigenous groups. Then you have another group that focuses rather on land rights, on economic issues of inequality. You have different faith-based groups coming along and establishing alliances with different sectors in Guatemala and let's call it "pro-peace movements."
-Manuel Orozco

The Guatemala case is not primarily an inter-religious conflict but the closer you get to it, you see the religious factors. Secondly, you see the importance of the institutions: the Roman Catholic Church; the Mayan community as a spiritual community; and the Evangelicals – as some of the presidents of Guatemala have shown in recent times. These are major forces that mold the thinking of the people and certainly have an effect upon the economic, political, and social life of the people.
-Paul Wee

4.1: Historical Legacy of Violence

Colonialism, Religion and Culture

It is beyond the scope of this course to provide a detailed look at Guatemala's complex history; however, a brief discussion will help provide context to appreciate the role of faith-based third parties in the peace process.

In Guatemala, the expression *la violencia* is often used to describe brutal military campaigns waged against fierce guerrilla movements in the 1970s and 80s by successive Guatemalan governments, particularly those of Presidents Romeo Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt. Yet these campaigns of violent and counter-violence fit into a pattern of violence in Guatemala that dates back to the Spanish conquest, to the period when political and military domination, along with a religious drive to convert indigenous people, nearly destroyed traditional Mayan culture and religion. In the words of Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, the history of Guatemala is "a tale of intermittent conflict, insurgency, and retaliation first brought about by patterns of Spanish conquest over four and one-half centuries ago."[1]

Mayan civilization was among the most advanced in the Americas at its peak between 600 and 900 AD, although for reasons that have never been entirely clear, it began to decline in the years thereafter. According to Rachel Sieder, when the Spanish arrived early in the 16th century, "they encountered fragmented ethnic groups, dispersed between

[1] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 3.

different kingdoms, fighting for political and economic domination."[2] By exploiting these rivalries and employing substantial technological superiority, the Spanish eventually conquered the region, appropriated land and resources, and used various methods to subjugate the indigenous population.

Black and Needler note that the Catholic Church provided ideological justification for the conquest. The Spanish state gave landholders "the labor of the Indians and effective control over their lives in return for guardianship of their souls." In practice, this meant that landholders were expected to "convert the Indians and to maintain the forms of Christian worship among them."[3] Black and Needler credit the church for many good works, "founding schools, hospitals, orphanages, and asylums"; but they also note that "as the colonial era progressed, the church became characterized less by the self-sacrificing good works of the early missionaries and more by the desire to protect and maintain property given to it."[4]

Independence

In the early 1800s, the region's wealthy landholders and businessmen led a movement that eventually resulted in independence from Spain. Through the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, several governments were successful in modernizing Guatemala's economy and upgrading its basic infrastructure. However, attempts to improve the lives of indigenous people were generally ineffectual and short-lived. For example, the development of cash crops for export, responsible for considerable generation of wealth for the Spaniards, for the Indians only meant more systematic expropriation of land.

To this day, substantial divisions remain between those of Spanish and Mayan descent, including huge disparities in inherited wealth and upward mobility. According to Black and Needler, "The Spaniards and the Indians did not live in separate worlds, but neither have their cultures successfully fused." The analysts conclude that in the latter half of the 20th century Guatemala remained "characterized by legacies of the unintegrated and unequal development of these two societies."[5]

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[2] Rachel Sieder, "Guatemala," in *South America, Central America, and the Caribbean 2005*, Regional Surveys of the World, 13th ed., ed. Jacqueline West (London: Europa Publications, 2005), 471.

[3] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 8.

[4] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 12.

[5] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 3.

Perspectives

The conflict in Guatemala that began in 1960 and ended in 1996 has a long historical precedent that goes way back to the time of the conquest, when the Spanish invaders came to Central America. When, in the name of the church and the Spanish government, Mayans and Incas and others were conquered. This of course has created two worlds basically this tension has been with us, certainly, for five hundred years. "We are the rulers, we determine the agenda, we say what is going to happen," and there was on the part of the conquistadores, a demeaning of the humanity of the Indians. And that is expressed, of course, in all of the writings from the very beginning, and so it represented one of the weaknesses not only of European culture but of the faith. It saw itself as superior

-Paul Wee

The Catholic Church has had its heroes who have walked along the side of the people, like Bartolomé de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico in the early 1600s, and at that time, actually that region of Chiapas, Mexico was also part of what we know as Guatemala. And so he was a champion of the poor – but he was a real exception – and he was a champion of the indigenous people, of their rights. There were other illustrations of that, but by and large, the Catholic Church forcibly converted people to Catholicism. There is a Mayan spirituality, an indigenous spirituality, and people were obligated by the sword to convert to Catholicism. Over time, the Catholic Church became large landholders, had access to presidents and power, and basically did not take the side of the poor.

-Philip Anderson

The Catholic Church had historically been connected to the hierarchy of political authority because they became part of it during the colonial times. This hierarchy of political authority associated with the cleric hierarchy would basically establish a symbiotic relationship of power and controlling society, so the Catholic Church was always preserving and seeking to preserve this thought of school. And that included legitimating military repression in many cases. They would tell the indigenous people to accept the conditions in which they were immersed because you will find heaven in another life, to accept the way things were because, at the end of the day, they will inherit heaven.

-Manuel Orozco

The Modern Period

Following the defeat of fascism in World War II, a broad coalition of groups in Guatemala, hungry for reform, launched a wave of strikes and protests that eventually succeeded in ending the dictatorship of President Jorge Ubico Castañeda and his successor, Federico Ponce Vaides. In 1945, Guatemalans elected Juan José Arévalo to the presidency in what was generally recognized as a free and fair election. Arévalo's presidency was followed by another democratic election, and an orderly transfer of power to his successor, Jacobo Árbenz Guzman. The Arévalo and Árbenz governments were characterized by a series of social and economic reforms, including abolition of various types of forced labor, a broad extension of suffrage, improvements to public health and education, and land reform.

However, the land reform program threatened several American commercial interests, notably those of the United Fruit Company, which claimed that the Árbenz government harbored communists and posed a threat to U.S. national security, charges that spread widely in the American press. Many current analysts, including those like Black and Needler who are generally sympathetic to U.S. perspectives, conclude that the anti-communist rhetoric used against Árbenz was exaggerated, although he was tolerant of communists in the Guatemalan legislature whose rhetoric was stridently anti-American.[6] In the heightened tension of the Cold War, the Eisenhower Administration came to the conclusion that the Árbenz government posed a threat to hemispheric security and supported a coalition of opposition groups from within Guatemala that overthrew Árbenz in 1954.

The Árbenz government was replaced by the autocratic, repressive government of Carlos Castillo Armas, who immediately put a halt to social reforms and initiated a violent crackdown against his opponents. As Susanne Jonas describes, "The government immediately suspended all constitutional guarantees and embarked upon a drastic witch hunt, headed by the former secret police chief." Hundreds of political and labor leaders escaped into exile. Of those who didn't get away, at least "9,000 were imprisoned and many tortured under the government's virtually unlimited powers of arrest." Union organizers and Indian village leaders were targeted, and "as many as 8,000 peasants were murdered." Along with the persecution of specific individuals, "virtually all popular organizations were destroyed."[7]

These events traumatized many in Guatemalan society. As James Dunkerley states, "Whereas 1954 was for Washington a uniquely successful foray against international Communism," for historically dispossessed Guatemalans "it halted and turned back a ten-year experience of innovation that had already become codified and deeply embedded in the popular consciousness."[8] Jonas points out that the government helped create conditions for armed insurrection by "cutting off all legal avenues in Guatemalan politics, even physically eliminating moderate centrist leaders."[9] Dunkerley concurs on this point, noting that for many who supported reform, what happened in 1954 "signaled the necessity of armed struggle and an end to illusions about peaceful, legal and reformist methods."[10]

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[6] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 26-27.

[7] Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, Latin American Perspectives Series, No. 5 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 41.

[8] James Dunkerley, "Guatemala: Garrison State," in *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (New York: Verso, 1988), 428-429.

[9] Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, Latin American Perspectives Series, No. 5 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 64.

[10] James Dunkerley, "Guatemala: Garrison State," in *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (New York: Verso, 1988), 429.

In 1959, Fidel Castro succeeded in overthrowing the Batista regime in Cuba, inspiring a number of opposition groups within Guatemala to turn to guerrilla warfare. Supported ideologically and financially by the Soviet Union and Cuba, and led by former Guatemalan military officers who opposed the new regime, these groups began a series of successful guerrilla campaigns, including local self-defense, attacks on the army, bank robberies, and kidnappings.[11] The Guatemalan government responded forcefully, embarking on what Dunkerely calls "the first real 'scorched earth' policy of the modern era."[12] Thus began three decades of vicious armed conflict that resulted in thousands of forced disappearances, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons and approximately 200,000 deaths. As Sieder notes, these deaths were largely "the result of state military operations against civilians, particularly rural Mayan communities suspected of supporting the insurgency."[13]

As it had for most of its history, the Catholic Church in Guatemala supported landholding interests. According to Black and Needler, the church also continued to provide much of the ideological justification for government policies, "emphasizing those portions of Christian doctrine that counsel the poor to accept their lot meekly and account themselves more blessed than the rich and powerful."[14] Together with the military and a group of powerful, land-owning families, the church in Guatemala—and throughout much of Latin America—formed what some have called a "three-legged stool," a stable yet politically undemocratic and culturally exclusive foundation for maintaining power.

Perspectives

The violence in Guatemala escalated largely because there were unresolved problems that emerged in the 1950s. And the problems that existed in the 1950s were also a consequence of previously unaddressed problems. Guatemala tries to go through a series of transformations between the 1900s and 1950s to try to consolidate some form of democratic stability, but the process fails for many reasons. One of them is their inability to move into the international arena, and the other one is that there is a growing strength of the military in the country. By the 1950s they really become the most influential political power in the country. In addition to that, there is a very powerful economic elite that controlled the country significantly. You have basically in the 1950s-1960s, a level of land concentration in the hands of two percent of all farms controlling basically eighty percent of all the farms in the country. So you have this significant inequality that is peculiar to agrarian societies but they were deeper in the case of Guatemala. So all those

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[11] Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, Latin American Perspectives Series, No. 5 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 66-67.

[12] James Dunkerley, "Guatemala: Garrison State," in *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (New York: Verso, 1988), 430.

[13] Rachel Sieder, "Guatemala," in *South America, Central America, and the Caribbean 2005*, Regional Surveys of the World, 13th ed., ed. Jacqueline West (London: Europa Publications, 2005), 471.

[14] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 30.

elements give rise to the seeds to a conflict process that begins in the 1960s. So you see a buildup that begins to escalate in terms of the intensity of the tension that it creates in the society. And in lieu of the lack of solutions to these tensions, the level of anxiety that grows in the population explodes into some forms of conflict.
-Manuel Orozco

If one set the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 as a sort of…as a turning point, as a marker in history's path in Guatemala, then one must say that prior to Vatican II – although this is a generalization of course – the church saw itself as one of the mainstays of the economic and political powers of the Spanish. They had, of course, come from Spain. They had accompanied the conquistadores five hundred years earlier, and they knew that what they were doing in the exploitation of the land and the people was something, in their understanding, that was pleasing to God. They were the ones that had the privilege, they had the power, and together with the military and the economic interests, this three-pronged power structure maintained life to the benefit of the Spanish and their sons and daughters throughout the course of history.
-Paul Wee

In the period of the 1950s all the way up until 1980, Cardinal Casariego of Guatemala, the archbishop of the city of Guatemala and named cardinal, was actually an ally of the military in many, many ways. He blessed the military. This was during the period when the violence of the 80s and earlier was beginning. – the 50s, 60s, and 70s. He refused to see the violence that the elite was perpetrating upon the poor.
-Phillip Anderson

Roman Catholic Revolution: Vatican II (1962-1965)

Yet there were other factors at play during this period, several of which came together to bring an end to the internal war in Guatemala. One of these took place in the 1960s and gave new shape to the theology, practice, and mission of the Roman Catholic Church. That event was the Second Vatican Council.

This three-year gathering of church leaders, called into being by Pope John XXIII, had many impacts well beyond the scope of this narrative. But one key result was that it altered the role of the church in conflicts throughout Latin America, including Guatemala. Vatican II, as it came to be known, affirmed the church's calling to be a community of faith committed to the poor.

Vatican II said something quite radical, namely that human sin was not only to be found in the souls of individual people, but also in the structures and practices of political and economic life. It spoke of the need to invest more authority in the laity of the church and encouraged the leadership of women. It spoke directly to the oppressed poor with a clear challenge: God has created you with dignity, God has created you for freedom; now *be* what God has created you to be.

In the years following Vatican II, two Roman Catholic bishops' conferences, *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericao* (CELAM), one in Medellin in 1968 and one in Puebla in

1979, would interpret the meaning of Vatican II for the people of Latin America and give concrete expression to what came to be known as liberation theology. The Medellin conference pioneered the laity-led "base ecclesiastic communities" that transformed the life of the church in all of Latin America. We will not trace the many ways in which liberation theology manifested itself throughout Latin America, but instead focus on the reconciliation process in Guatemala.

Not all in Guatemala's church leadership embraced these new ideas; many continued in their traditional support of the government, the military, and landholders. Howver, Vatican II and the subsequent CELAM conferences encouraged a significant number of church leaders to take a critical stance toward actions of the state that they considered contrary to the mission of the church.

According to Black and Needler, "There was a sense that Christianity demanded more than virulent anticommunism and that failure to observe the most rudimentary demands of social justice was hardly more compatible with Christianity than atheistic Marxism—a theme highlighted by Pope John Paul II's speeches during his March 1983 visit to the country."[15]

Growing Non-Violent Resistance

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, several church groups and social movements, supported by a range of NGOs, human rights activists and others, organized and led non-violent resistance to oppressive state policies, responding, as Jonas describes, to "the absence of any serious attempt to meet lower-class needs."[16] In 1979, more than seventy organizations joined together in the *Frente Democratico Contra la Represion* (FDCR), or the Democratic Front Against Repression, "to protest repression and fight for basic democratic rights."[17] Economic cooperatives, also organized by church groups, NGOs and others, were at the same time rapidly expanding in the countryside, intensifying local conflicts with landowners and the army. A number of these movements merged into the *Comite de Unidad Campesina* (CUC), or Committee for Peasant Unity, which in 1980 organized a massive strike of 75,000 workers that for a time halted production of sugar and cotton, and eventually led to wage and other concessions. In Jonas's words, "for both landowners and the army, the strike was their worst nightmare come true."[18]

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[15] P. A. Kluck, "The Society and its Environment," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 72.

[16] Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, Latin American Perspectives Series, No. 5 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 7.

[17] Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, Latin American Perspectives Series, No. 5 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 125-126.

[18] Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, Latin American Perspectives Series, No. 5 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 128-129.

Perspectives

The Second Vatican Council 1962 to 1965 was called by Pope John the XXIII. There are not many councils in history. When a council takes place it is transformative. Cardinals, other leaders come, and this time, ecumenical leaders – that is from other churches – and the Roman Catholic church came together in Rome for these years to ask "Who are we now? In light of God's word, what is God calling us to do at this time in history?" And it's a very remarkable event, in the spirit in this great Pope John XXIII and his colleagues. There was a spirit of openness to listening and also to bringing in those from Asia, Africa and Latin America whose voice had not been heard in the past. You had people coming from Latin America, representing poor communities, and they started to talk, not only about human sin, as what individual people do that is wrong and contrary to God's word and God's law, but they started to talk about sin within the structures and practices of the social, economic and political order.

This was very, very new. Vatican II called the church to a new openness to this voice, "You are a person of dignity, God has called you to dignity, called you to freedom—be free!" And through the bishops' conferences in Latin America, this took on very, very concrete form. It said the church is on the side of the people. It's on the side of the poor and the oppressed just as Jesus was on the side of the poor and the oppressed. And the priests who took this seriously were suddenly in big trouble because to stand with the people, to affirm their rights and to say that that has to be expressed politically, economically and so forth, is to confront the powers that be.
-Paul Wee

The major significant change was an attitude of openness and the need for change within the Church. Pope John XXIII had a famous saying that "we're going to open up the windows of the Church because we need fresh air in here. Frankly, we need fresh air." Out of that momentum - there was a meeting of Catholic bishops in 1977, of CELAM, the Second Conference of Catholic Bishops of Latin America, in which the purpose of that was to look at the Catholic Church in Latin America in light of Second Vatican Council.

Out of that came two or three elements. One is yes, we do need reform. Out of that came the very famous statement that the Church should express a preferential option for the poor. Secondly that we have become too large and powerful and distant from our people. And therefore what we need to do is create small base Christian communities – break us down into small, livable communities of faith so people can dialogue about what the faith is, also in the light of their context. Out of the spirit of Second Vatican Council, there was this tremendous openness and John Paul XXIII talked about development as the new road to peace. And I think that statement also said something about the desires of people - human development, again, at the grassroots level for education, health care, economic opportunity, water systems in their communities, and the like.

So taking all of that together and really working at the grassroots in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Colombia, Brazil, the aspirations of the people, coupled

with what they were hearing as the good news of the gospel – that God wants life for all and life in its abundance – that would have fruit.
-Philip J. Anderson

Well, to think about how these faith-based efforts fit into the Guatemalan peace process is to realize that Guatemala was never alone. One of the issues that the military tried to exert was its control not only over the population but what was known, over what was happening in the country. They tried to maintain an isolated position vis-à-vis the rest of the world. But with the intensification of repression, with the damages caused by the earthquake in 1975, as well as with the Cold War-ization of Central American conflicts, the role of the military to isolate the country became practically impossible. And that opened the doors, or the floodgates you can say, of a number of organizations from abroad that established partnerships with different social movements in Guatemala. Some will, for example, ally with CONAVIGUA, the association of widows of the Guatemalans who disappeared, others with Rigoberta Menchú's Guatemalan support group that was created basically in the mid-80s. Others will form alliances with the Catholic Church directly. And so you have different efforts coming from different parts and all carrying the same message: we need to arrive at a peace settlement.
-Manuel Orozco

State Crackdowns

In response to these various challenges, states in the region launched a series of violent crackdowns against lay catechists of the Roman Catholic Church and others who identified with the aspirations of the poor. Many were tortured and killed throughout Central America.

In Jonas's words, neither the guerrillas nor civil society actors anticipated the level of violence in the government's response; "hence, tens of thousands of highlands Mayas were left unprepared to defend themselves."[19] Leaders of faith communities were not spared in these assaults. As the noted Guatemalan poet Julia Esquivel told an ecumenical delegation in 1981, "The Bible became a dangerous book. We buried it deep in the ground so that the bayonets of the soldiers could not find it."[20] There were many leaders, Roman Catholic and evangelical, who suffered under waves of repression, not only in Guatemala, but in neighboring El Salvador, including Roman Catholic priest the Rev. Rutilio Grande, Baptist lay leader Maria Gomez, Lutheran pastor David Fernandez, and the Rev. Ignacio Ellacuria and his Jesuit family, who were tortured and killed by the Salvadoran military. Among hundreds of church leaders who carried out ministry in the spirit of Vatican II in spite of these dangers, perhaps the most well known was the

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[19] Susanne Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 24.

[20] Julia Esquivel, oral report to an ecumenical delegation, 1981, as reported by Paul Wee. The official report of the delegation is also available: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, *From Guatemala, an Epistle to the Believing Communities in the United States* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1981).

Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. On March 24, 1980, a day after he called on the Salvadoran military to stop the repression of the people, Romero celebrated mass in a small chapel near the cathedral, where he was killed by an assassin's bullet.

It is important to mention Vatican II because, in spite of these individual tragedies, the Catholic Church's widening of perspective helped allow religious leaders to play a significant role in bringing about peace in Guatemala. Without the strong leadership of post-Vatican II prelates associated with the office of the Archbishop of Guatemala, such as Monsignor Prospero Penados del Barrio, Monsignor Rudolfo Quezada Toruño, Monsignor Julio Cabrera Ovalle, Monsignor Juan Gerardi Conedera, Monsignor Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri, and Monsignor Jorge Mario Ávila del Águila, the Catholic Church would not have been viewed as a broad-based institution with a compelling claim to understand the needs, fears and aspirations of all sides. Without Vatican II, the ecumenical initiative of the late 80s and early 90s would have been much more difficult, if not impossible.

Perspectives

Now, in the 1970s is when you see an escalation of repression. After the earthquake in Guatemala in 1975, there is a significant escalation of repression because society begins to demonstrate more, begins to complain about the lack of response on the side of the state over the earthquake. And that gives way to an increase in repression by the military in Guatemala. The late 1970s is where you see an upsurge of guerrilla resistance and that's where you see that there is a possibility that the Guatemalan guerrilla may become stronger and an important opponent to the military in power. But it is in the 1980s, especially the first three years of the 1980s, where the campaigns on human rights violations, where the repression and violence in the country really escalates dramatically. The estimates we are talking about are at least 20,000 people killed every year during that period. The level of violence was brutal. There was targeted killing, there were significant levels of disappearances during that period, and then you had massacres – large segments of villages, especially in indigenous communities, were completely destroyed by the military because the military believed that the indigenous people were becoming closer to the guerrilla resistance, even though in practical terms that was not the case. The guerrilla movement in Guatemala had serious confrontations with the indigenous resistance movement in the country. They didn't believe in following the same path as the guerrillas. Yet, the military responded in the same way, by basically destroying villages, especially in the highlands of Guatemala – Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Quezaltenango – all those were regions where there was significant violence and it was predominantly coming from the military

-Manuel Orozco

To this growing wave of awareness of "who we are," on the part of the Mayan people…in the face of this growing sense among not all Catholics, but some major Catholic bishops and priests, that we must take the side of the poor for justice and for equity… the reaction of the state was very harsh. This, of course, was seen by the powers that be as a threat. "Who are these people now, these priests coming to tell us – who have the power – that this is illegitimate and that it must be shared with others?" The reaction was powerful. And you think of all these hundreds of catechists who were taken and

tortured and killed by the government. Now, the record is very clear. It's not conjecturing on this point. The statistics are there for all to see. But it was a tough time and not just for the Roman Catholics, David Fernandez of the Lutheran church, Maria Gomez of the Baptist Church, but it was especially the Roman Catholic Church that suffered unbelievably during *la violencia*.
-Paul Wee

At the time, say certainly by the early 1980s, we knew of at least 200, 000 victims that had been killed by the military, some 400 villages that have been destroyed – Mayan villages in the interior of the country in the mountains. One million people were displaced from their homes due to the violence out of a population at that time of about 7.5 million people. In raw numbers, perhaps that isn't huge, but for Central America in a small country, that was significant. It impacted the lives of everybody in Guatemala.
-Philip Anderson

The Mayan Resurgence

If the pronouncements of Vatican II occasioned a time of far-reaching change for the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, there were also rumblings of resistance within the indigenous Mayan community.

The long history of cultural oppression and brutality had served to create a culture of quietism and withdrawal among many Mayans, a tendency that continued in modern Guatemala. During the bloody military campaigns, over 200,000 people had been killed, over 440 villages had been destroyed, and over a million civilians displaced.[21]

However, the change in the Roman Catholic Church set in motion by Vatican II was dramatic not only because it caused church leaders to question their traditional alliance with the military and the government, but also because it helped open them to the aspirations of Guatemala's five million indigenous Mayans.

If Vatican II spoke of the "preferential option for the poor," in Guatemala that had to include the masses of poor who were Mayan, among them strong women leaders such as Rosalina Tuyuc and Rigoberto Menchú Tum, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who spoke out courageously on behalf of a more just social order.

To facilitate the conversion of native people in the early years of Spanish conquest, the Catholic Church assimilated a number of Mayan religious beliefs and traditions, a process that developed what Black and Needler call a "syncretic folk Catholicism."[22] In the mid- to late-20th century, some religious leaders developed a different kind of interest

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[21] Philip J. Anderson, interview with Keith Bowen, June 24, 2008, Washington, DC; Susanne Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 24.

[22] Jan Knippers Black and Martin C. Needler, "Historical Setting," in *Guatemala: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, 2nd ed., ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1983), 12.

in studying correspondences between traditional Mayan beliefs and Christian ones, in many cases reflecting new fascination with the kinds of parallelism, interpenetration and mutualism that we described in Chapter 2. Some individuals, including the Rev. Vitalino Similox, an indigenous leader and Presbyterian minister, drew upon traditional sources of Mayan spirituality as they mobilized Mayan evangelical communities in support of the peace process of the 1990s.

Perspectives

The other factor is the Mayan people themselves. There was a growing awareness among them of their rights, partly, I must say, through the Roman Catholic Church, the teaching of the lay catechists. Hundreds and hundreds of lay catechists' who propagated this message of equality among Mayan communities., There was something brewing in the indigenous community. This is represented now, of course, by Rosalina Tuyuc, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, who won the Nobel Peace Prize and who has begun a campaign for indigenous people all around the world. But this was a movement, going back to their own ancient texts, the Popol Vuh. Sometimes combining them with Christian elements of liberation. But the end product was saying, "Now is our time, now is the right time for us." The leader Vitalino Similox expressed this eloquently to his own people, in their own rituals, at their own places of gathering to tell the stories of the ancestors and so forth. This took on a much more urgent and a much more realistic sense during the '60s and '70s and '80s.
-Paul Wee

There are some, I'm speaking primarily of some of the Pentecostal, some of the Protestants, certainly, I'm sure, some of the Catholics, who say that all has to be laid aside and forgotten and treated with suspicion. On the other hand, I really believe that among some Catholics, some Protestants, they view that there is no contradiction between, sort of the Western Christianity that came 1500s and on, and Mayan spirituality which is grounded in a creator to whom the Mayan people have great reverence. God is alive in creation and the priest honors that. So it's not a syncretism, but it is an honoring of millennial faith.
-Philip J. Anderson

You do have in Guatemala an increasing level of organizing despite repression. This is an issue that is hard to explain and understand. How can Mayan communities organize themselves while at the same time suffering repression? And given the fact that Mayan culture is generally and paradoxically non-aggressive, partly because of the products of the colony and the conquest in Guatemala, the Mayan culture becomes very subdued and that basically reduced the level of organizing. But in the 1970s there is an emerging leadership in the country, partly associated with global changes in issues relating to international labor rights, that raises attention. Also very important is that in the 1970s, the international development community begins to have an important presence in the world and an authority over issues relating to development. And the most important issue raised in the 1970s had to do with land reform. Land reform is picked up by the indigenous leaders in association to Latino groups, as well as trade unions. And that

conference of issues brings up a movement of different indigenous leaders to claim for certain land rights.
-Manuel Orozco

The Role of the Jewish Community

The small but influential Jewish community also played a role in bringing peace to Guatemala.

The Jewish community numbers perhaps 1,000 members, most of whom trace their origins in Guatemala to immigration from Germany, Eastern Europe and the Middle East during the 19th and 20th centuries. Although the Guatemalan government was not always hospitable to the Jewish minority, this changed significantly when, in 1947, Guatemala's representative to the United Nation's Special Committee on Palestine, Jorge Garcia Grandados, argued successfully for partition and for recognition of the State of Israel. The special bond that this intervention created between the governments of both countries led to programs of political, economic and military cooperation.

But like the Catholic Church after Vatican II, Guatemala's Jewish community was not monolithic in support of one side or the other. Some supported the government, while others committed themselves to understanding fundamental problems that motivated the guerrilla movement. One of the leaders of this latter community was a prominent attorney, Mario Permuth, who knew that if Guatemala was to become free of the violence and fear that permeated the daily life of all segments of the population, a new order, grounded in law and respect for human rights, needed to be established. Though he worked frequently for the government, he nevertheless gained the respect of the commanders of the guerrilla movement and leaders of the Mayan community.

Although there were many forces at work to pull them apart, the desire to bring an end to the internal war united members of the Roman Catholic, Mayan, evangelical, and Jewish communities of Guatemala during the 1990s. This unity was not simply pragmatic and political; as expressed in events of prayer and worship during the peace process, it was also rooted in a profound awareness of the spiritual dimension in the life of the people.

4.2: The Ecumenical-Interfaith Initiative

Meetings With Guerrilla Leaders

In 1986, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez initiated a peace process that culminated in the Esquipulas Accord, signed in Guatemala City in 1987 by Arias and the presidents of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The accord called for the creation of a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) in each country. For Guatemala, the accord represented a first step in what would be a decades-long search for a just peace.

A second chapter in the search for peace began in 1988, when a diplomatic commission representing the major guerrilla movements, which had banded together as the *Unidad*

Revolucionario Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), or the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, came into contact with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva, Switzerland.

There are only a handful of Lutherans in Guatemala, but the LWF is a closely knit worldwide communion of evangelical Christians, numbering at present 66.7 million members in 78 countries.

The LWF had three other natural connections to Guatemala.

1) For many years, it had worked on the ground in areas of development, health and education, primarily through its partners in Europe, Scandinavia and North America. Working among the poorest communities, it sought to help in the eradication of malnutrition and poverty. These good works gave the LWF and its partners a measure of credibility, well known to both the URNG and the government.

2) It had an excellent relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. Lutherans and Roman Catholics have achieved significant consensus on matters of doctrine; they have joined together in areas of mission and development throughout the world. The President and General Secretary of the LWF, as well as members of its staff, meet frequently with leaders of the Vatican Council for Promoting Christian Unity and, during the 1980s and 90s, with Pope John Paul II.

3) It also worked closely with a range of ecumenical partners, especially the World Council of Churches, the Latin American Council of Churches and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. These organizations share time, finances, personnel, and their broad range of contacts in the NGO community.

During one of its visits to the Vatican in 1988, the LWF proposed that a joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic delegation be sent to Central America to give support to the Esquipulas peace process.

Perspectives

The most important initiative is the one that resulted from the Arias Peace Plan in August ’87. From August ’87, there is a timetable that was established for compliance with the peace agreements, and the peace agreements had different components that were attached to a calendar. So the National Reconciliation Commission was entrusted, as part of the peace process of the Arias Peace Plan, with the objective to promote a reconciliation dialogue over the issues that mattered to the country. Now, they didn’t have a mandate with authority to change things. Their mandate was to open up a discussion with legitimacy from the international community, as well as from the Guatemalan government. That reconciliation process gave more strength to different organizations advocating and negotiating a settlement. But at the same time you have the agreement that says that these countries need to arrive at a peace process. So, this is basically taking

us an opportunity, and the ecumenical movement comes in and proposes this meeting in 1990 in Oslo.
-Manuel Orozco

I know specifically, and very well, the work of the Presbyterian Church, the Mennonite Church, the Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Church, largely in terms of their work for peace, but also community development. I work very closely with what was called the Evangelical Conference of Churches of Guatemala, directed by Reverend Vitalino Similox, himself a Mayan K'iche', and there were still tensions and distrust between many Catholics and Protestants, or Evangelicals as they are known, but there was at least a convergence among some Protestants and Catholics. Another clear message from the Second Vatican Council was ecumenism – that it was good to be in dialogue with other Christians. And so out of that spirit, but primarily out of the spirit of necessity, church leaders began to meet with one another and to build trust and relationships and to work together on many projects. One of the unique things about Guatemala is that – certainly the Catholic Church is and was dominant, though the Evangelicals, particularly in the 60s and on into the 80s, have blossomed tremendously (and some of the Pentecostal churches) – but in any given community you have both Protestant and Catholic. And the work of both Protestant and Catholic at that human community development level didn't distinguish "Are you Evangelical? Are you Catholic?" but to work for the benefit of all. .--Philip J. Anderson

I had personally had experience in Guatemala in the early '80s when the violence was at its worst, and felt already in my bones, if you will, the agony of the people. And I remember making a commitment in the early '80s, that I, for one, would certainly want to join with others to see that this situation is overcome. Now in the mid '80s, there was an opportunity, when I was with the Lutheran World Federation as Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights, to make contact with some groups in Guatemala, who were part of the opposition, even those who were part of what had become a guerrilla movement in Guatemala, which there were four major guerrilla movements that had come together to form the URNG. I talked to Jorge Rosal, a doctor and member of this commission of the URNG, and got to know him and some of his colleagues. I must say, from the earliest days, I got to respect him and talk to him, and so forth. So at one point, when there was nothing happening in Guatemala, I asked him whether the Lutheran World Federation, together with its partners, could not provide some type of forum for discussion with the government and the military. And of course they were very, very interested.
-Paul Wee

Overtures to the Guatemalan Minister of Defense

It was during the joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran delegation's visit to Guatemala in 1989 that, with the help of the National Reconciliation Commission, an unscheduled meeting was arranged with the Guatemalan Minister of Defense, Hector Gramajo, and members of the military high command.

In the course of that meeting and following consultation with his fellow officers, the Minister of Defense agreed in principle to send representatives to a meeting with the opposition URNG outside the country. This decision was supported by the Guatemalan president, who named a three-person delegation that would travel under the umbrella of the National Reconciliation Commission.

It would be nearly six months before the meeting was realized and, up until the day that it actually began, no one was certain that it would take place at all. But when the Minister of Defense said yes, and the URNG agreed, the General Secretary of the LWF, Gunnar Staalset, began to make contact with his friends in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

The Norwegians also had credibility with both sides. Over the years, Norwegian Church Aid, a faith-based development organization supported by government funds, had been working quietly to improve the lot of the poorest of Guatemalans, the indigenous Mayans, through projects designed to improve agriculture, health care, education and infrastructure. This type of integrated rural development, carried out with and among people who have good reason to be suspicious of the ulterior motives of outsiders, established a firm basis of trust.

Working together, individuals in the LWF and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry set in motion a plan to host what would be a highly secretive meeting, which would take place in March 1990 in a chalet high in the Holmenkolen Mountains outside the capital of Oslo.

Perspectives

We decided that – we at the Lutheran World Federation decided that – together with our Roman Catholic counterparts, we might undertake a series of visits to Latin America, to Guatemala in particular, to talk to some of the political and economic leaders. We have good contacts and have had, over the years, with the Vatican and one of the early visits to the Vatican and visits with John Paul the II, indicated that we would have very strong support for Lutheran, Roman Catholic, an ecumenical delegation. The first of a series of visits by delegations comprised of both Catholics and Lutherans and Presbyterians and others was very helpful in making contact with members of what came to known as National Reconciliation Commission. That's Jewish leaders, Mario Permuth; people in the political process, Jorge Serrano Elías; people in the military as well, and they were looking also, for an avenue to get out from under this war, thirty-six years of war. They were losing all the time, commanders in the field, economic interests were being destroyed, exports to the European community; world opinion was not favorable and that could not help them at all at other levels.

And so, here we have, in spite of the positions that both sides had, a common interest. The guerilla movement, the URNG had its interests to bring about deep changes in the economic, political and military, life of the country. But the government, for its side, had an interest to get this war, that's gone on now for so long, finished – so that we could have peace, so that we could do our exports, and so that we don't have to live in fear, because they were increasingly living in fear. We asked the question from both sides, finally, "Could we provide a platform for quiet talks without publicity, no headlines, but

just at some level, so that the parties that were not talking to each other – there had been a couple attempts earlier on that were unsuccessful – might in fact sit down and talk?"
-Paul Wee

So as it turned out, with the delegation Paul Wee organized to Central America, of course we had to go to meet with this national commission of reconciliation. As I say, we had developed good relationships with Monsignor Avila.. It was a very formal meeting, and basically, at the end of the meeting, Monsignor Avila said, "Well, we have attempted many, many things. You have come; you have laid on the table the desire to meet with the military as the critical power of our country, but I just don't think that that's going to be doable. It won't be possible to meet with General Gramajo, because we just know that the tone of the country right now, they don't need outside intervention. There are different processes going on and they don't have confidence in talking with the URNG." At the conclusion of the meeting, we all stood up, we were saying goodbye, and this military delegate just took me aside and he said, " Where will you be today?" I said, "Well, we're staying and such-and-such hotel." He said, "Please be there. Expect a telephone call from me. I'll see what I can do." And so we went back to the hotel. That meeting was in the morning and then we had lunch. We got a call from this military person and he said, "I've arranged the meeting with General Gramajo. Be there at four o'clock."

So it was that military man who took the initiative on his own, not in the name of the total commission, but somebody who had his pulse on what was going on. And clearly he wasn't able to say that within the context of our meeting for whatever reason. But he opened the door for us, and we in fact then met with General Gramajo, together with one of his top commanders. During that dialogue, of course, we reviewed a lot of the history and the tensions that existed and the lack of confidence; in fact, I recall General Gramajo saying, "We don't need to talk to the URNG. We know what their positions are - they publish their statements. We see them from time to time on the streets in Mexico City or in Geneva or in New York City. They are doing their lobbying. Basically there's no reason to talk to them." We had a lengthy talk, and I was doing the translating between Paul Wee and the General, Paul being the primary representative of our group. We emphasized that we are a consensus delegation of the will of the major Christian churches around the world, together with our partners in Guatemala – not only the church, but the people of Guatemala who are pleading for some breakthrough of peace.

What Paul put on the table was that General Gramajo could come out of this period of history as a hero. If he took the risk to talk to the URNG and actually to say that "yes, it time to search for peace, in a period of dialogue," that he could come out of the Guatemala history as a hero and go down in the history books as someone who was fundamental to breaking through this prolonged war, which was really a stalemate.

The other thing was put on the table very seriously, and I think that this got through to General Gramajo, basically saying that we know that your troops also are in harm's way, and in fact bodies are coming back. It's not publicized in the newspapers, but we know. We hear from the people in those communities that body bags essentially are being flown

out on helicopters from the K'iche' area, from Huehuetenango, from the Petén, and elsewhere. That's got to hurt. Do you want this legacy, this war, to pass on to your children and your children's children? Or can you be the individual that at this point takes the risk to meet with the URNG and open up a pathway to peace?
-Philip J. Anderson

Oslo: The Encounter of the Two Guatemalas

As is the case with most conflicts within and between nations, the internal armed conflict in Guatemala was fought over macro issues: the economy, human rights, land use, the nature of the political and judicial systems, and the role of the military.

As might be expected, a lively and occasionally volatile series of conversations took place in the historic chalet provided by Norwegian government. For its part the Guatemalan government understood its mission in terms of preservation of a long-standing way of life. In its eyes the apparatus of state power was to be used against anyone who sought to alter the status quo and undermine the legacy of the original Conquest, a legacy that had created two Guatemalas, one of wealth and power, and the other of poverty and powerlessness.

For its part the URNG was not interested in a mere cessation of hostilities, nor did its leaders desire a peace accord that entailed few changes in the economic, political and military realities on the ground. Such a peace would have been tantamount to capitulation. It would merely have served to reinforce the very system of exploitation they were fighting against. It is worth noting that, though the mainline religious community in Guatemala in no way identified themselves with the political and economic positions espoused by the URNG or with its violent guerrilla activities, they were fully in agreement with this basic position. A peace without deep changes in the political, judicial, economic, and social life would be no peace at all.

Perspectives
Frankly I wasn't sure that anyone would show. We had promises and so forth, and I never underestimate the effect of providing a round-trip ticket to another country to talk about peace – very powerful and thank the Norwegian government for that. But there they showed up, first one delegation and then the other from Europe and from Guatemala from Mexico. The planes came in, and I tell you we were simply elated – simply that this was taking place. And it had, of course, gone through a number of negotiations, testing to get to this point, because people are never quite sure that you don't have some ulterior motive, that you want to gain something by this. So you have to be prepared, if are a third party to negotiations or peace talks, to be tested so that you tell the truth, and that time and time again you are saying the same thing to both parties. But there were enough of those factors involved that gave both sides confidence that we were there for them, that we were even-handed, and that here, in fact, they were.

So we were taken to a chalet, way up in the hills. It begins, of course, with a ceremony, greetings, welcome. Members of the Norwegian government – the foreign ministry – were there, but then, of course, it moves into another stage, where people are allowed the

opportunity to express some of their deep anger, resentment and the hostility against the other. This really has to happen in a peace process, and you have to be willing, if you are a third party, to allow that to happen, even if you become the object of the anger, which also happens. Because people have to get it out and to deal with it honestly, and there is resentment on both sides that's justifiable. And these people at the process, if you are a third party, you have to affirm them in that. You don't want it to get out of hand, but you want the truth to be told, emotions to be expressed.
-Paul Wee

Well I think there are two issues. Clearly one is the disparity of those who dominated the political, social, economic life of the country and then the vast majority who are poor. So the struggle historically had really been "where do the vast majority of people fit in to this country, Guatemala? What rights do they have? How do they make a living? How are they educated? How do they get healthcare?" And that's primarily the Maya people, the dominant people of the country in terms of numbers with more than 50%. So that's one. And coupled with that, the repression that elite of the country, waged against people who wanted change. There is the economic disparity/political power struggle, but then use of the apparatus of a military to repress any effort toward change.
-Philip J. Anderson

4.3: Turning Point

The Brink of Failure

The evening dinner on March 29, 1990, took place at a restaurant near the chalet. It began in a more subdued atmosphere than had been the case during previous evenings, when time had seemed plentiful for getting acquainted and talking in general terms about the future.

Now the enveloping darkness reflected a more somber mood. To be sure, the tensions that had followed the initial pleasantries were now gone; so too the belligerency of the middle days of the week, filled as they had been with a degree of anger and recrimination. Ironically, the periods of hostility that brought the meeting nearly to the point of collapse had worked as a benevolent catharsis.

Yet as the parties gathered for a final dinner the evening of March 29, there was in place no agreed-upon framework or process for taking further steps. There was nothing concrete that could be brought home to Guatemala, printed in *La Prensa Libre* and announced by both sides as a step forward in bringing the armed conflict to an end. The evening before, a call had been put in to a hospital in Houston where Monseñor Rodolfo Quezada Toruño was recuperating from surgery. The members of each delegation had spoken with him and had received his personal word of assurance that if a viable process were in place, he would be pleased to serve as conciliator. (The terms "mediator" and "negotiator" were purposely avoided as inappropriate in light of the preliminary and unofficial nature of these conversations.) The two sides found Monseñor Quezada to be not only congenial, but clearly honored by the joint request.

The dinner moved along in a subdued but friendly atmosphere over the course of the next couple hours before it began to gradually wind down. It was then that something happened that took all of those present by surprise, a moment that would be seen in retrospect to be significant, not only for the Oslo gathering, but for the peace process itself.

Perspectives

Of course the problem was that after all of this, we got to the end of the week, and there was no agreement, and nothing on paper. Not that we needed one, but we discovered, really halfway through the discussions, that some of those present needed to come back from Oslo to Guatemala, to say, "Here we achieved this." I mean both sides needed something, but especially a number of people on the government's side. They wanted to go back to Guatemala and say, "Here, we talked to those guerillas and we have a breakthrough for peace. Not a negotiated settlement but we have something."
-Paul Wee

I think there was an anxiety about the fact that the Arias Peace Plan, at two years later, had very little results. There was still military mobilization, the guerrillas continued to resist, there were humans rights violations taking place in the country. And so the belief that this would change through the peace process was limited. This group of faith-based communities tried to push forward an agreement that would begin negotiations over the pacification of Guatemala.
-Manuel Orozco

The Personal Dimension

As those familiar with third-party efforts will quickly understand, personal dynamics played a very significant role in the outcome. For third parties with an orientation in faith-based approaches, understanding of this personal dimension can be an important asset.

Sometimes, moments occur in the lives of individual leaders where they are able to shift the balance and alter the direction or influence the course of an historical development. One such moment took place the evening of March 29, as the dinner guests were getting ready to bring the evening, and the effort, to a close.

Differences in ideological positions might be given prominence in media coverage, but such positions are invariably bound up with individual egos, the desire for power, and the need for acceptance or fulfillment. Those engaged in third-party efforts need to be aware of some fundamental dynamics in the behavior of human beings and how they function within their social context. With respect to the meetings that took place between opposing groups in the Guatemala peace process, it was important to know that some participants had personal ambitions, others wanted a way out of the violence and still others wanted simply to find a viable justification for having engaged in 36 years of conflict.

What happened during the last dinner together owed a great deal to Dr. Leopoldo Niilus. He was a man of calm patience, but also had a passion for his work. Niilus had uncanny insight and diplomatic skill that came from his years in Switzerland with the Commission on the Churches in International Affairs, a division of the World Council of Churches. He had played a major role in negotiating a peace treaty in the Sudan in the early 1970s. On more than one occasion during the week with the Guatemalans, Niilus had defused a volatile argument with his sense of humor and his unique ability to say blunt things to both sides without offense. At the final dinner, Niilus was thoroughly engaged in the wide-ranging discussion.

Perspectives

We had gotten to the end of the day, and as was the custom, we would all would go out to eat. There was a nice restaurant in the mountains of the home in Colom, and there we had a private place where we gathered together to eat and drink and talk more informally. And those were not just sort of add-ons, by the way. Those informal times around the peace negotiations or talks about peace, can be the most important times of all, in every single situation of third party negotiations, because people start to ease up. The defenses are lowered, and they start to talk to each other with feeling and with passion. And this is what happened on this evening. We progressed with the dinner, very nice, and into the night.

-Paul Wee

The people who are sitting are predominantly three major players: members of the URNG, the military, and the defense minister accompanied with other advisors, and the Guatemalan government. The main challenge that they had at hand was what is the purpose of this meeting. How are we going to address issues of conversation with people who we believe are our enemy? It was a significantly troubling issue because it implied re-humanizing that enemy that you had dehumanized. That was particularly important for laying down a very basic agenda, putting it on the floor, and sitting face-to-face opened up this stage of rehumanizing the enemy. And in my opinion, conflict resolution begins at the process by which you transform the political identity of your enemy and yourself by understanding that you can communicate.

-Manuel Orozco

Spirit of Confession

In the late hour, a spontaneous after-dinner speech set off a chain reaction. One of the members of the Political Diplomatic Commission of the URNG, Jorge Rosal, stood up to offer what was thought to be an after-dinner toast. What he said as he faced the group, however, was more like a confession, an admission that in his own quest to alter Guatemalan society, to bring a greater degree of justice for the poorest members of the community, things had not gone as he had hoped.

He looked around the table—first in the direction of his counterparts and then to Assistant Foreign Minister Vollebaek, Mario Permuth, Dr. Leopoldo Niilus and the others—and reflected on the irony of the fact that Guatemalans on both sides of this conflict, including those around the table, had grown up together, played together, gone

to school together, and had at one time even shared a common vision of a future Guatemala. He reflected on how this early friendship had soured, how their world deteriorated, and how, in spite of their shared love of country, 200,000 Guatemalans were dead. There was silence. What was significant, however, was that Rosal did not single out for blame the Guatemalan government or the military; he laid the blame on himself.

He did not talk about the disappearances, torture and killing at the hands of the military or its surrogate, the dreaded Civil Defense Patrols. He did not speak of the scorched earth policy of the military government of the early 1980s, nor of the intimidation and murder of the leaders of civil society who took a public stand against impunity for the Guatemalan military. He spoke rather about himself and about his own mistakes, about the URNG and how good intentions had sometimes resulted in more suffering for the people. He raised his glass to an eventual peace accord and sat down.

What happened next took everyone by surprise. A member of the National Reconciliation Commission stood up, looked directly at the previous speaker and proceeded to express gratitude for what he had just heard. Then he surprised everyone by making a public confession of his own mistakes. Instead of lashing out at others, he laid the blame on himself. He spoke of how good intentions had gone awry, how a vision of order and peace became demonic.

This extraordinary round of public confession continued as other members of the delegations rose to express personal failure that they had not previously acknowledged, perhaps not even to themselves. Participants from both sides began to weep; there were *abrazos* all around.

When the round of speeches and toasts was over, it was suggested that, in light of the remarks made and in spite of the lateness of the hour, they return to the chalet and attempt to finalize the brief document that they had been working on, in fits and starts, over the past days.

At 9 o'clock the following morning, the Norwegian Foreign Minister (later Prime Minister), Kjell Magne Bondevik, appeared to witness the signing of the page-and-a-half document that the group had finalized only a few hours earlier. It came to be known as *The Basic Agreement on the Search for Peace by Political Means*.

Perspectives

And then suddenly somebody got up and made a toast to peace. “We have not achieved everything at this meeting, but we have come to know each other better etc …So may we have peace in Guatemala,” and that person sat down. But then, a member of the URNG Jorge Rosal, stood up, and he said something quite different than anybody had ever said before. He gave his expressions of gratitude to everybody present: to the churches, the religious communities for mediating this, to the Norwegian government for its hospitality, and for the opposition for the Guatemalan government, the National Reconciliation Commission, the representative of the military. [He] thanked them very much. He said “but I want to say one thing…that over these past thirty-six years, when I

wanted so badly for change to come to Guatemala, and acted on that belief, I also made mistakes, we made mistakes," speaking for his delegation. And it was the first time that anybody sort of introduced this type of thought. He said, "I wanted what was good for this country," and he said, looking at the people at the government side, he said, "some of us grew up together in Guatemala. We went to school together. But then we went our separate ways, and look what's happened. Over 200,000 people are dead. People have been tortured to death. We still have no change. Nothing." But he said, " I realized now that even out of good motives, I made mistakes. And I want you to know that as my brothers," they were all men there. And he said, "I am sorry about those things. It is not what I intended but unfortunately, this is really what happened, and so in this last evening together, I simply want to confess my own faults to you." And then he sat down.

I remember shaking a little bit, and there was silence in this place. And then suddenly a person from other side stood up. I remember it, Mario Permuth, a leader of the Jewish community but part of the government – a government attorney – and he stood up and he said, "My brother Jorge, I thank you for this. I really appreciate the candor, the openness, the honesty where you have said to us that you made mistakes in these past years. But I want to tell you something also," he said. "I made mistakes. We made mistakes. Yes we also wanted something that was good and right for our children and grandchildren in Guatemala. But things deteriorated and violence took over, and we could not realize the things that we had hoped for. Thank you for your very candid statement, but I want to say to you, as a brother; the mistakes are also very much with us, and I apologize to you."

Well…suddenly he sat down. And then, it goes around this circle and almost everybody is standing up, saying the very same type of statement, sometimes very concrete. I could not believe, listening to this as a third-party observer, that this was something we hadn't heard before, because you come in a defensive mode, you want to assert yourself, you want to justify your history, your past, and here, people are just doing the opposite. But you suddenly realize that this vicious circle of recrimination and attack is suddenly being broken, and a new element is entering into the scene. Maybe it is the only element in a peace process that is able to break that type of a vicious circle, and bring some healing. And I knew suddenly that, regardless of what came out of this meeting, something rather remarkable had been set in motion here.

Well when it was all over, I think it was Mario Permuth who got up and said, "Brothers, after what we have been through in this evening, I want to ask this question, could we not try again? Could we not commit a few more hours to this process?" Of course everybody had been eating and drinking…I don't know if everybody was in shape for that, but they said yes. They went back across the street to the chalet where they had met, and in the next four hours they pounded out a page and a half; a page and a half of common agreements on a framework for peace.
-Paul Wee

You can say that it's the second time the Guatemalan government commits to negotiating peace, the first time being the Arias peace plan, the second time being this domestic process going on among themselves, facilitated by external groups, but it is a decision that goes on among three parties. They agree that they are going to talk about five main issues: agrarian reform, indigenous rights, human rights, the issue of income inequality and social reform of the state, and civilianizing the police that was in the hands of the military. So they signed an agreement to begin negotiating a large range of issues. That to me is the breakthrough –Those were five of the most important issues that they believed needed to be addressed, and they open up later on the whole negotiation process that led to the most ambitious peace agreement, I think, in the history of peace agreements.
-Manuel Orozco

After Oslo

The search for a just and durable peace, one calling for deep changes in political, economic, juridical and military structures and practices, was not of course concluded in a single evening. This initial breakthrough was followed by a six-year negotiating process between leaders of the government and the URNG.

These follow-up negotiations were held at various levels and involved different actors. Leaders of the different faith communities frequently took part, as they had in Oslo. Over the course of the peace process, a number of worship services were held, including some in the mountains, some in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Guatemala City, and some at the Church of the Reformation in Washington, DC. Each event featured music, prayers, and readings that honored the integrity of each faith tradition, while at the same time transcending each to express deep and fundamental spiritual roots of peace.

Typically, religious leaders stepped into the background to let the parties themselves announce breakthroughs in the political process, and importantly, third parties with other types of expertise stepped in at appropriate times. Among these, the role of the United Nations as the principal third-party mediator is most notable, but also included were various non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and human rights activists, both international and domestic.

Important steps in the process included the following interim agreements:

- *Comprehensive Accord on Human Rights,* March 1994
- *Agreement on the Resettlement of Population Groups Uprooted by Armed Conflict,* June 1994
- *Agreement for the Establishment of an Historical Clarification Commission,* June 1994
- *Violations and Acts of Violence that have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer,* June 1994
- *Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples,* March 1995

- *Agreement on Socio-Economic Aspects and Agrarian Situation,* May 1996
- *Agreement on Strengthening of Civilian Power and Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society,* September 1996
- *Agreement on a Definitive Cease Fire*, December 1996
- *Agreement on Constitutional Reforms and the Electoral Regime,* December 1996
- *Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of the URNG,* December 1996
- *Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements,* December 1996
- *Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace,* December 1996

Each of these agreements contained its own important breakthroughs; however, the *Basic Agreement on the Search for Peace by Political Means*, signed in Oslo, served as a framework for this entire peace process, a process that culminated with the final signing of the complete *Peace Accords* on December 29, 1996.

Perspectives

If Oslo was a beginning – a breakthrough – it was one small step, one could say. We still had six years before a final agreement would be signed. And in the course of that, a great deal had to be done. Frankly, I am just grateful for members of civil society, which was emerging in Guatemala. Thanks, I must say, to the faith based communities; they lifted all of civil society in Guatemala, because this plan that was signed in Oslo, or outside of Oslo, called for a series of meetings to take place in Ellis Correal in Spain: with the political leaders of civil society; the URNG, the National Reconciliation Commission; with the economic leaders in Ottawa; with the religious leaders in Quito, Ecuador; with the journalists; small business people in Mexico. At all of these, the Mayan community, also the Jewish community, very important, the Roman Catholic community; they were present, and I would say that they lifted this dialogue.
-Paul Wee

Concretely, in terms of the whole peace process, two primary leaders that I think of are Vitalino Similox, who was the head of the Evangelical Conference of Churches and a Presbyterian, Mayan pastor, and Rodolfo Quesada Toruño, who was the bishop in Zacapa, Guatemala, later to be named conciliator in the peace process, an agreement arrived by the government of Guatemala and the URNG, and later became archbishop of Guatemala City, and now is a cardinal.

Those two individuals, religious leaders, have a very strong personal relationship and have worked on a number of conflicts together – both the larger peace process, as well as some incidents that have arisen since the signing of the peace accord in 1996. They work in tandem in terms of relationships to the people, and mediation directly with presidents, with the human rights ombudsperson, with members of congress, with (if the case is necessary) some of the economic elite of CACIF I've seen this happen time after time; they maintain good relationships with all of the political parties, all of the major political

actors, but also with grassroots people and other leaders, like Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Nobel Peace Laureate who plays a role, and both of them are friends of Rigoberta. They can access her; she plays a major role. But they also relate to labor unions, the peasant movements, the displaced persons movement, and the like. Another example of where there is mediation is in the department or state of San Marcos, where the bishop there currently continues to work on the rights of people in terms of labor, primarily, both on the coffee harvest as well as the mining sector. There he works very closely again with the Protestant churches.
-Philip Anderson

The Day of Peace

There was a mood of jubilation as a brilliant, sun-drenched day gave way to evening, and the crowds pushed ever closer to the imposing fortress that is the National Palace of Culture in Guatemala City.

Tens of thousands of Guatemalans, mainly *campesinos* and indigenous Mayans from the countryside and from the vast, sprawling *barrios*, were already exhausted from two days of marching and chanting, singing and dancing. Within the various faith communities, the people were gathering to recall their own history through ritual, music, and the telling of stories into the night. In their midst were most of the leaders of the guerrilla movement who had been negotiating with the government over the previous six years and had returned to Guatemala after years in exile to a tumultuous welcome by their supporters.

As the sunlight faded their attention turned to the giant video screens that had been set up to convey this long anticipated moment in Guatemalan history, the signing of *Peace Accords* between the Government of Guatemala and the umbrella organization of four guerrilla groups, the URNG, bringing 36 years of internal warfare to an end.

Representatives of the major actors in the dramatic six-year struggle to reach a settlement took their seats on the dais: President Alvaro Arzu, members of the government and military, the four commanders of the URNG, UN negotiator Jean Arnault, and the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The Post-Agreement Phase

Leaders of faith-based communities have continued to be involved in the difficult processes of reconciliation in Guatemala, often at great personal risk to themselves. For example, the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala compiled and published a record of atrocities, the *Recuperation of Historical Memory.* which is Making such information publicly available is often an essential step in truth-telling and healing, but it can also be a very controversial measure. Monseñor Juan Gerardi Conedera, its chief editor, was bludgeoned to death just two days after its publication.

In spite of tragedies such as this, the work of reconciliation has continued to this day by courageous individuals throughout Guatemala. In the face of repeated setbacks, the country has made significant progress toward reconciliation.

Perspectives
You know, you remember the day of celebration the day the peace agreement is signed, December 29th 1996. It's a festive moment; tens of thousands of people in front of the palace in Guatemala. Groups coming from all over the country: Mayan Indian groups; meetings held; dances; liturgical rites. But it was one celebration into the night, into the night and inside the palace of course it was very festive. United Nations, members from various countries there, those who are involved in the process, and the president of the country, President Arzu, welcomes the leaders of the URNG – the guerilla movements that have been fighting – so this is a tremendous, tremendous moment.
-Paul Wee

The actual negotiations begin to succeed in 1994, and it's between '94 and '96 that you have formal agreements on human rights, on indigenous rights, on social reform, etc., and they constituted the basis of what was the final peace agreement, that basically was a synthesis of all of the previous agreements that began with the Oslo agreement.. The peace agreement basically is a body of instruments for conflict resolution that is almost a perfect instrument of what you would like to achieve to eliminate conflict. It was basically an ideal body that still today has not been able to be fully implemented in that country. But it contained very important issues especially those pertaining to indigenous rights.
-Manuel Orozco

5: Lessons Learned in Guatemala

Strengths of the Faith-Based Approach

What can we learn from the efforts for peace in Guatemala? Every conflict is unique, of course, but there are some general lessons to be learned from the Guatemalan experience, lessons that can be applied to conflicts in other cultural settings.

Social and economic inequality often creates divisions within a community, and sometimes violence, particularly when tensions are exacerbated by historical, ethnic and/or religious factors. However, the Guatemala case study shows that those with a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution, including those with religious training, can influence others within their communities.

Working together, faith-based peacemakers can encourage leaders from opposing sides to view potentially divisive sources of insecurity as a common challenge, to investigate and discuss them together, to join in common cause, and to take risks for peace. In Guatemala, this sense of common challenge brought Roman Catholics, indigenous

Mayans, Jews and evangelicals together for peace, and these faith-based peacemakers played a crucial role in helping opposing sides find common purpose.

Highly involved in their communities, faith leaders often share in their suffering during times of conflict. Resulting bonds can help in the process of building trust. However, and to build peace, to avoid the divisiveness that may engulf others in the community, to help break cycles of hatred and violence, religious leaders must be willing to challenge old assumptions, to take calculated risks, to make contacts that might be considered unconventional, and to act decisively—to show courage and inspiration, in the ways demonstrated by faith leaders in Guatemala, even if there is no guarantee of success.

The willingness to share resources with other groups and individuals is also highly important. Most organizations hold their financial and other resources very close. Yet those willing to share their money, personnel, time, and insights will be most effective in reaching their desired goals.

Perspectives

The training that religious leaders undergo in their seminary or religious education can instill them with some of the specific skills that can be useful in mediation in the sense that they develop the skills of active listening, of pastoral response to suffering, which is an important role for mediators to play, to recognize the suffering and to hear deeply and broadly the interest of both or all parties of the conflict, and to be able to respond to that, as well as to push them forward into new ways of thinking and to new ways of acting. Religious leaders are trained in that sort of work, and they have also been trained and had experience in, often times, mediation within their own communities - whether its interpersonal mediation when they have followers that are disputing with each other, whether it's inter-familial mediation when they have to mediate between families who have a dispute, or even inter-communal mediation. So they have skills already that address that. They also, by virtue of their religious tradition, address issues of justice. So they are also trained in and have a capacity, a sensitivity, towards the issue of justice that is at the heart of so many conflicts, and it must be addressed in conflict resolution.
-Susan Hayward

Religious leaders tend to be the most committed to their community and conflict. They know because the congregation is experiencing the conflict; they are experiencing the horrors of war. Religious leaders are the first to hear, the first to see, and they are also very important observers of any changes on the ground. Sometimes they not only hear things, but they are important observers and analysts to the conflict because they are the first ones to interpret and digest the evolution of the conflict and issues on the ground. So it's very important that we think of religious leaders as very serious, important resources on the ground who can assess, diagnose, and also analyze the events on the ground because it is their analysis that will help others who can help and assist in preventing further conflict or the expansion of conflict.
- Qamar-ul Huda

If religion is centrally a part of the problem and everybody sees it as a religious conflict, then religious leaders have a different role to play. They need to come together and demonstrate a possibility of ending the conflict together. But if it's not primarily a religious conflict and religion is not implicated directly in the conflict, then a religious leader has the advantage of being in some ways above the fray and seen as a symbol of peace, a symbol of somebody who cares for people on all sides as a religious symbol, as a religious human being, and also somebody who has a certain level of closeness to both sides. It's very advantageous if you can have a creative religious leader who can demonstrate a set of ideals and also not be seen as part of the problem so that, for example, the church in the Philippines during the revolutionary period had a very positive impact on it being a nonviolent transition because they were not seen as part of the conflict. They were seen as simply representing the will of the people but in a nonviolent way where they were trying to get everybody, both the political leaders, military leaders, and the peasants and the people not to kill each other, but to change nonviolently to a new situation. Same thing in South Africa. So there are times and opportunities where religion can play a very positive role. Interestingly, I saw this also in Syria where I worked with the Mufti, where Syrians don't see the conflicts there primarily in religious terms, and therefore the Mufti and I and others could have credibility. And the symbol that we created together of apology and forgiveness, particularly over the torture in Abu Ghraib and some of the apologies that we made in public for that, that had a very strong impact on his population because they trusted him.
-Marc Gopin

5.1: Impartiality

Building and Keeping Trust

Religious leaders who would act as third parties must also observe strict impartiality of process throughout the course of their efforts.

Although third parties can and often do have interests at stake in a given conflict, they must design and adhere to a balanced, even-handed process in order to gain the trust necessary to be effective as peacemakers. Building and keeping trust is not easy, especially with people who have experienced the breaking of promises, selective implementation of treaties, the cycles of violence, and other related problems that characterize long-running, intractable conflict.

Fortunately, building trust is one of the special callings of communities of faith. Trained to balance the aspirations of each individual with the wider needs of others, religious leaders typically have years of practice helping resolve personal conflicts among adherents to their faith. Religious leaders in Guatemala applied the patience and listening skills required for conflict resolution on a personal level to the task of building trust in a broader context.

Significant trust can also be built on the ground by demonstrating long-term commitment to the community. Through good works, faith communities build trust in tangible ways.

The long-standing and respected work of faith-based development agencies, including Lutheran World Services and Norwegian Church Aid, helped create a deep foundation for trust with all parties in Guatemala, opening doors for faith-based peacebuilding initiatives.

The need to be truthful and transparent is also paramount. Such openness is particularly important when a third party does have an interest in the dispute. Integrity and consistency will be tested over and over again during a negotiation, and any breach of confidence will have substantial negative consequences. Facilitators must be prepared to speak the same truth to both sides and to fulfill all promises that have been made. Maintaining confidentiality is also a fundamental practice for religious leaders, and their reputation for integrity affords them special opportunities to build and keep trust in the course of a third-party effort.

Perspectives

What makes a religious leader or faith-based organization potentially useful in mediating conflicts is that often times, not always, but in some situations, they have the credibility and the trust of the parties to the conflict. They're not necessarily seen as having political interests of their own. Now, as I said, this is not going to be in every circumstance. In some circumstances you do have a religious institution or religious leaders who are particularly connected to one of the parties to the conflict and have vested interested in the conflict itself. So they might not necessarily in that circumstance be an effective mediator, in the sense that they can be a repository of trust for all the parties for negotiations. But in cases where religion was not an instigator, was not institutionally connected to those propelling the conflict or waging the conflict, they are often seen as credible, as not having political interests, so they won't become kind of another party to the conflict within the negotiations themselves. They can promote ideas of reconciliation and forgiveness within the context of the negotiations themselves to ensure that they're addressing not only the political and economic issues, but also some of the larger social, psychological issues that need to be addressed to create sustainable peace. Often times, religious leaders and organizations were at the front lines of the conflict. They were providing humanitarian relief, and because of this, they have access to a lot of the parties to the conflict and they had developed relationships with the different parties to the conflict, which was for example, the case of Sant'Egidio Catholic laid organization in Mozambique. They had operated in Mozambique throughout the course of the conflict providing humanitarian relief, and they had been in the rural areas and had met with and developed relationships with RENAMO, and they had relationships with the government as well, based on trust, allowing them to become a third-party mediator to the conflict.
-Susan Hayward

I think the most important role that faith based communities have is to bring some kind of impartiality, but not impartiality over ideology, but impartiality over what was the common purpose of ending the conflict, which was reducing violations, reducing militarized confrontations. So it was a relatively transparent position that these groups basically firmly believed that were the most important prerequisite to really deal with more basic issues such as improving basic conditions of a society. They came along with

the moral authority of individuals who had no other interest than getting people at a table to sign an agreement over a peace negotiation process.
-Manuel Orozco

Trust is a rare commodity one could say. It is not gained overnight. It is built up over time, on the ground with the people. It is tested over and over again. One must ask: Do we have a base of trust? Have we been working with the people? Do we understand their needs and do they perceive that we understand their needs if we are indeed a thirty party and not indigenous to the situation itself? Can we gain that trust through friends on the ground, so that when we begin to play a role in seeking to bring people together, we are not dismissed as people who have ulterior motives?
-Paul Wee

5.2: Justice

Commitment to Social Harmony

Religious leaders and their faith communities should share a common commitment to social harmony based on justice.

Many religious leaders spend much of their professional life in intense study and rigorous contemplation of justice principles that transcend any particular time and circumstance. From this experience, they develop appreciation of the complexity of difficult problems, along with the habit of separating articulated ambitions from deeper and more fundamental needs. These habits of mind give them a natural inclination toward productive application of interest-based approaches to conflict resolution, approaches that are helpful in guiding disputants in the direction of stable, and ultimately durable peace based on collaborative problem-solving and compromise.

Many faith communities are determined to exhaust all non-violent means to bring about peaceful resolution of disputes; however, the idea of "peace at any price" is illusory. Peace in the absence of justice is not resting on a firm foundation. Faith communities need to work for genuine, lasting peace, which requires the presence of justice, when all members of society have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to thrive.

During the initial stages of the Guatemala peace process, from 1990 to 1993, there were opportunities for both parties to sign a statement of "peace." On several occasions the government, for its part, proposed signing such a document. However, because there was no prescription for deep changes in political, economic, juridical, and military structures and practices, these offers were rejected by the URNG, without the objection, and even sometimes with the tacit support, of faith-based third parties.

Perspectives
Sometimes faith-based communities are relegated to just faith-based work; its good for church members just to do the work in church, or the people in the mosque to just deal with religious issues within the mosque. Clearly, when there are conflicts beyond issues

of religion, we found that religious-oriented people, faith-based communities, are still interested in conflict reduction, in conflict management and working towards peace, we find that they are still interested in poverty-reduction, and interested in issues of children labor rights, interested in unemployment, in national politics, international politics, regional cooperation. Interested in inequities and injustice, whether it is an international organization who's set up their headquarters in a foreign country and they find that in that country, the locals are not benefiting from the corporation assets. They are involved with corporate work, in corporate equity. Faith-based communities are in many ways involved with conflict resolution beyond religious work.
-Qamar-ul Huda

Religious leaders can often speak out in a way, in a repressive situation, that differentiates them from others in the community, in the country. It's partly because they root their advocacy and their pronouncements in religious context, justified by their faith convictions, often a conviction that the leaders in the country may, at least nominally, espouse themselves, so it makes it very difficult for the leadership to shut them up, and say " you shouldn't be saying these things," when they are the religious leaders of a faith that the political leaders are also subscribing to. But there is also, I think, a fear of the international community. Religious leaders have a kind of international standing, that if they are speaking out, they are more likely to be allowed to speak out because of the fear of local dictators that the international community is going to be particularly distressed if religious leaders are shut up. There is something about the stature as religious leaders, seen to be noble and selfless, that enables them to have an international standing that other secular advocates wouldn't enjoy
-David Smock

Well most faith traditions have an understanding of justice, and at least when viewed within the Abrahamic traditions, that understanding of justice is one that is based not so much in a legal framework, but it is based on relationships. What, in fact, will constitute right relationship? What will restore right relationships between groups of people? And if faith communities are able to really reach back into their traditions and understand the sources of that understanding of justice, then they understand the need to at least establish good relationships with other communities. How one goes about that can be a very difficult task, but there is a fundamental faith-based orientation to what justice means within, at least all of the Abrahamic traditions, that is important to understand and to see the value of.
-David Steele

5.3: Humility

Understanding One's Role

Religious leaders who act as third parties must be willing both to affirm and yet transcend their own faith traditions.

This is difficult for faith communities that claim to know and possess absolute truth. Faith-based or not, potential peacebuilders compromise their own chances of success when they ground their efforts on truth claims that admit no truth or validity to the beliefs or experiences of others. By contrast, successful third parties routinely seek value in multiple perspectives and invariably encourage disputants to acknowledge their shared commitment to justice and peace. On repeated occasions during the Guatemalan peace process, leaders in the Catholic, Protestant, Mayan, and Jewish communities emphasized that a shared commitment to peace and justice was the foundation of their efforts, despite their differing beliefs in matters of theology and doctrine.

Faith-based third parties must also know the limits of their roles as peacemakers. Successful third parties always remember the important distinction between mediating substantive issues and facilitating process. In general, the role of religious third parties is not to mediate but to facilitate—to bring conflicting parties together, to clarify issues, and to initiate processes that build confidence and trust. Religious leaders might be tempted to think they are able to resolve issues, but unless they are well trained for substantive mediation, they do best to act in a supporting role. As we have seen, in Guatemala, religious leaders such as Monseñor Rodolfo Quezada Toruño studiously avoided the terms "mediator" and "negotiator" in describing their efforts, and instead emphasized terms like "conciliator" and "facilitator." Most importantly, these leaders knew when to step back and allow others, such as the UN, to apply their expertise and take charge.

And all should remember that the struggle for peace belongs first and foremost to those who are engaged in conflict but are willing to work for resolution. They are the ones who best know their own reality—and the ones who need to own the solution. Individuals and groups involved in third-party efforts must avoid the temptation to take credit. Although all organizations, including those that are faith-based, need to provide thorough reports to their constituencies, this requirement should not translate into public self-praise over an apparent success in a peacemaking venture. Once an organization seeks to take credit publicly, its effectiveness is diminished. Public praise should be saved for the formerly conflicting parties, who can use the kudos and momentum as they move to the very difficult step of implementing what they have agreed on.

Perspectives

Religious leaders can be particularly effective when they are seen as being deeply involved in the community, and even more so when they're not perceived as being motivated by ego or motivated by empire-building. If they are truly and genuinely motivated by their religious and altruistic convictions and orientation, then they can be accepted as a party who can listen to both parties empathetically and find the shared elements that might form the basis for a peace agreement. Religious leaders that are driven by ego and are trying to generate a reputation or win a Nobel Prize or whatever else, the parties are going to see through that fairly quickly and are not going to turn to them as peacemakers. But those who are genuinely engaged in the community in a way that they understand the issues, that they empathize with the deepest and noble aspirations of those on both sides, and can convene and bring the parties together and find common ground – those leaders are going to be effective as peacemakers.

-David Smock

If you come from the outside, you better be very sure that you know, and they know, that it's their fight, it's their struggle, their battle. If they get a partial victory, it's their partial victory. And frankly, if you just want to wave your flag or get some publicity or take some credit, this will be seen very, very quickly, very early on. You can't hide these things. And that's the end of it. That's the end of the process; that's the end of your role if you fail that test. At times, you come close to losing it, because we all have our constituencies. We all need to have resources and funds to put on meetings. You have to raise those; you have to tell the story. But in peace negotiations you have to be very, very careful. It is theirs. You are in the second line, the third line, or the fourth line, but not in the first line. They have to know that. They have to know you know that. But when you are pulled into it, then you better be seen to be as even-handed as possible.
-Paul Wee

The players in the negotiation process were not simply the URNG and the government. There were, behind the scenes, with a range of social organizations that were shaping the agendas over what issues to negotiate. So, while their names were not in the papers, their ideas were present in the agreements.
-Manuel Orozco

5.4: Compassion

Truth-Telling, Healing and Reconciliation

Faith communities are particularly well equipped for the tasks of reconciliation, healing and nation-building.

Like the story of the pastor and the imam, the Guatemalan case study illustrates two of the most important strengths that faith-based peacebuilders bring to their work: the experience to overcome alienation through confession and mutual acceptance, and the ability to bring healing through reconciliation and compassion. These are powerful capacities that help faith-based third parties stop cycles of blame and retribution among angry disputants, and then restore trust and goodwill in the aftermath of bitter conflicts. For these reasons, faith communities are particularly well suited to help establish the structures and practices that make possible both individual healing and culturally sensitive post-conflict development.

For example, recording the stories of victims is a crucial post-conflict responsibility, essential not only for the potential prosecution of those who committed war crimes, but also for the process of truth-telling, healing and reconciliation. It is not uncommon for religious leaders to take substantial risks in these important efforts. As we noted earlier, Monseñor Juan Gerardi Conedera of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala was killed for just this kind of work.

Numerous problems remain in Guatemala, but faith-based peacebuilders have made substantial progress since the dark days of the country's brutal internal conflict. In 2006, an *Ecumenical Conference for Peace* was held in Guatemala City, honoring the work of

Rigoberta Menchú; the Catholic bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala; Guillermo Kerber, representative of the World Council of Churches; Øystein Lied, representative of Norwegian Church Aid in Guatemala; and many others.

Perspectives

The most difficult work comes after the conflict subsides – the post-conflict phase. This is where religious leaders think about reconciliation; a very important term that has many different meanings, but religiously, it means for religious groups to understand and move forward towards a future without the baggage of oppression and the damage of suffering. Reconciliation, to them, means moving forward and peacefully understanding that what happened yesterday was yesterday, tomorrow's work needs to be done with a great deal of openness and tolerance and pluralism. Tomorrow's work, or the future, has to have a future of thinking about…a future only with peace. So, religious leaders do think about reconciliation, but in terms of very specific concepts and practices that will touch individuals' lives and the larger community.
-Qamar-ul Huda

Religious leaders can often be successful in the hard work of reconciliation and grassroots peacemaking that follows the signing of the peace agreement, that others may not be nearly as effective at, and I think that's because they can generate in their followers the principles of empathy, listening, but even more powerfully, the principles of apology, of forgiveness, and this is not a forgiveness that entails an automatic forgetting of the atrocities that have been committed, but a forgiveness based upon apology, based upon a mutual understanding, based upon a shared commitment to creating a more just society in the future. But the religious principles of reconciliation, of love and compassion, that are so central to so many faith traditions, espoused by religious leaders, can provide a basis for communities to move beyond the atrocities that they have experienced and learn how to live together in the future.
-David Smock

Reconciliation in modern conflict resolution theory; the way in which we conceive it, the way in which the methodologies have arisen, were impacted a great deal by the discussion of reconciliation between the world wars and post-World War II, in which the Pope in the Vatican actually had a strong voice in promoting a process of reconciliation and political transition that looked at – you could roughly describe it as confession, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. It was a matter of confession in the sense of the truth; of finding out exactly what happened and having political and other authorities speak to and testify to the truth of what happened – both the overt violence that happened, but also the structural violence, the decisions that were made politically and economically that disenfranchised some at the expense of others. You have repentance in the sake of saying that these things won't happen again. We're going to have transformation of the political, social, and economic structures so that the mistakes of the past, the injustices of the past are not repeated. You have accountability, to some extent, in terms of making sure that justice is served, that those who are responsible for it are held accountable for what they did. And then you have the aspect of reconciliation, which is about then moving forward. It's about restoration of the communities that were

at conflict, it's about restoration of the community and the culture at large which has been torn by the conflict, and moving forward.

So this idea of reconciliation and political transition that has evolved over time, was very much influenced to some degree by religious concepts, and by religious leaders playing a role in defining what is necessary to move from conflict into peaceful coexistence. The issues of truth and justice and reparation, the issues of forgiveness that are at the heart of reconciliation; these are all terms, these are all issues that resonate deeply within religious rhetoric, within religious ideas, within religious frameworks, of creating a peaceful, just society.
-Susan Hayward

6: Key Themes for Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith Dialogue Within the Abrahamic Traditions

Before we get to our final exam, we will provide a series of self-study exercises focused on interfaith dialogue within the Abrahamic traditions.

The first requirement for dialogue involving people who hold differing views on matters of great importance is that each understand what the other is saying. Dialogue will expand the intellect, but only if participants comprehend what is being said. Even if the participants are using a common language, one cannot assume that key words will convey the same meanings.

For members of the Abrahamic traditions, there is a rich common tradition to use in interfaith dialogue. The Abrahamic tradition already has in place a framework of language for dialogue—there are texts, histories, rituals, beliefs, and doctrines that bind the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.

Interfaith dialogues within the Abrahamic faiths begin with a common understanding of a single divine being. The monotheism of the Abrahamic traditions allows members in the dialogue to meet with some common histories, theologies and sacred texts. Agreeing that Judaism, Christianity and Islam have Abraham as a common figure that binds them allows multiple areas of dialogue.

Here are eight thematic areas for interfaith dialogue for the Abrahamic faiths:

- **Theology**
- **Scriptural Commonalities**
- **Prophets**
- **Ethics**
- **Rituals and Symbolism**
- **Contemplation**
- **Contemporary Issues and Social Justice**
- **Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking**

In this section, we will provide specific examples of dialogue to use as a framework.

Theology

Here are some study questions in theology for dialogue:

- Explore the understanding of the divine in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- Investigate the multiple ways in which the Abrahamic traditions have experienced the sacred.
- "God Talk" is our use of reason and rational discourse in understanding our relationship to the divine. Discuss this.
- Explore the place of revelation in faith.
- Interpret together the foundational doctrines of faith.
- Study together the teachings of the prophets and how these teachings became essential beliefs in the Abrahamic traditions.
- Study overlapping themes like creation, sin, repentance, the hereafter, compassion and hope.

Scriptural Commonalities

These study questions can be used to explore the established paradigms for interpreting the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an:

- Who is the Abraham of the Hebrew Bible? What Role does he play in the ongoing history of the Israelites?
- What key events are recalled in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?
- Here are some texts for study: Gen. 1-12; Genesis 12:1-25; Leviticus 26-42; Isaiah 41:8-10.
- Who is the Abraham of the New Testament? Is he the same of the Hebrew Bible? Are the concepts, values, and ideas represented by Abraham the same in both scriptures?
- Please use the following texts for discussion: Matthew 3:1-10; Luke 1:5-75; John 8:31-59; Acts 7:1-8; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 9:6-9; Galatians 3:5-29; James 2:18-24.
- Who is the Abraham of the Qur'an? What are the key events in his story as it is portrayed in the Qur'an?
- What values does Abraham represent in the Qur'an?
- Are these values and concepts similar or different from those represented in Hebrew Bible and New Testament?
- Read the following passages to compare: Qur'an 2:124-140; 2:258-260; 3:64-71,84; 4:125; 6:74-84; 6:161; 11:69-76;
- What aspects of Abraham's portrayal seem to be of greatest importance among the various religious traditions?
- In remembering Abraham and his tribulations, how are his weaknesses remembered today?
- In Islam, the pilgrimage to Mecca, or the hajj, is the reenactment of Abraham's test. Are there similar religious rituals in Judaism and Christianity?

- How is the person Abraham understood to support authenticity of one tradition in opposition to another?
- Use the readings to understand the traditions of interpretations and what they mean within that particular faith tradition. Reflect on how these interpretations contribute to tradition. Explore together to understand the specific methods and goals of interpretation.
- Learning the variety of interpretations teaches us the diversity of thought within each of the Abrahamic traditions. Discuss this.
- Discover how particular religious interpretations manifest themselves in faith.
- Maintain a reflection journal on the dialogue of scriptural commonalities to share later with other participants.

Prophets

The following study questions focus on the role of prophets:

- Discuss the following passages on admiration of Abraham. In the Bible: "Recognized as very rich in livestock, silver, and gold." The statement made by Jesus: "Today health has come to you and your family, for you are a true son of Abraham." The statement made by Muhammad: "To recapture the love devotion of the Prophet Abraham."
- Explore the multiple prophetic figures in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Qur'an: Moses, Noah, Joseph, Jonah, Issac, Jacob, Job, Mary, Aaron, Joshua, Elijah, Sara, Ruth, Elisha, Hagar, David, Solomon, Daniel, Ezra, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Micah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Malachi, Samuel, Hannah, Saul, Joel, etc.
- With each prophetic figure, identify their standing in each of the Abrahamic traditions and consider how they are remembered.
- Investigate together how prophets are taught in religious education for adults and children. What texts are used?
- Reflect on why prophetic stories are used in each of the traditions.

Ethics

A concise and simple definition for ethics is the systematic critical study concerned with the evaluation of human conduct; our understanding of ethics helps inform our process of making decisions for the future.

- Explore the standards of these evaluations in the Abrahamic sources. What assumptions are made about relationships of human beings to one another and about their relationships to the divine?
- Identify the texts, sources, reasoning, and faith behind the ethical codes. How do ethicists in the Abrahamic traditions struggle to identify the search for truth?
- There are several subheadings within the field of ethics to explore: scriptural ethics; law; ethical teachings of the Prophets and Apostles; the ethics of love, freedom, respect, and the self; ethics for others, strangers, poor, destitute, defenseless, death/life, etc.

- How can these fields of ethics be a critical area for mutual learning and teaching? Are there similarities in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

Rituals and Symbolism

The power of religious rituals in faith is integral to the Abrahamic traditions.

- Explore liturgy, prayer, sacrifice, and other religious acts that connect the believer to the divine.
- Examine the ways each ritual is used in that respective tradition, e.g., the deeper motivations of prayer and the discipline connected to prayer. Do they provide an ongoing dialogue between the individual and divine?
- Consider the act of fasting in the Abrahamic traditions. Why is self-sacrifice necessary?
- Consider pilgrimage to holy sites, the power of participation, and centering the self to the holy center.
- Religious symbolism captures the numinous in ourselves and in others. Discuss this.

Contemplation

The following study questions address the importance of contemplation:

- Discuss the role of mysticism in the Abrahamic traditions.
- Discuss the desire to unite with the divine, to see the divine in all things, and to commit the self to a disciplined transformation.
- Discuss the mystical spiritual path as a source for a deeper appreciation of the other.
- Explore the work of key figures such as Esra ben Solomon, Azriel ben Menhem, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, Ibn al-Arabi, or Jalaluddin Rumi as inspiring mystics.

Contemporary Issues and Social Justice

Religious leaders often join together in social justice projects that affect the community at large. A joint project in local communities is a step toward working together and showing a sense of unity for interfaith cooperation. Many interfaith dialogues in the Abrahamic traditions are finding the transformative element in joint social justice programs, which are excellent areas for reflection and dialogue. Here are some suggestions for projects and topics:

- Ecology and moral responsibility.
- Citizenship in a democracy or in non-democracies.
- Punishment and concept of punishment.
- Rights of victims, rights of perpetrators, and capital punishment.
- War and the quest for peace.
- Peacemaking and definitions of peace in each faith tradition.
- Modern warfare methods and applicability of just war theories. Do we need an alternative to traditional just war talk?
- How long does one engage with the other as an enemy? How do we define an enemy?

- How can interfaith dialogue projects and people of faith intervene in ending or reducing active war?
- What is the place of work, property, and community in the life of a faithful person?
- The context of capitalism, economies, social justice, and globalization.
- The role of women and youth in peacemaking, mediation, conflict prevention, conflict reduction, and post-conflict stability.
- Gender equality and practical steps in achieving gender justice, and addressing gender-based crimes.
- Poverty, poverty of children, and homelessness.
- Human trafficking, child labor, and illegal abuses of child labor.
- Youth gangs and violence, altering gang behavior and creating hope.
- Interpersonal violence.
- School violence, peer pressure, delinquency, and addressing the discrepancy in the quality of education (urban vs. rural, private vs. public).
- Popular culture violence and the devaluation of human dignity, relationship between culture and faith.
- Understanding anger management in faith traditions; implementing interpersonal anger management seminars based on the Abrahamic traditions.
- Practicing an interfaith dialogue peace meditation.

What specific roles do synagogues, churches, and mosques play in these areas? What doctrines allow for greater interfaith dialogue collaboration in these social justice issues?

If religious doctrines do not address the above-mentioned areas, how do faith communities initiate a dialogue or an interfaith dialogue project?

How do faith traditions have similar or different approaches toward justice? What are the definitions of justice? What joint interfaith dialogue strategies can be formed? Task forces on local, regional, and national levels?

Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking

Religious leaders involved in peacemaking can contribute in multiple ways to prevent, mediate, and reduce conflict. Religious leaders in interfaith dialogue need to assess their capacity-building roles and implement key objectives in conflict prevention and mediation.

Here are examples of interfaith dialogue leadership objectives:

- Build coherent objectives and unity of purpose amongst the interfaith community.
- Organize a steering leadership team for interfaith dialogue.
- Ensure that all parties involved are committed and have the authority to participate in an interfaith dialogue conflict resolution project.
- Guarantee that there are adequate financial and staff resources which are shared by the interfaith dialogue community.
- Maintain legitimacy with constituents and other NGOs.
- Develop a network of constituents of peacemakers.

- Arrange workshops on mediation and conflict reduction to constituents.
- Maintain good communications with community leaders.
- Collect, manage, assess, and analyze information that can assist the interfaith dialogue leadership team in the conflict.
- Assemble a group of individuals who can brainstorm options and strategies as the situation changes.
- Identify the root causes of the conflict and strategize ways to minimize influence of "spoilers."
- As appropriate, assist relief workers, civilians, military, peace monitors, politicians, international groups, and law enforcement.

Example of Religion and Conflict Resolution

Dr. David Steele worked with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Center for Religious Dialogue in the Balkans from 1994 to 2003. During the wars in the Balkans, Dr. Steele worked with Muslim and Christian leaders to help resolve conflict and to press them toward greater recognition of the other. During six years of demanding work, he developed the six-step approach, outlined below.

Six-Step Approach for Religious Leaders to Work Toward Conflict Resolution:

- Process grief by listening to one another's stories
- Share fears to build trust
- Identify the other group's needs
- Admit wrongs done by oneself or one's own group
- Forgive others publicly
- Jointly envision and strategize a restorative justice

The Impact of Steele's Reconciliation and Peacemaking Dialogue Efforts

- Re-humanized the enemy
- Transformed relationships among participants
- Forgiveness was viewed as a long-term process
- Restorative justice did not involve punishment or revenge; it was based on the needs of the people, moving beyond thinking of retribution

Interfaith Dialogue's Contribution to Peace

Interfaith Dialogue can play a significant and successful role in:

- Preventing threats and violence to any faith-based community
- Applying interfaith dialogue to manage and resolve local and international conflicts
- Rethinking interfaith dialogue to promote personal and communal peace-building efforts

Glossary

A

Abrahamic faith traditions

Refers to the three monotheistic religions that trace their roots to Abraham: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Adversarial other

A mental construct by which one individual or group projects negative traits on another, a projection frequently reciprocated, both sides defining each other as "the enemy." This creates emotional distance, making the defined enemy seem less human and allowing one to avoid self-critique by blaming others

Albania

A country in Southeastern Europe that was largely isolated from both East and West during the communist rule of Enver Hoxha from 1945 to 1985. Established a multiparty democracy in 1992, though transition has proven difficult. Ethnic Albanians form the majority population in neighboring Kosovo.

Analytical Framework

Derived from Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators [copyright © International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), 1998, http://www.idea.int/], the analytical framework helps generate questions that should be asked when studying a conflict.

Anglican

A Protestant Christian denomination, also known as the Church of England or the Episcopal Church. It was established in 1534, after separating from the Roman Catholic church.

Angola

A country in Southwest Africa that was plagued by civil war and factional fighting through much of the latter half of the 20th century.

Armenia

A country in the Caucasus that was part of the Soviet Union until its break-up in 1991. Disputes the region of Ngorno-Karabakh with its neighbor Azerbaijan.

Arusha Peace Accords

A comprehensive agreement signed in Arusha, Tanzania, that provided for substantial power sharing in Rwanda between Hutu and Tutsi. Vocal Hutu in Rwanda denounced and ultimately abandoned the agreement.

Asymmetry

Unequal or unbalanced; in describing relationships, it refers to a situation where one person or party has more power or leverage than another

Azerbaijan

A country in the Caucasus that was part of the Soviet Union until its break-up in 1991. Disputes the region of Ngorno-Karabakh with its neighbor Armenia.

B

Banja Luka

Capital of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Baptist

A Protestant Christian movement which began in the 1500's. It is composed of loosely affiliated, independent congregations, grouped into several denominations

Belgrade

Capital of Serbia. Formerly capital of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

Bible/ Biblical

A collection of writings of Judaism and Christianity which is considered sacred and authoritative for Christians. It includes the Hebrew Scriptures (or Old Testament), which is also authoritative for Jews, and the New Testament, which includes narratives about the life of Jesus and later Christian writings.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

A former republic of Yugoslavia that declared independence in 1992, touching off a war that did not end until 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Accords.

Boundary Leaders

Individuals within a group who reach out to those beyond their own group, across the "boundary" of group identity.

Burundi

A country in East Central Africa that, like its neighbor Rwanda, has in the latter half of the 20th century seen periodic violent conflict between its Hutu and Tutsi populations.

C

Caliphate (of Sokoto) – Nigeria

A historical province of what is now northern Nigeria, headed by a Muslim leader

Chechnya

Official name: the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Currently seeking independence from Russia.

Christianity/Christian

A monotheistic religion which emerged from Judaism, following the life and teachings of Jesus. The primary, authoritative text for Christians is the Bible.

Church

Term used to refer to the places where Christians congregate for worship, and/or to Christian believers as a group.

Clergy/ Cleric

Formal religious leaders, such as an imam, priest, or rabbi.

Confession

The admission of wrong-doing, either publicly or to particular individuals.

Conflict Analysis

The systematic study of conflict, including the study of conflict in general and the study of individual conflicts.

Conflict Management

A general term used to describe efforts to prevent, limit, resolve or transform conflicts. This can involve preventing conflicts from breaking out or escalating, as well as stopping or reducing the amount of violence by parties engaged in conflict. In Lund's curve of conflict, conflict management is an equivalent term for Peacemaking and is associated with early stages of war.

Conflict Mitigation

On Lund's curve of conflict, conflict mitigation is an equivalent term for peace enforcement and is associated with late stages of war. Describes efforts to impose or enforce agreements.

Conflict Prevention

On Lund's curve of conflict, conflict prevention is an equivalent term for preventive diplomacy and refers to third-party actions taken at the early stages of unstable peace. In Preventing Violent Conflicts, Lund further defines preventive diplomacy as an activity that comes into play when "policies, institutions, and procedures between states and groups at the local, national or regional levels that could handle disagreements and maintain a process of orderly resolution either do not exist, are breaking down, or fail to regulate political disputes and conflicts of interests."

Conflict Resolution

In Lund's curve of conflict, conflict resolution is an equivalent term for post-conflict peace building and is associated with de-escalation from crisis to unstable peace and stable peace. Involves assisting in the termination of conflicts by finding solutions to them.

Conflict Termination

On Lund's curve of conflict, conflict termination is an equivalent term for peacekeeping and is associated with a post-war state of crisis. Describes efforts to keep conflicts from re-escalating and to move them in the direction of resolution.

Coup D'Etat

The sudden overthrow of a government by extra-legal means.

Creed

A formal statement or proclamation of religious belief.

Crisis

From Lund: "Crisis is tense confrontation between armed forces that are mobilized and ready to fight and may be engaged in threats and occasional low-level skirmishes but have not exerted any significant amount of force. The probability of the outbreak of war is high."

Crisis Diplomacy

On Lund's curve of conflict, crisis diplomacy is an equivalent term for crisis management and is associated with early stages of crisis. In Preventing Violent Conflicts, Lund further defines crisis diplomacy as the effort to "manage tensions and disputes that are so intense

as to have reached the level of confrontation. The threat of force by one or more parties is common, and the actual outbreak of hostilities is highly likely."

Crisis Management

On Lund's curve of conflict, crisis management is an equivalent term for crisis diplomacy and is associated with early stages of crisis. In Preventing Violent Conflicts, Lund further defines crisis diplomacy as the effort to "manage tensions and disputes that are so intense as to have reached the level of confrontation. The threat of force by one or more parties is common, and the actual outbreak of hostilities is highly likely."

Croatia

A former republic of Yugoslavia that declared independence in 1991 but did not gain control over all its territory until 1998.

Curve of Conflict

Developed by Michael Lund, the curve of conflict is a visual tool that helps illustrate how conflicts tend to evolve over time. The curve helps in conceptualizing how different phases of conflict relate to one another, as well as to identify associated kinds of third-party intervention. Practitioners can use this knowledge in the determination of effective strategies for intervention, along with the timing of those strategies.

D

Dayton Accords

Peace agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The accords were named for the Ohio location of the talks between Serbian, Croatian and Bosniak delegations in November 1995.

Denomination

A formal statement or proclamation of religious belief.

Democratic League of Kosovo

Founded by Ibrahim Rugova to challenge Serbian control of Kosovo. Known as the LDK by its Albanian initials.

Dialogue /dialogic/dialogical

A conversation or exchange of ideas which seeks mutual understanding through the sharing of perspectives. It requires mutual listening and sharing.

Doctrine

The beliefs and teachings of a group, often used to refer to religious teachings.

Dubrovnik

A walled city on the Dalmatian coast, founded in the seventh century AD, situated in Croatia. The city was shelled by Yugoslav forces in 1991, which provoked considerable international outrage. Dubrovnik is also called Ragusa.

Durable Peace

From Lund: "Durable (or Warm) Peace involves a high level of reciprocity and cooperation, and the virtual absence of self-defense measures among parties, although it may include their military alliance against a common threat. A ‘positive peace’ prevails based on shared values, goals, and institutions (e.g. democratic political systems and rule of law), economic interdependence, and a sense of international community."

E

East Timor

A country in the Timor Sea that recently gained independence from Indonesia.

EC

European Community, a term used after the European Economic Community (EEC) took on a more political character, and before it became the European Union (EU).

Ethiopia

A country in East Africa plagued by internal uprisings in the 1990s, as well as a border war with neighboring Eritrea.

EU

European Union, the term used for this organization since the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht. Formerly the EEC and the EC.

Evangelical

A movement within the Christian religion which emphasizes evangelism, the authority of the Bible and personal conversion through belief in Jesus Christ.

Exclusivism

A perspective that holds that one's religion is "true" and all others are false.

Extremist

Individuals or groups who hold views which go far beyond the norm, favoring immoderate and uncompromising beliefs or practices, and who often feel the need to act on those beliefs against those who do not see things the same way.

F

Fasting

A spiritual discipline or practice which involves abstaining from food or other daily activities (such as smoking) for a period.

FRY

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This term was applied to the six republics of the former SFRY, and then, following successful secessions by other republics, to just Serbia and Montenegro. The FRY officially ceased to exist in 2003.

Fulani

A member of the Fula ethnic group which is spread across western Africa. They are traditionally pastoralists/herders and primarily Muslim.

G

Genocidaire

French term often used to describe those who committed genocide in Rwanda.

Genocide

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as "any of a number of acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Georgia

A country in the Caucasus that was part of the Soviet Union until its break-up in 1991. Since then separatist movements have grown in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Guatemala

A mountainous country in Central America, which was colonized by the Spanish and won its independence in 1821. It experienced a 36 year civil war which ended with a signed peace agreement in 1996. The population is 40% ethnic Mayan, and 60% mestizo (mixed European and indigenous heritage

Guerrilla

A member of an irregular military or paramilitary unit that uses techniques such as harassment, sabotage, and surprise against a more powerful force.

H

Hajj

Pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam, which Muslims are exhorted to make at least once in their life.

Hausa

An ethnic group of western Africa, primarily in northern Nigeria and southern Niger. They are traditionally agriculturists and primarily Muslim.

Hebrew Bible

The sacred book of Judaism, consisting of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. Also called the Tanach or Tanakh.

Holocaust

When capitalized, the term refers specifically to the genocide of European Jews and others by Nazi Germany during World War II.

Hutu

One of three principal groups that inhabit Rwanda. The others are the Tutsi and the Twa. In pre-colonial Rwanda, the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi" had, after centuries of intermarriage, come more closely to represent distinctions of economic class rather than ethnic origin. A Hutu who gained in wealth could become a "Tutsi," and conversely, a Tutsi could fall in economic stature and become a "Hutu." In 1926, however, the Belgians established policies to sharpen and institutionalize distinctions between Hutu and Tutsi.

Hutu Power

A radical Hutu movement in Rwanda that rejected power-sharing with Tutsi and whose leadership has been implicated in the Rwandan genocide.

I

IGO(s)

Inter-governmental organization(s), such as the United Nations or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Imam

The prayer leader in a mosque.

Impartial/ Impartiality

Not taking sides or showing preference for one perspective over another; treating both sides equitably.

Inclusivism

A perspective that is open to learning about and engaging with other religions, but still believes in the ultimate truth of their beliefs over other faiths.

Insurgency

An armed movement that attempts to disrupt or overthrow a government through the use of subversion and violence

Inter Faith Mediation Centre

Organization established by Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa in Nigeria to promote interfaith reconciliation.

Interfaith dialogue

A structured process of communication between members of different faith traditions with the goal of fostering mutual understanding and ability to live together in peace.

Interahamwe

In Kinyarwanda, "those who attack together." Militia formed by Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and the Hutu Power leadership.

Internally Displaced Persons

Violent conflicts often drive people from their homes. International convention distinguishes those forced to cross an international frontier, "refugees," from those who remain in their own country but cannot return to their usual place of residence, "Internally Displaced Persons" (IDPs). In the former Yugoslavia, some categories blur, especially between Kosovo and Serbia, and between the two entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Also unclear is the will of many people to return to live alongside people whom they might see as bitter enemies. Across the region in the last ten years, at least three million people have found themselves in one status or the other. If "economic refugees" are included, the number is much higher.

International Monetary Fund

International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Interpenetration/ Mutualism

A perspective that sees religions as interconnected and complementary, believing that deeper understanding of other faiths will deepen understanding of one's own faith.

Islam/ Muslim

A monotheistic religion founded by the prophet Muhammad. The primary, authoritative text for Muslims is the Qur'an.

J

Judiasm/Jewish

A monotheistic religion that traces its roots to Abraham. The primary authoritative text for Jews is the Tanakh or the Hebrew Scriptures.

K

Kampala

Capital of Uganda.

Kashmir

A region that has been a subject of conflict between India and Pakistan since the two states became independent in 1947.

Khojand

Tajikistan's second largest city.

Kigali

Capital of Rwanda.

Kinyarwanda

The language of Rwanda. Shared by both Tutsi and Hutu.

KLA

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which came to prominence after the Dayton Accords of 1995. Levels of violence in Kosovo increased, with the KLA emerging as a uniformed paramilitary organization, funded in part by the Albanian diaspora, that targeted Serbian security forces. After the Kosovo War, the KLA was officially disarmed and disbanded. However, not all violence has ceased in Kosovo. Moreover, some of its personnel, leaders and equipment, though, contributed to the foundation of the NLA, a

parallel organization, that began an armed insurgency in Macedonia in February 2001. In Albanian, KLA and NLA have the same name, the UCK.

Kosovo

Former province with an Albanian majority population within the Republic of Serbia. Its efforts to gain independence led to a war which did not end until June, 1999. Its final status has yet to be determined.

Kosovo Polje

Scene of a battle that has great symbolic significance in Serbian history. Now a town in Kosovo. Literally means "field of blackbirds."

L

La violencia

A monotheistic religion that traces its roots to Abraham. The primary authoritative text for Jews is the Tanakh or the Hebrew Scriptures.

Lay leader

Leaders in a congregation or religious community who are not clerics or otherwise ordained, but are active in providing for the needs of the group.

Layperson

Members of a congregation who do not have specific responsibilities or roles.

LDK

Albanian initials of the Democratic League of Kosovo, founded by Ibrahim Rugova to challenge Serbian control of Kosovo.

Liberia

A country in West Africa that was plagued by civil war and factional fighting through much of the 1990s.

Liturgy/liturgical

A liturgy is the form of worship performed by a specific religious group, according to their particular traditions.

Lutheran

A Protestant Christian denomination, which separated from the Roman Catholic church in the early 1500's. It was founded by Martin Luther, in Germany.

M

Macedonia

A former republic of Yugoslavia. Though it declared independence in 1991, its recognition was delayed by Greece, which objected to its use of the name "Macedonia" for an independent state. In 1995, it gained international recognition as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M.).

Mayan

Refers to a group of languages and peoples that are indigenous to part of Central America, particularly in the Yucatan, Belize, and Guatemala.

Mecca

A city in Saudi Arabi which is the holiest place for Muslims, because it is the birthplace of Muhammad. It is the destination of the hajj, the pilgrimmage that is one of the five pillars of Islam.

Mediation

In mediation a third party actively helps parties find a solution they cannot find by themselves. Pure mediation involves helping parties to find their solutions, and the possible injection of ideas. To this process, power mediation adds leverage to persuade the parties, positive and negative incentives to achieve an agreement, and authority to advise, suggest or influence.

Methodist

A Protestant Christian denomination which was founded in the early 1700's by brothers John and Charles Wesley, in England.

Montenegro

Former republic in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Now with Serbia a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

Mosque

A Muslim place of prayer and worship.

Mysticism

The belief that one can attain knowledge of God and/or spiritual truth through direct personal experience.

N

Narod and Narodnost

The terms Narod and Narodnost were used in the Yugoslav constitutions between 1945 and 1991, and still are used in the successor states. Narod referred to the "constituent people" of a Yugoslav republic. Narodnost referred to a group which had a nation-state outside Yugoslavia and which therefore had no claim to a republic of its own. Serbs were the largest narod, while Albanians were the largest narodnost. Within Yugoslavia, Albanian activists in Kosovo sought status as narod and hoped that Kosovo would become a republic. With the break-up of Yugoslavia, Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, who had been members of the largest narod, now found themselves in the potential role of minorities, a status that was formalized by the new Croatian constitution of 1990. Tension over usage of the term narod also exists in Macedonia, where the 1991 constitution makes primary reference to the Macedonian narod and no other. Albanian political parties seek the status of narod for Macedonia's Albanians.

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Negotiation

In cases where two or more parties are in conflict, or have differences that may result in conflict, the parties may negotiate. Negotiation is a process to achieve goals through communication and bargaining, with the presumed outcome an agreement.

NGO(s)

Non-Governmental Organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross or Amnesty International.

Nigeria

A country in West Africa, which is the most populous country in Africa. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups; about 50% of the country is Muslim, 40% is Christian, and 10% follow indigenous practices.

NLA

See KLA.

Nobel Peace Prize

An award given annually in Oslo, Norway, "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses." It also includes a financial award.

O

OECD

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a 30-member organization of market democracies from North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim.

Organization of the Islamic Conference

An intergovernmental association of 57 states promoting Muslim solidarity in economic, social, and political affairs. It has also played a role in conflict mediation.

OSCE

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an inter-governmental organization whose members include the US, Canada, all European nations, and five Central Asian states.

Oslo

The capital of Norway, a nation in Scandinavia, the northwestern part of Europe.

OTPOR

A student-led organization in Serbia that was partly responsible for the ouster of Slobodan Milosevic.

P

Parallelism

A perspective that recognizes the truth of other religions, and is open and tolerant towards them, seeing faiths as engaged in parallel journeys.

Pastor

The spiritual leader of a Christian congregation or group.

Peace Enforcement

On Lund's curve of conflict, peace enforcement is an equivalent term for conflict mitigation and is associated with late stages of war. Describes efforts to enforce agreements.

Peacekeeping

On Lund's curve of conflict, peacekeeping is an equivalent term for conflict termination and is associated with a post-war state of crisis. Describes efforts to keep conflicts from re-escalating and to move them in the direction of resolution.

Peace Making

On Lund's curve of conflict, peace making is an equivalent term for conflict management and is associated with early stages of war. Describes efforts at ending hostilities.

Peacetime Diplomacy or Politics

On Lund's curve of conflict, peacetime diplomacy or politics is associated with durable and stable peace. In Preventing Violent Conflicts, Lund further defines peacetime diplomacy or politics as "the stuff of ordinary, peacetime international relations and national foreign and defense policies."

Pilgrimage

A journey to a sacred or holy place or shrine.

Pluralism

A perspective that believes that all religions and faiths have something valuable to contribute.

Post-conflict Peace Building

On Lund's curve of conflict, post-conflict peace building is an equivalent term for conflict resolution and is associated with de-escalation from crisis to unstable and stable peace. Involves assisting in the termination of conflicts by finding solutions to them.

Presbyterian

A Protestant Christian denomination, associated with the teachings of John Calvin, who lived in the early 1700's. The movement originated in Scotland.

Preventive Diplomacy

On Lund's curve of conflict, preventive diplomacy is an equivalent term for conflict prevention and refers to third-party efforts taken at the early stages of unstable peace. In Preventing Violent Conflicts, Lund further defines preventive diplomacy as an activity that comes into play when "policies, institutions, and procedures between states and groups at the local, national or regional levels that could handle disagreements and maintain a process of orderly resolution either do not exist, are breaking down, or fail to regulate political disputes and conflicts of interests."

Priest

A Christian cleric (usually Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, or Episcopalian) who has the authority to perform the religious rites of the church. The specific requirements and responsibilities of a priest vary by denomination.

Primary Actors

In conflict analysis, those directly involved in a conflict.

Pristina

Capital of Kosovo.

Prophet

A person who speaks by divine inspiration or who serves as an intermediary between God and humanity.

Proselytize

To seek to promote a particular belief or doctrine, or to recruit people for one's group, especially religious group.

Protestant

General term for the Christian denominations which trace their roots back to a break with the Catholic church during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe.

Pyramid Scheme

A form of "wild capitalism" which requires ever-increasing inputs from new speculators to repay earlier ones, since it does not entail any actual productive investment. Such schemes occurred in various former communist countries, including Romania, Serbia, Macedonia and Albania. A bank is set up offering very high rates of return on short-term investment. Those who invest early are repaid with the deposits of those who invest later; however, as the schemes expand (which they must, to meet repayment schedules) it becomes impossible to repay the numerous later depositors. Those who set up such schemes generally profit at the expense of small investors seduced by the promise of riches. In Albania, the collapse of many such schemes brought down the government in 1997.

Q

Qur'an/ Qur'anic

The sacred text of Islam, considered to be God's revelation directly through the prophet Muhammad. (also spelled Koran)

R

Rabbi

The leader of a Jewish congregation. The word means "teacher" or "master."

Racak

A village in Kosovo which was the site of an engagement between KLA and Serbian security forces in January 1999. Foreign observers reported that the engagement was followed by a massacre of Albanian civilians, prompting renewed international pressure on Serbia. This led first to negotiations at Rambouillet and then to the use of force by NATO.

Rambouillet

Location of an international attempt to broker a peaceful solution to the growing violence between Serbian security forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army in February 1999. The Rambouillet Accords called for an international force to enter Kosovo and a phased introduction of self-determination. They were signed by Albanian representatives but not by Serbs, who denounced them as an assault on Serbian national sovereignty. The failure of Rambouillet led to the Kosovo War, which began in March 1999 with NATO air strikes.

Reconciliation

The process of restoring broken relationships, finding agreement or common ground.

Refugees

Violent conflicts often drive people from their homes. International convention distinguishes those forced to cross an international frontier, "refugees," from those who remain in their own country but cannot return to their usual place of residence, "Internally Displaced Persons" (IDPs). In the former Yugoslavia, some categories blur, especially between Kosovo and Serbia, and between the two entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Also unclear is the will of many people to return to live alongside people whom they might see as bitter enemies. Across the region in the last ten years, at least three million people have found themselves in one status or the other. If "economic refugees" are included, the number is much higher.

Religion

A set of beliefs, principles, and practices about how humans relate to the universe, centered on their relationship to the divine or supernatural.

Roman Catholic/ Catholicism

A Christian denomination that traces its roots back to early Christianity, and emerged around 200 A.D. The head of the church is the Pope, in Rome, Italy. It is the largest Christian group.

Root Causes

In conflict analysis, that which is driving the conflict; the needs and fears of each group.

Rwanda

A country in East Central Africa, bordered by Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Rwanda Patriotic Front/Army

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed in 1987 as an exile organization dedicated to the democratization of Rwandan society and the return of Rwandan refugees. Unable to attain these objectives through peaceful means, the RPF formed the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), which invaded Rwanda in 1990.

S

Sarajevo

Capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The city was held by the Bosnian government, and besieged by Serbian forces on the surrounding hills for almost the entire period 1992-1995. It was the site of several highly public attacks against civilians, including a mortar shell in the marketplace which killed 68 people in February 1994.

Sect/Sectarian

A religious group that has broken off from a larger group, usually over differences in doctrine.

Secondary Actors

In conflict analysis, not actual parties to the conflict but those who nevertheless have a high degree of interest in and influence over it, often due to their proximity

Serbia

Former republic in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Now part of Serbia and Montenegro.

Sharia law

Islamic religious principles which are used as the foundation for laws and practices.

Shi'a

A branch of Islam that believes that Ali was the legitimate successor to the prophet Muhammad.

"Shadow State"

An unofficial, parallel government for Kosovo organized by Ibrahim Rugova and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

SFRY

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Formed and governed by Tito, it followed an idiosyncratic form of communism and a non-aligned foreign policy during the Cold War.

Slovenia

A former republic in Yugoslavia that declared and gained its independence in 1991.

Somalia

A country in East Africa plagued by factional fighting since the early 1990s.

South Africa

A country in Southern Africa that ended its apartheid system of race-based separation and minority rule and held its first national, multiracial election in 1994.

Srebrenica

Town in southern Bosnia-Herzegovina and site of mass killings of Bosnian Muslims by Serbian armed forces under the direct command of General Ratko Mladic in July 1995. UN peacekeepers on the spot failed to prevent the murder of over 8,000 Bosnian men in an area that had been declared a United Nations "safe haven."

Stable Peace

From Lund: "Stable (or Cold) Peace is a relationship of wary communication and limited cooperation (e.g. trade) within an overall context of basic order or national stability. Value or goal differences exist and no military cooperation is established, but disputes are generally worked out in nonviolent, more or less predictable ways. The prospect for war is low."

START I

The first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Signed by Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev and American President George H.W. Bush on July 31, 1991. It reduced the nuclear arsenals of both countries according to a specific timetable and had important verification provisions.

Sunni

A branch of Islam that accepts the first four caliphs as the rightful successors to Muhammad.

Synagogue

Jewish place of worship and religious instruction.

Syncretism

The fusion of different beliefs or religions into new beliefs.

T

Theology/theological

The study of God and God's relationship to the world.

Transcendence

To rise above normal perceptions and interpretations, into a more spiritual or abstract perspective.

Tutsi

One of three principal groups that inhabit Rwanda. The others are Hutu and Twa. In pre-colonial Rwanda, the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi" had, after centuries of intermarriage, come more closely to represent distinctions of economic class rather than ethnic origin. A Hutu who gained in wealth could become a "Tutsi," and conversely, a Tutsi could fall in economic stature and become a "Hutu." In 1926, however, the Belgians established policies to sharpen and institutionalize distinctions between Hutu and Tutsi.

Twa

One of three principal groups that inhabit Rwanda. The others are Tutsi and Hutu.

U

UCK

See KLA.

UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Universalism

A perspective that sees all religions as valid and equal.

URNG

Unidad Revolucionario Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity), a rebel group against the Guatemalan government, formed by four guerrilla groups.

Unstable Peace

From Lund: "Unstable Peace is a situation in which tension and suspicion among parties run high, but violence is either absent or only sporadic. A ‘negative peace’ prevails because although armed force is not deployed [or employed], the parties perceive one another as enemies and maintain deterrent military capabilities.. A balance of power may discourage aggression, but crisis and war are still possible."

V

Vojvodina

A province of the Republic of Serbia.

W

War

From Lund: "War is sustained fighting between organized armed forces. It may vary from low-intensity but continuing conflict or civil anarchy…to all-out ‘hot’ war. Once significant use of violence or armed force occurs, conflicts are very susceptible to entering a spiral of escalating violence. Each side feels increasingly justified to use violence because the other side is. So the threshold to armed conflict or war is especially important."

X

Y

Yugoslav

A category of individual identity that was used by some people while Yugoslavia was still a country, especially in urban settings such as Novi Sad or Sarajevo, where affiliations to particular national identities sometimes carried less meaning. Members of mixed marriages and their descendants were especially likely to use this category.

Yugoslavia

Former Southeastern European country. At that time, its constituent republics included Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. Literally, Yugoslavia meant "southern Slavs."

Z

Zagreb

Capital of Croatia.

Zero Network

Clandestine group of confidants formed by Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and the Hutu Power leadership.