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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACE-BUILDING

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The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding

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Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
HCI	High Council of Islam (Mali)
LBGT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MNLA	*Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad* (Mali)
MOJWA	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts (Somalia)
UK	United Kingdom
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee On Relief
US	United States

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Executive summary

The role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding has all too often been depicted in binary terms: it is seen as a source either of violence or of reconciliation. This simplification obscures the complexity of the subject and shows that there is no common understanding of the central terms of the debate. As a starting point for a more meaningful analysis, this report aims to find a workable definition of 'religion' – a concept that is frequently applied to a diverse range of situations, institutions, ideologies and actors. Most recent efforts to define religion have focused on how it is understood and experienced by individuals, rather than how it is assessed by institutions or doctrines. By observing how religion operates and interacts with other aspects of human experience at the global, institutional, group and individual levels, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of its role (or potential role) in both conflict and peacebuilding.

The major part of this report comprises a literature review, which aims to synthesise contributions from a variety of academic disciplines, including politics and international relations, peace and conflict studies, theology, history, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, security and terrorism studies. The report also draws on research and relevant publications from faith-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Three conflicts that have shown some religious dimension are examined as case studies, namely those in Israel-Palestine, Mali and Bosnia-Herzegovina. We identify the concepts, actors and arguments at play in each instance, and show in what ways and to what extent different aspects of religion were implicated either in the violence or in the building of peace, or both. We find that religious factors and motivations vary in each case, supporting our contention that when it comes to understanding their role in situations of conflict, context is crucial.

This report puts forward several recommendations for policymakers, particularly those involved in conflict resolution or mediation, and for scholars in the field. Underpinning them all is our key finding that religion is never a static or isolated entity, but should rather be understood as a fluid system of variables, contingent upon a large number of contextual and historical factors. It is rarely easy to discern the complex ways in which religion permeates a conflict, but it is vital for those involved in this area of study and diplomacy to strive to do so if progress is to be made in understanding them. Finally, a word of caution: we must be careful not to give undue prominence to religion in all instances; it is not a major factor in every conflict and there is a risk that it can sometimes come to obscure more deeply rooted causes and motivations.

1. Introduction

This project does not attempt to provide a definitive answer to the extremely difficult questions of whether religion is a cause of conflict, and if so, how the faith-based violence that has plagued the opening of this new Millennium can be stemmed. Instead, it reflects on the interpretive lenses and language that we use for dealing with these questions. It is also a modest attempt at providing some intellectual tools for grappling with the multifaceted concept of 'religion' in contexts of conflict and peacebuilding around the world.

We seek to examine and analyse the relationships between faith and conflict, without producing an encyclopaedic review of existing literature focusing these terms, or on the understanding of violence among world belief systems. The aim is to identify features of religion, as well as the interpretive trends put forward by scholars that share an interest in similar questions but come from diverse disciplinary fields. We hope that this effort will not just make an academic contribution to a burgeoning field, but will also address real and pressing concerns faced by policymakers and the general public alike. This is particularly important as the international community has gradually shed its 'secularist scepticism' and has awakened, in the course of the past 20 years, to the realisation that 'religion matters' in diplomacy and foreign affairs (see among others: Johnston and Sampson 1995; Johnston 2003; Thomas 2005; Hill 2013; UNFPA 2014; Mandaville and Silvestri 2015).

In this endeavour, however, caution is needed not to exaggerate religion as a cause of violence. As Cavanaugh (2009) has pointed out, much of the current debate on religion and violence, and on the religion versus secularism dichotomy, is based on incoherent understandings of religion and of religious violence, and of how the latter differentiates from secular violence. Focusing on the 'myth' of religious violence, he warns, prevents us from tackling violence and the different conditions, ideologies, practices and symbolism under which it emerges and spreads.

We hope that the findings of this report will be useful to those promoting peace in different social, economic and political settings around the world, and in particular for the UK government at a time when religion, in one form or another, appears to be entangled in a large number of international conflicts and zones of instability.

2. Definitions

2.1. Religion: part of the problem

Terms such as 'religiosity', 'spirituality', 'faith', 'belief', 'transcendence', 'sacred', 'sense of belonging', 'culture', and 'identity' are all components in the idea of – and have sometimes been used synonymously with – religion, but in fact they all have distinct meanings. Like its supposed counterpart, secularism, the notion of religion is a relatively recent social and intellectual construction of the West, and in particular a product of the Reformation. Based on a theological construction of authority in reference to a book (MacCulloch 2004), the idea of religion became a function of power relations (Asad 1993; Thomas 2005; Philpott 2001; Shakman Hurd 2007), and according to Oxford historian Diarmaid MacCulloch (2004), a concept imposed on human behaviour by Christianity and especially its Protestant variant. In fact, as he has highlighted, the Protestant concept of religion became an instrument of intellectual hegemony because of the spectacular reach and power of the British Empire and the United States (US). The religious appellative 'Hinduism', for example, is but an invention of the British Protestants administering India in the early nineteenth century as they were coming to terms with the rich variety of cultures, philosophies, spiritual practices and observances of the sub-continent.

In reality, religion is not static, but is constantly being reconfigured (Cavanaugh 2009; Woodhead 2011). Despite the absence of a universal definition, it is possible to identify some broad and common ways of understanding religion. The 'substantive' approach looks at the content of religion, that is, key scriptures, theologies, bodies of doctrine, and values and beliefs enshrined in these. Complementary to this is the 'functional' approach, which highlights what religion 'does' to people, such as providing them with sources of identity, morality, law and order, or by linking them together into communities. Rather than elaborating

a single cohesive notion of religion, though, each of these two approaches in turn points to a number of multifarious concepts.

It is therefore not surprising that in the current debate in the humanities and social sciences about the rediscovered vitality and significance of religion in contemporary societies, three important questions need to be raised. The first is whether we can reach an exhaustive definition of what is commonly called religion, faith, or sacred? If so, what would be its constituent elements? And third, what are the most appropriate concepts, objects, and methodological and interpretive parameters to use in the study of religion?

These questions are even more important for those seeking to establish the role of religion in situations of conflict and peacemaking/peacebuilding. This paper does not attempt to provide a new scholarly definition for religion. Rather, it aims to establish a practical understanding of what is commonly called 'religion' and what that entails, essential to any analysis of whether features of this phenomenon matter in triggering, averting, or mitigating conflict, and if so, which ones.

Most commonly, religion is understood to be a system of beliefs and values associated with particular organisational forms (e.g. ritual practices, institutions), and with a supra-natural deity embodying and emanating some absolute truths. However, such an understanding fails to capture those traditions (especially Asian) that do not revolve around a single God and tend to function as philosophies of life. In such contexts, religion is best defined as 'a conceptual and moral framework for understanding and ordering lives and communities' (Skidmore 2007, 4). Moreover, even when a divinity, beliefs, doctrine and institutions are clearly identifiable, focusing only on these elements will still not be enough to permit a deeper and sophisticated appreciation of the power of religion. This is because the 'substantive' approach to religion ought to be complemented by a 'functional' one, looking at how faith is articulated in practice, considering if and how it affects individual or groups' behaviour, thoughts and choices. In analysing religious fundamentalism, for instance, Ernest Gellner (1992, 3) argues that what really matters is not doctrine but ritual, loyalty to procedural rules and celebration of community. Following various scholars, including Duffy (2004) and Thomas (2005), we can conclude that the experiential level (i.e. experiencing shared values and commitment) is as important, or perhaps even more important than the intellectual and cognitive dimension of faith.

Increased awareness of the Western origins of the concept of 'religion' and its inextricable links with the idea and processes of secularism and secularisation (see among others: Taylor 2007; Asad 1993, 2003; MacCulloch 2004; Martin 2005) requires that the net be cast wide. Contemporary research cannot be limited to organised and collective forms of religion only. It is also necessary to consider the role of individual subjectivity and experience, the 'invisible' presence of religion (Luckmann 1967) in everyday life (McGuire 2008), in the fluidity of cultures, identities, and social movements, and in the dynamics of global transformations. Awareness of the weight of history in shaping religion is also essential if we are to appreciate the way it expresses itself today.

It is important to resist the temptation to try to understand faith through homogenising categories such as religious institutions (e.g. churches, mosques) and communities (e.g. the Muslim Brothers, the Evangelical movement) when attempting to gain a deeper understanding of how religion works and the many ways that it matters to people. Perhaps a fuller picture of religion in today's world could be gained by observing how religion manifests itself concomitantly at all these levels – global, institutional, group and individual.

An initial attempt to empirically distil the essence of religion in a comprehensive manner was made by American sociologists Glock and Stark (1965). They set out to identify, using a quantitative method, five key features of what is commonly understood to be religiosity, namely the ritual and the ideological components, the experiential/emotional side, intellectual engagement, and the consequential dimension or the effects of embracing a religion has on other aspects of a person's life. While these features are supposedly related to each other, they do not necessarily appear in equal measure in each scenario. They are useful analytics because they succeed in condensing a series of relevant concepts drawn from a variety of perspectives on religion.

This kind of analysis of religion is further complemented by the qualitative approaches taken by French sociologist Hérvieu-Léger (2000) and American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1993). Hérvieu-Léger concludes that despite its having become invisible and fragmented in the post-modern world, religion as an 'expression of believing' retains a strong connection with tradition; the constant efforts to revive and reconnect with the idea of tradition (even when it is completely reinvented) and with the 'memory' of this continuity, are what makes

religion vibrant and powerful in the present. Geertz is renowned for his definition of religion as:

> *'(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' (Geertz 1993, 90).*

Yet, he also provides another definition that is perhaps more pertinent in attempts to understand how and why religion matters to so many people today, and how it motivates some individuals so strongly to act, whether for good or for bad. For Geertz, religion 'tunes human actions to an envisaged cosmic order and projects images of cosmic order onto the plane of human experience' (Geertz 1993, 90).

The desire to attain this 'cosmic order' is what engenders political theologies, that is, sets of 'ideas that a religious body holds about legitimate political authority' in the world (Philpott 2007a, 507). This global perspective of world order and political authority is what makes religion relevant to the study of international relations. Religion offers more compelling reasons than do *Realpolitik* and economic advantage for people to put their lives on the line, as it 'provides a vision of reality that transcends temporal and terrestrial life and thus inspires people to make the ultimate sacrifice' (Johnston and Cox 2003, 14).

Some, such as Juergensmeyer (2003), contend that the very idea of and the vivid imaginary associated with engagement in a cosmic war fought to protect some absolute truth is one of the central drivers of faith-based terrorism. However, there are several ways to analyse and criticise political arrangements from the perspective of 'God's ways with the world' (Scott and Cavanaugh 2007, 2), and different political theologies stemming from a single faith tradition have proven to generate both violence and peace. This means that we need to reconsider rigid assumptions about and categorisations of any religion as 'bad' (violent) and political, or 'good' (peaceful) and non-political.

2.2. Conflict

While there is not room in this report to elaborate on theories of conflict, a working definition of conflict is nevertheless necessary in the interest

of clarity. For Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005, 13), conflict 'is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints'. By asserting that conflict is 'an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change' and that 'the way we deal with conflict is a matter of habit and choice', they seem to imply that understanding conflict and conflict resolution requires bypassing approaches relying on rational choice that privilege state actors, and instead focusing only on competing material interests and hard power.

Thus this paper adopts the concept of conflict in its broadest possible sense, which includes both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts (i.e. involving similar and dissimilar parties) and also Galtung's (1969, 1975) widely accepted view that violence occurs not only in a direct way (the act of harming or killing) but is also hidden in societal structures (socio-economic or juridical systems) and culture (the ideas shaping people's attitudes), and that behaviours, structures and attitudes have to be addressed simultaneously to achieve peace.

Attitudes are, of course, intertwined with perceptions, which are identified by Juergensmeyer (2003) and many others (e.g. Wolff 2006) as one of the factors that can trigger religious and ethnic violence. Perceptions are key to the construction and perpetuation of identities and narratives, both of individuals and of communities. Thus it is not surprising that perceptions of prejudice, victimhood, and discrimination are central in the dynamics of structural, physical and cultural violence, whether religion or ethnicity are involved or not.

Given the fluid and kaleidoscopic nature of conflict, it is difficult to disentangle causes and effects and draw clear conclusions, so a holistic approach that takes contextual variables into account is required. Religion may well be one of these variables, whether as something that may contribute to provoking or to solving conflict. However, its role should not be taken for granted and is certainly not fixed.

One of the foremost thinkers on peace is again Johan Galtung. His distinction between 'positive peace' (the absence of indirect and structural violence) and 'negative' peace (the absence of direct violence) is used widely today to analyse situations of peace and conflict (Galtung 1964). Variations of his theory and subsequent developments of it have been presented by leading scholars such as Jean-Paul Lederach (1996) and John Burton (1988), among others. A vast body of literature exists

on the implications of favouring one set of terminology over another
in relation to conflict resolution, peacebuilding and peacemaking.
In the interest of conciseness, this paper uses these three terms
interchangeably, but acknowledges that processes of 'transformation'
are central to paths leading towards peace. This transformative and
gradual dimension involves stages of negative and positive peace
and is especially important when it comes to appreciating religion's
contribution to peace.

3. Methodology

Given the complexity of the subject matter in this report, and the number of philosophical questions that it raises, we have chosen to take a qualitative and interpretive approach. It is based on a critical review of existing literature from a variety of academic fields, including but not limited to politics and international relations, peace and conflict studies, theology, sociology, history, social psychology, security and terrorism studies. It also examines materials that faith-based NGOs have produced on conflict and peacebuilding, and builds on existing research focusing on religion that has been undertaken and funded by DFID to study the roles of civil society and equality in conflict and peacebuilding.

In our analysis of all of these sources, we have devised a methodology that aims to capture the diversity of approaches that have been deployed in the study of the relationship between religion and conflict/peacemaking, and also in the practice of dealing with these issues (i.e. from the perspective of diplomats/policymakers and faith-based organisations). We consider this inclusive methodology necessary to ensure breadth, objectivity and nuance of interpretation in this report, and to ensure that no particular conceptual framework was imposed that might limit or skew the investigation of such a complex and multifaceted topic.

An exhaustive literature review is beyond the scope of this study, so for practical purposes we have organised the review into three sections. The first provides a broad overview of the relationship between religion and conflict. The second examines sources that identify religion as a driver of conflict, while the third looks at sources that provide evidence of cases where religion acts as a driver of peace. In addition, in an effort to cover aspects of the subject that may not have been fully captured in our literature review, we present three case studies. These delve into the details and compare them in situations where religion is normally

considered to be a powerful force promoting violence or peace. The case studies allow the reader to appreciate the specificities of different socio-economic and historical contexts. More importantly, they also allow readers to unravel the bundled concept of religion in these conflicts, identify some of its key features, and examine if and how they intersect with each other as well as with other factors shaping conflict and peacemaking. Specifically, we concentrated on:

a. the type of concepts (religious or not) that emerge in a conflict that is considered to be religious;
b. the actors (religious or not) involved and those that use these concepts;
c. the kind of arguments (religious or not) that are used by the identified actors in deploying the concepts.

This division into these three sections is important as a means of capturing some key nuances of the issues under investigation, which in turn are helpful for elaborating appropriate and tailored policy responses. While many conflicts can be branded as 'religious', the religious factors at play are different in each situation. For example, by focusing one section on 'religious concepts' we can determine if and in what ways a religious claim is central to a war (e.g. Islamic State wants to establish and strengthen its Caliphate), or how a religious concept is borrowed by a non-religious cause (e.g. a nationalist fight where what is at stake is not 'religious rule' but control of territory and resources by a particular ethnic or national group, as in the case of the Yugoslav conflicts).

At the level of 'actors' we can distinguish what kinds of people or groups are involved in a conflict that is considered 'religious', whether they are religious or secular leaders, individuals or communities, male or female. The assumption here is that there are situations where religious concepts/claims may not be central to a conflict and yet the conflict is considered to be 'religious' because prominent religious figures are involved. Similarly, there may be situations where non-religious personalities appropriate religious concepts to help them implement their plans. Finally, by focusing a third section on arguments we aim to consider the type of rationale used by religious or non-religious actors that may deploy either religious or non-religious concepts. By applying simultaneously the three levels of analysis, we are able to portray the degree to which religion is relevant to a particular situation, and thus to identify targeted policy responses. The hope is that such an exercise that breaks down a very complex situation by analysing these

factors could be of particular use for those civil servants and policy- and decision-makers that are grappling with the dilemmas of responding swiftly to crises with a religious dimension, whether at home or abroad.

The case studies provide snapshots of conflicts in three different regions of the world where the role that religion may have played is disputed. Using the analytical framework above, each case examines what aspects of religion, if any, have been factors in causing, maintaining, preventing or resolving conflictual situations and violence. The choice of case studies is selective, and not representative of all possible typologies of conflicts and all religions in the world. However, we have included cases that involve three different religious traditions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism) – albeit all from the same Abrahamic family – and three regions that are often viewed as hubs for ethnic conflicts: the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans (see Wolff 2006). We also focussed on covering a range of configurations of conflict; the countries selected have distinct histories, socio-economic characteristics, institutional capacity, and are in different positions vis-à-vis Western powers and European history. They are also significant in that they offer examples of conflicts at different stages (ongoing in Israel-Palestine; officially ended in Bosnia and in Mali, although tensions between communities persist) and involving both inter-faith tensions (Israel-Palestine, Bosnia-Herzegovina) and intra-faith ones (Mali, and to a certain extent also Palestine and Israel, if we consider the split between Muslims supporting Hamas and Muslims supporting Fatah, and the array of Jewish movements and parties holding disparate views).

Finally, despite their specific local origins, these conflicts all have an international dimension in common, namely international aid or the intervention of international troops, and also because they can have repercussions on faith communities abroad).

4. Literature review

'[C]onflict and violence often have a religious dimension, whether they occur between adherents of different faith traditions or rivals within a faith tradition. Religion may play a role as a marker of identity, a mobilizing device, a basis for rationalizing violent behaviour or a source of values on which to base peace-building and reconciliation. The relationships between religious and other key actors, especially in the state, are complex. Religious leaders may play important roles in instigating or preventing violence, and in either sustaining bad feeling or attempting to prevent a re-occurence. The various organizational forms associated with religious traditions may provide a basis for mobilization, give humanitarian assistance during the emergency, assist longer term recovery and build peaceful (or confrontational) relationships in the longer term'. (Best and Rakodi 2011, 5)

For a long time, mainstream publications on conflict and peace studies, as well as those on international relations, tended to ignore the subject of 'religion'. However, prolific literature that addresses the *relationship* between religion, peace, conflict and diplomacy began to emerge during the 1990s. Much of it was contradictory, often written from a religious perspective by individuals with a religious background. But much of it was also inspired by universalist thinking, analysing the bridges built by religions across societies and throughout history, without neglecting the divisive power of religious discourse. Thus, this report devotes substantial attention to this literature. In addition, our broad understanding of the notion of conflict has led us to incorporate in this study a section addressing the topic of what is generally called 'religious terrorism'.

4.1. Religion as a driver of conflict

Religion is often seen as a key cause of conflict, both in individual societies and on the international scene. While the proponents of this

viewpoint are numerous, one scholarly figure ought to be remembered as the central point of reference for this argument. Samuel Huntington (1993; 1997), borrowing partly on an idea put forward by British-American historian, Bernard Lewis (1990), became the most prominent voice claiming that religious and cultural identities would be the main driver of international conflict in the new world order following the end of the Cold War. He argued that although the nation state would remain the most powerful actor in the international arena, the 'clash of civilizations' would become the new force fuelling conflict. His categorisation of the world into nine different civilisations is based mostly along religious lines. He contends that conflicts can occur both on a local level within a state with groups belonging to different civilisations, or among neighbouring states ('fault-line conflicts'); and also on a global level between and among states that belong to different civilisations ('core-state conflicts'). He argues that civilisations compete on the international scene, and that this competition can turn into violent conflict, most importantly because of the different religions that have formed these civilisations. Conflict lines on the international scene, he maintains, are primarily those between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world, which have shaped the history of conflict for centuries (Huntington 1993, 1997).

As powerful and representative of the current status of international affairs as this may seem, such a primordialist view of religion does not promote convincing discussions that take into account aspects of Islam or Muslim societies that could determine conflicts and international affairs today. This kind of argument also fails to appreciate how Islam becomes intertwined with other factors, which might better explain conflict dynamics inside and between neighbouring countries and also within entire regions. Most importantly, the Lewis-Huntington argument can be criticised for being based on weak history and for underestimating or ignoring deep fault lines that have existed within and among denominations of the same religious family.

Besides examining religion as a driver of violent conflict, scholars have also been concerned with the extent to which religion may indirectly foster or tolerate violence. The nexus between faith and conflict is thus addressed by referring to religion as a cause of structural violence through discrimination and exclusions. This line of reasoning is supported by the fact that religious identities can erect potent boundaries and provoke fierce confrontation within a group when there is excessive emphasis on claims by some that they belong and adhere to or are protecting a set of absolute truths. Anthropologists often examine

how, within and across societies, religion is used to create differences among people. Political scientists argue that religion, through its inherent distinction between an in-group and an out-group, can lead to structural violence both within societies and on the international scene. Urging that we take into consideration the existence of various levels of violence, Galtung (1969) argues that religion is often the source of 'cultural violence', a form of violence that is used to legitimise other forms of violence. Without seeking to establish a direct cause and effect between religion and violence, Galtung shows how different factors such as religion, ideology, language and ethnicity become intertwined to shape ways of thinking and behaviours that can lead to situations of exclusion, discrimination and eventually also physical violence.

Another way of establishing an indirect relationship between religion and violence is by focusing on the inaction of religious groups. Boulding (1986), for example, argues that religions have not succeeded in using their potential for peacebuilding, and thus they have lent support to states when they are at war. While religion has not ignited a conflict, it has worked as 'an obstacle to peace'.

The majority of experts on religion and politics, nationalism, and conflict and peace, however, concur that conflicts are usually characterised by a set of motivations and their interactions, and thus an analysis of conflict factors cannot be limited to only one of these dimensions, be it religious, political, historical, or economic (see, for example, Berdal 2003, 492; Laitin 2007; Mayall 1990; Toft 2007).

The Iraqi-born British historian Elie Kedourie (1960) became famous for his controversial view of nationalism as a Western invention. He regarded nationalism as the greatest evil of the twentieth century, the export of which was particularly catastrophic in the Middle East. While likening nationalism to religion because of its despotic and divisive quali-ties, Kedourie did not, however, attribute the emergence of nationalism to religion; indeed he regarded the two as being essentially opposed.

Scholars with expertise on the Indian subcontinent (among them: Talbot 2007; Bhatt 2001; Mayall and Srinivasan 2009; Waseem 2010) argue for more nuanced readings of the apparent inter- and intra-state religious conflicts affecting India and Pakistan. This means examining central elements in the emergence of violent attacks on religious minorities and on sacred sites. Among those are the historical legacy (from both during and before the colonial era), attempts to elaborate modern

(secular) nationalist projects, weak state institutions, and blatant competition for political power among and within ethnic groups and competing religious and political leaders. It is against the background of these factors and in the changing context as societies feel the pressures of modernity, globalisation and multicultural society, that violence becomes morally and religiously sanctioned, argues Indian psychoanalyst Sundhir Kakar (1996).

Taking into account economic factors, a global study coordinated by Oxford professor Frances Stewart (2008) reaches similar conclusions. It centres on the hypothesis that violent conflict in multicultural societies occurs in the presence of major horizontal inequalities among culturally defined groups. The argument is that when cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups, this can cause deep resentment that may in turn lead to violent struggles. This builds on the work of Gurr (1993) and Collier et al. (2003), whose theories stress the centrality of mobilisation based on group identity and poverty and deprivation in conflict. It also confirms the finding by Fearon and Laitin (1996) that multicultural societies do not generate conflict just because they are multicultural. It is rather the combination of multiple factors that ignites conflicts.

Wolff (2006) proposes comprehensive elaboration on these factors. He usefully distinguishes between 'underlying' (structural, political, economic, social, cultural, perceptual) and 'proximate' causes of conflict (i.e. the role of leaders and their strategic choices, both domestically and in neighbouring countries). Underlying causes are 'necessary, but not sufficient conditions for the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence' (Wolff 2006, 68). The 'proximate' causes, by contrast, enable or accelerate conflicts in situations 'in which all or some of the underlying "ingredi-ents" are present' (Wolff 2006, 70–71). Accepting the existence of this multiplicity of factors leading to multiple configurations thus explains 'why, despite similar basic conditions, not every situation of ethnic ten-sions leads to full-scale civil war' (Wolff 2006, 71). Ethnic conflicts, Wolff argues, are not necessarily always about ethnicity; rather, this is often 'a convenient common denominator to organize a conflict group in the struggle over resources, land, or power […] a convenient mechanism to organize and mobilize people into homogeneous conflict groups willing to fight each other for resources that are at best indirectly linked to their ethnic identity' (Wolff 2006, 64–65). Ethnicity and religion are not synonyms but they frequently overlap. Thus it seems safe to conclude

that religion – as any other factor – can be part of the picture but cannot, alone, be a cause of conflict.

Fox (2003) has demonstrated that self-determination and nationalism are the primary causes of ethnic conflicts, while religious factors can influence the dynamics of the conflict and increase its intensity. Furthermore, religion causes violence only when it is combined with these other factors (Fox 2004b). Fox (2001) specifically examines the role of religion in conflicts in the Middle East and their resulting characteristics, based on the Minorities at Risk dataset and religious factors, and he finds that religion plays a disproportionately important role in ethno-religious conflicts in the region, more so than in non-Middle Eastern states with Muslim majorities. States in the Middle East are also disproportionately more autocratic than in other regions. However, despite the unique importance of religion, Fox argues that the prevalence of religious conflict is not explained by either the Islamic or autocratic character of the states, and in reality the ethno-religious conflicts in the Middle East are not significantly different from similar ethnic struggles around the world. This, he concludes, contradicts Huntington's (1993) notion of Islam's 'bloody borders', as the conflicts in the Middle East are not more violent than other ethnic conflicts. He warns, however, that actions based on Huntington's notion could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a further study also based on the Minorities at Risk dataset, Fox (2004) does argue that religious conflict is more contagious than non-religious conflict; however, only violent conflicts cross borders while non-violent ones do not.

The nature of grievances and demands in a conflict is central to the analyses of Svensson (2007) and Fox (2003). Fox argues that 'when religious issues are important, they will change the dynamics of the conflict', (2003, 125). This can be attributed both to the role of religious institutions within the state and to the way in which religion influences international intervention in ethnic conflict. Internally, religious institutions tend to facilitate a reaction if the grievances have religious importance; however, if they have no religious importance the religious institutions often inhibit protest. With regards to international intervention, Fox maintains that other states are more likely to intervene if they have religious minorities in common and if the conflict is ethno-religious. Using data from international interventions, he shows that Islamic states are most likely to intervene and that Islamic minorities are most likely to benefit from that intervention.

Svensson (2007) argues that across religions, where the grievances or demands are based on explicit religious claims, the negotiated settlement of conflict is less likely to succeed than if there are no religious claims. He demonstrates that the chances for negotiated settlement are not affected if the conflicting parties are from different religious traditions. Svensson's argument is based on data from intra-state armed conflicts between 1989 and 2003, using the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme. He concludes that efforts should be made to prevent conflicting parties from developing their demands in religious terms, given that negotiated settlements are more likely if religious claims are not involved.

Galtung's (2014) theory of the peace potential of religions essentially focuses on the factors that can make religions prone to promoting violence and then extrapolates from these to identify and develop the factors that lend to the potential of religions to maintain or build peace, arguing that the latter can and should be promoted. Although he notes that different religions have different degrees of potential to promote peace, he clearly acknowledges that there is no automatic connection between the belief system of a specific religion and the use of force by its followers. He also rejects the notion of 'religious conflicts', as conflicts are multi-dimensional and complex and cannot usually be reduced to only one causal factor (Galtung 2014, 32). To understand the peace potential of religions, he looks to what extent religions are prone to promote or reject direct violence and structural violence.

With regard to direct violence, Galtung (2014) argues that the idea of 'being a *Chosen People*' and the value of 'aggressive missionarism' built into the core belief system of a religion can lead to direct violence perpetrated by its followers. 'Holy War' and 'Just War' become terms used to justify the use of violence against other people.

He notes that all religions advocate a special relationship with their god(s) and fellow believers, thus creating in-groups and out-groups. However, different religions also have different potential to promote other forms of structural violence, such as economic exploitation and political repression. Galtung cites the example of slavery, which was legitimised in religious terms by some Christians.

Based on this theory, Galtung develops a generalised model of major religions in the world and classifies them according to their inherent potential to reject both direct and structural violence. Most importantly,

he argues that, in general, Hinduism rejects both forms of violence and thus has a large potential for peace. However, Hinduism is less than explicit about rejecting direct (physical) violence, and it also tolerates and promotes structural (cultural) violence through its caste system. Islam rejects a societal caste system (structural violence), but is prone to promote direct violence through its doctrine obliging all its followers to defend the faith. Other religions, in particular Christianity, are predisposed to promote both structural and direct violence. Galtung clearly accepts that this theory is a general one, and that there are many possibilities to cite counter-examples. However, he uses his theory mainly to justify the need for more dialogue, both intra-religious and inter-faith, which can promote the peace potential of religions (Galtung 1997).

In the light of the research evidence presented so far, it is clear why many – if not all – scholars of religion and politics subscribe to the expression 'ambivalence of the sacred'; religion itself is also neither good nor bad, but its power can be used to accelerate violence (bad) or promote peace (good) across societies (Appleby 2000; Haynes 2011; Philpott 2007a). Trying to distinguish between 'religious' and 'secular' violence is not only useless but also dangerous (Cavanaugh 2009) since, 'privileging religious explanations also serves to depoliticise and securitise in the political realm' (Jackson and Gunning 2011, 382). The consensus seems to be that while religion should not be taken for granted as the main driving force of violence and conflict, it cannot be excluded from accounts of international relations, impacting both interstate relations and domestic politics (see among others Fox 2004a; Thomas 2005).

4.2. Islam and faith-based terrorism

In his response to Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' article (1993), Edward Said (2001) argued that not only political leaders, but even academics can fall into the trap of simplification by basing their arguments on a perception of static, rather than dynamic relations between social and religious groups. He points out that the use of labels for groups, rather than groups themselves, are driving factors of conflict. For him, the political and academic discourse on religious identities that distinguishes between 'the West' and 'Islam' promotes and amplifies conflict (Said 2001). Cavanaugh (2009) echoes this by arguing that the prevalent discourse of the violent force of religion is a myth that has been constructed by Western societies to legitimise their existence;

and this myth is used to justify violence perpetrated by the West against Islamic societies.

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Islam has been centre stage when it comes to research on the links between religion and conflict. Popular commentaries facilely point to the ideological sources of conflict, maintaining that the Qur'an is inherently violent and that all forms of Islamism are nothing but an antecedent of violence, terrorism and totalitarianism. Indeed, a dataset of suicide attacks from 1981 to March 2008 shows not only an escalation of these from 2000 onwards, but also that 'most contemporary suicide attacks can be attributed to jihadist groups' (Moghadam 2009), while until recently the evidence (from a study taking into account data up to 2003) was that secular and religious groups had been responsible for a roughly equal number of suicide actions (Pape 2003). Several scholars, including Moghadam (2009) and Khosrokhavar (2005) have shown how key the religious ideology of martyrdom is to explaining this sudden rise of Islam-motivated suicide missions. Yet other experts on Islam and terrorism play down – without ignoring – the ideological component. In their view, the escalation of violence carried out in the name of Islam must be attributed to a combination of factors where contextual variables, individual psychologies and opportunity structures in a society are central (Hafez 2003; Jackson and Gunning 2011; Mandaville 2007; Wiktorowicz 2005a). Looking at entire processes rather than examining individual factors, ideas or actors appears to be more productive in capturing the shifting role of religion, and of Islam more specifically, in the current challenges of conflict and terrorism that the international community faces.

On the theme of radicalisation, biographical studies of convicted terrorists have been carried out and there is no conclusive evidence demonstrating if or how religion plays a role or showing what the typical profile of the would-be radical, and his or her path to radicalisation, is. Rather, the literature urges us to see these dynamics against the backdrop of societal and global transformations and their challenges to individual identities (see Roy 2004; Wiktorowicz 2005a; Coolsaet 2011; Schmid 2013). For instance, after researching the trial evidence of the first convicted Islamist terrorist in Australia, Aly and Striegher (2012, 850) come to the conclusion that 'religion plays a far lesser role in radicalization toward violent extremism than the [counterterrorism] policy response contends'.

Certainly, Islamic State and other jihadist groups legitimise themselves through a repertoire of 'ideas that have broad resonance among Muslim-majority populations' (Hamid 2014). But the fact that radical jihadi groups resort to Islamic sources to justify their violent acts cannot, on its own, prove that Islam is inherently violent. Rather, as Wiktorowicz (2005b, 94) argues, it demonstrates their tactical ability to frame violence in Islamic terms, which is possible thanks to a gradual 'erosion of critical constraints used to limit warfare and violence in classical Islam'. Many, therefore, have urged moderate Muslims to pre-empt this manipulation of Islamic knowledge. Yet, Moghadam (2009, 78) warns, we have to recognise that the factors involved in this type of terrorism are multiple and diverse and that 'the battle against suicide attacks will not be won by exposing the inconsistencies of Salafi jihad alone'.

Following Gellner (see section 2.1.) we could argue that the central problem is not the religious truth itself, but the exclusivist mindset of those appropriating and disseminating it. Similarly, for Berman (2007), the origin of conflict lies not in religion, but rather in extremist thinking, be it radical Islam/Islamism (which he calls 'Muslim totalitarianism'), Christian religious fundamentalism, fascism, secular dictatorships, or extreme authoritarianism. During the twentieth century, violent conflict on the international scene was caused by such extremist thinking, rather than by religion *per se*. It is also important to remember that adherence to strict religious practices or conservative views is no guarantee that fundamentalism has been embraced (Brekke 2012). And while it has often been the case that violent actions have stemmed from fundamentalist beliefs, no automatic mechanism has been identified whereby fundamentalism entails violence (Almond et al.2002).

Terrorism studies experts often seem to look at religion through a narrow lens that focuses only on ideology. Rapoport (2002) was central in popularising the term 'religious' (or faith-based) terrorism with his theory of the 'waves' of terrorism, while others categorised it as 'new' (Laqueur 1999; Neumann 2009). Juergensmeyer (2003) warns against the cosmologies of violence emanating from religion, and Hoffman (2006) too stresses the powerful role of religious narratives and the position of religious leaders in legitimising acts of violence. However these scholars are also careful not to demonise religion *per se,* and they all acknowledge too that other factors need to be taken into consideration. For instance, according to Rapoport (2002), the latest – current – wave of religious terrorism includes features of previous waves of terrorism (i.e. anarchy, self-determination,

socialism). Even someone like Juergensmeyer (2003), who believes that religion has provided the motivation, world view and organisation for either conducting or supporting acts of terrorism, acknowledges that other contextual variables also need to be addressed in each case being examined.

Based on a quantitative comparison of Islam-related terrorist attacks between 1968 and 2005, Piazza (2009, 63) accepts that 'religiously-motivated terrorist groups are indeed more prone than are secular groups to committing attacks that result in greater casualties'. He shows that in that period 'Islamist groups were responsible for 93.6 per cent of all terrorist attacks by religiously-oriented groups and were responsible for 86.9 per cent of all casualties inflicted by religiously-oriented terrorist groups' (Piazza 2009, 64). However he demystifies the assumption that Islamist terrorism is more 'lethal' than other types of terrorism, by pointing out the constellations of ideologies that fall under the nebulous term 'Islamism' and that besides religious ideologies and practice, one should also focus on groups' 'organisational features' and 'goal structures'. On the basis of this type of analysis, he argues, only Al Qaeda and similarly structured groups are likely to be seriously dangerous.

Many have also asked whether economic factors have a role to play when people engage in terrorism and in faith-based political violence. Research by Krueger (2007) as well as by Piazza (2006) and by Canetti et al. (2010) has found no evidence that poverty or loss of economic resources are predictors of engagement in terrorism. However, Canetti et al. (2010) did find that distress and loss of 'psychological' (rather than economic) resources do have a correlation with religion in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Piazza, on the other hand, argues that state repression and party politics are important predictors of terrorism (2006) and that countries with minority groups experiencing economic discrimination have a significant likelihood of being exposed to domestic terrorist attacks (2011).

Another line of interpretation puts aside religious values and beliefs to focus instead on particular individuals in privileged/elite positions within particular religious traditions and communities. Once again, the argument is not that religion itself leads to violence, but that it is manipulated by opportunistic and power-thirsty (faith or political) leaders who appropriate religious language for their own ends. Toft (2007, 103) has named this phenomenon 'religious outbidding'; that is, 'elites attempt to outbid each other to enhance their religious credentials

and thereby gain the support they need to counter an immediate
threat'. Typically religious language is used to cultivate the identity of
those mobilised and to reinforce out-group markers of the 'other'. This
process, Stewart (2009) notes, does not happen all at once, but takes
place over a long period of time. Apart from using religion for grand
causes, it is often the case that leaders resort to it to promote their own
underlying interests and so again it is not religion *per se* that contributes
to conflict but rather the way it is used within societies.

Following this line of analysis, Toft shows that compared with either
Christianity or Hinduism, Islam was greatly over-represented in civil
wars in the twentieth century. She argues that political leaders in the
Islamic world used religion to lend themselves greater legitimacy,
and thus increase their capacity to mobilise the population and
strengthen their power base (Toft 2007). De Juan (2015) arrives at
a similar conclusion in his study of religious elites in intrastate conflict
escalation. Besides providing 'quotidian norm setting', religious
leaders 'communicate specific narratives and shape the religious
self-conception of the believers' and are also crucial in the 'constitution
of radical religious conflict interpretations' (De Juan 2015, 764). His work
examines 'the motives of religious elites to call for violence' rather than
'the structural prerequisites of their success'. Using case studies from
Thailand, Iraq and the Philippines, he shows that 'competing religious
elites try to mobilize their followers against their rivals to establish
their predominance within their religious community' (De Juan 2015,
765). He also notes that in this competition 'for material and dogmatic
supremacy', these religious elites become inclined to promote violence,
establish alliances with political elites and thus become triggers of
intra-religious and intrastate conflicts (De Juan 2015, 762). Yet, the
scholar insists, religion is not itself the cause of the conflict.

In his acclaimed book, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, Appleby (2000)
goes beyond arguing the obvious, i.e. that religious texts can provide
justifications for either promoting peace or war, pointing out that both
violent extremism and non-violent movements can be religious. Instead,
his interest is in the factors that cause religion to be used to legitimise
violence. For him, it is 'religious illiteracy', a lack of understanding of
religious writings and their interpretations by the common people,
which makes it possible for reckless political and religious leaders to
manipulate populations to achieve their violent objectives. At the same
time, Appleby sees the inherent ambivalence of religion as fundamen-
tally positive because it provides opportunities for peace promotion.

4.3. Religion and state failure/collapse

There appears to be a strong correlation between the emergence of religious conflict and situations of state failure or collapse. Fox (2007), for instance, tracks state failures between 1960 and 2004, identifying the shifts in the role of religion and state failure. Using data from the State Failure dataset, he identifies an increase in state failure related to religion as a proportion of all state failures during this period, and finds that it became the most common kind of state failure in 2002, after which he identifies religion as an element in the majority of all conflicts that relate directly to state failure.

Since 11 September 2001, state failure and state collapse have been associated with terrorism and labelled as the 'Orthodox Failed States Narrative', which developed based on the experience of the rise of the Taliban in the collapsed state of Afghanistan (Verhoeven 2009). Several studies argue that there was an increase in Islamic extremism in the state failures experienced in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia in the 2000s. However, they also differ in how much the various authors emphasise the role of religion as a cause of increased extremism and offer different explanations for the phenomenon.

Mwangi (2012), for example, identifies the combination of state collapse and Islamism in Somalia as accounting for the legitimacy gained by Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujaheddin (Al-Shabaab), a non-state armed extremist group that provided local governance in Somalia, confirming the fears that arise from the Orthodox Failed State Narrative. He portrays Islamism not as a theological construct but as a political ideology that helps provide answers to the contemporary social and political challenges facing the Muslim world. Mwangi argues that radical Islam is most powerful as a mobilising tool when Muslim populations feel threatened by secular or Christian states. Following Hoehne (2009), he links the rise and radicalisation of Al-Shabaab with the joint American-Ethiopian anti-terror strategy, as well as the difficulties the Somali people faced under conditions of state collapse, which left the country with no central authority. Devlin-Foltz and Ozkececi-Taner (2010, 89) also consider the case of Somalia and while they too found a correlation between 'state collapse and an increase in Islamists' appeal and influence', they go on to argue that, 'state collapse does not necessarily generate more violent ideologies … rather [it] allows those committed to violence under all circumstances to allay more moderate elements'. They conclude that political opportunities make violence a 'normal and

effective' means of political competition (2010, 105), and when secular groups employ violence, moderate Islamist groups may move to view violence as necessary and align themselves with a wider range of Islamists, which can increase the influence of more extreme factions. However, Islamist groups in both Somalia and Iraq had also to recognise the non-ideological interests of the population to gain legitimacy in those countries.

Other scholars are even more dismissive of the Islamist terrorism threat in Somalia. For Bryden (2003, 25), an analyst with the International Crisis Group, the most persuasive feature that attracts followers to Al-Itixaad, the group supposed to be Al Qaeda's main branch in the country, 'is its financial clout: few Somalis are attracted by the movement's theological pedantry or its proclivity to violence'. Moreover, Islamists are the last addition to a 'witches' brew of ethnic, religious, and geopolitical tensions' in Somalia and thus have to compete with domestic, regional and foreign forces in a 'crowded political arena' (Bryden 2003, 26). Thus, he concludes, 'Somalia poses a more concrete and immediate threat to international security as a cockpit for regional interests than as a link in the chain of transnational terrorism' (Bryden 2003, 26). In fact, as Shinn (2003, 80) commented, the 'underlying conditions' of East Africa and the Horn 'contribute directly to conflict and the use of terrorist tactics'; the region has porous borders and readily available weapons, and poverty and social injustice are widespread.

In the long history of tribal confrontations affecting the Sudan (and South Sudan), religion is often said to play a central role. However, Islamic identity has proved not to be a fixed or constant marker of Sudanese communal tensions. Instead, it has been tactically played (i.e. taken up and also in turn abandoned) under particular circumstances by different groups and individuals (Jok 2007). Identities, we know, are never static and are always socially constructed, but this appears to be especially true for Sudan, where the notions of racial, ethnic and religious identity are particularly fluid (Jok 2007).

Cramer and Goodhand (2002) are also interested in how those vying for authority seek to gain legitimacy in failed or collapsed states. They identify three methods that historically have been used for gaining legitimacy in Afghanistan, namely tribalism, Islam and nationalism. They explain that many Afghans perceive the nation as a religious community and therefore during times of crisis, the notion of jihad has been used to mobilise the population. They track the historical use of Islam in

the development of the state and argue that the emergence of the Taliban was part of a process of different forms of Islamic influence in Afghanistan's history. Radicalisation of Islamic groups in the 2000s was a means of gaining legitimacy in response to the crisis of political Islam (Roy cited in Cramer & Goodhand 2002, 903).

Verhoevan (2009, 419) presents another dimension of the rise of Islamic extremism in failed states, arguing that in the case of Somalia, external factors had the greatest impact. He argues that US-led fears of an 'Al Qaeda safe-haven' forming in Somalia led to 'a self-fulfilling prophecy'. He argues that America's fear that the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) were Somalia's 'neo-Taliban', caused them to create conditions, through the American-Ethiopian axis, which pushed the moderate nationalist militants who were actually succeeding in creating order and stability, towards the radical, 'real (inter)national jihadis'. (2009, 407). Verhoeven then concludes that the international community must move away from the terrorism/failed state nexus and conceptualise 'state collapse as a series of painful but essential processes of "creative destruction"'.

Hossein-Zadeh (2005, 2) also deems external factors important in the link between failed states and terrorism, arguing that it was Western imperialism and Western policies in the Middle East region that caused the Muslim world to turn to conservative religious leaders 'as a source of defiance', against the Western powers, rather than the nature of Islam or the 'clash of civilisations' theory. He assesses Western intervention efforts and development programmes in the Middle East, arguing that at times when these programmes met the hopes and aspirations of the people, an Islamic alternative was not embraced. However, when the people were demoralised and disappointed, an Islamic revival was nurtured instead. The study therefore disputes the proposition that Islam is inherently confrontational and claims that socioeconomic and geopolitical policies account for the reactions of the Muslim people. His conclusion, however, that Islam is not more violent than other religions does not follow from his study, but the historical account of the factors that influenced the Islamic revival is useful in highlighting the peripheral role of religion.

While all of this evidence shows the presence of religious factors or actors in failed, weak or collapsing states, there seems to be a consensus among experts that the relationship between religion, state failure and violence is not unidirectional. Indeed, for many, the structural absence or malfunctioning of institutions, the prevailing cultures of fear, as well

as regional dynamics of instability, pave the way for extremist religious ideologies and ethnic rivalries to take over, rather than the other way round (see among others Fearon and Laitin 2003; Wolff 2006, 2011).

4.4. Religion as a driver of peace

Academic and policy-oriented literature on religion and international affairs is rich in publications arguing that religion is a useful – if not necessary – instrument for achieving peace. More specifically, religious beliefs/values, religious leaders and faith-based organisations are thought to have huge potential in promoting peace in any society and/ or in the international arena. Scholars in the US (Johnston and Sampson 1994; Johnston 2003; Appleby 2001; Gopin 2000; Smock 2002; Shah et al. 2012; Coward and Smith 2004; Little 2007) seem to be leading this school of thought. In fact, 'faith-based' diplomacy was invented in the US (see for example the journal *The Brandywine Review of Faith & International Affairs*). The US Institute of Peace has developed substantial resources for interfaith projects and publications, and the US government recently created an office for 'religious engagement' in the State Department (Johnston and Cox 2003; Mandaville and Silvestri 2015). However, some important works in this vein are emerging in Europe too (e.g. Thomas 2005; Galtung and MacQueen 2008). In addition to the academic literature, numerous faith groups and NGOs are also mobilising and producing policy reports to promote and enhance the contribution by religious actors to development and reconciliation.

The camp of those arguing that the religious dimension needs to be included in conflict resolution work is vast, but different authors highlight different reasons, aspects and priorities for this. Hence we have divided the following sections according to themes.

Religious beliefs and values
In *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, Appleby (2000) emphasises that ethics and ethical convictions, as expressed through religious beliefs, are main drivers for peace. Regardless of which religion may be prevalent, the ethical power of religion can help to unite divided societies. For Thomas (2005) too, religion has a role to play, especially as it can facilitate a dialogue about 'virtues' for shaping a better society. However, while acknowledging this and the useful characteristics of faith-based networks and NGOs, he warns against a reductionist approach, in which an instrumentalist perspective of religion and a logic of problem-solving

prevail while the need to address other issues and involve other actors is downplayed or discounted.

References to the Christian contribution to non-violence and peacebuilding are abundant. The key concepts are reconciliation, which is based on God's own reconciliation with a sinful humanity, the powerful model of Jesus' self-sacrifice to redeem humanity, and his invitation to 'turn the other cheek', and finally his attention to the poor and the marginalised that encourages Christians to care about the dignity of the human person. In Christianity, there is a close relationship between social justice and reconciliation; one cannot happen without the other. This helps to explain the important work of Christian denominations in mediation and in promoting transitional justice (see Philpott 2007b). Christian values are also at the heart of the Western conception of human rights, even though a parallel, at times competitive, secular account exists. In the aftermath of World War II, the work of Christian denominations and the ecumenical movement were important pillars for the peaceful reconstruction of Europe and in the establishment of the European Communities (see Thomas 2005; Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006; Leustean 2014), even though the project of European integration later took a highly secular and liberal character, focused mainly on economic and political reasoning.

The majority of case studies in textbooks on religion and politics refer to mediation work or interfaith activities promoted by Christian denominations, such as those done in South Africa with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in Mozambique with Sant'Egidio, in the US with Martin Luther King, and also the courageous work in Nigeria, the Middle East and the Balkans of various priests (see Thomas 2005; Little 2007; Smock 2002; Lederach 1996, 1997). Buttry (1994) elaborates on the Christian heritage of non-violence and peacebuilding. He argues that Christian teaching and values provide the foundations for 'Christian peacemaking', i.e. Christianity provides a whole set of non-violent responses to conflicts worldwide, both within and between societies (for a similar argument see also Friesen 1986). The work of Sampson and Lederach (2000) is often regarded as landmark research in demonstrating the pioneer role played by Mennonite communities in the history of their non-violent contributions to peacemaking. In addition, Quakers and Jehovah's Witnesses, two groups that are part of the Christian family, have also made explicit their pacifist stance and rejection of violence (MacCulloch 2010).

Biggar (2013), on the other hand, provides a thought-provoking and profound analysis of Christian justifications for the morality and even the necessity of war, based on a thorough review of the long tradition of the just war theory in Christian thinking, combined with modern insights into international relations and the realities of war. By doing so, he aligns himself with the great Christian philosophers behind the just war theory, and adapts it to the modern world. He argues that war can sometimes be a necessity and that therefore, the Christian just war theory ultimately helps to end conflict and promote peace.

Muslim scholar Abu-Nimer (2003) argued that Islam is based on fundamental human values encoded in the Qur'an, related religious writings and the Islamic tradition. Based on those values, Muslim societies have developed a considerable set of non-violent tools for conflict resolution and peacebuilding experiences. Traditional Arab-Muslim mechanisms for dispute resolution include third-party mediation and arbitration in any form of social conflict. Such mechanisms also included traditional reconciliation methods, based on the value of forgiveness and public repentance.

Abu-Nimer (2003) also looks at how Islam developed a theory of *de facto* just war principles, both referring to *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*: 'War is permissible in self-defense, and under well-defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour (but not relentlessly), but only to restore peace and freedom of worship of Allah. In any case, strict limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, nor trees and crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms'. At the same time, Islam has a tradition of non-violent resistance, also cited by Abu-Nimer (2003), which is exemplified by peaceful protests against British colonial rule in Egypt in 1919, the 1948 Iraqi uprising, the Iran Revolution in 1978–79, and the Sudanese insurrection of 1985.

Social justice is a fundamental concept in Islam. It has been a central tenet of the Muslim Brotherhood's mobilisation, and even Al Qaeda has tactically justified its attacks by elaborating on this Islamic concept, combining it with apparent Third Worldist claims. Abu-Nimer (2003) shows how social justice and other Islamic values can help promote peaceful conflict resolution: 'According to Islam, a nation cannot survive without making fair and adequate arrangements for the sustenance and welfare of all the poor, underprivileged, and destitute members of every community. The ultimate goal would be the elimination of their

suffering and poverty'. It can thus be argued that Islam is well suited to fighting against structural violence. Islamic values, he explains, are based on universal dignity of humanity, the equality of all races, ethnic groups, and the sacredness of human life and forgiveness are values that underpin any form of positive conflict resolution and help to build peaceful societies (Abu-Nimer 2003).

On a similar note, Sachedina (2000, 20) highlighted the 'centrality of Koranic teachings about religious and cultural pluralism as a divinely ordained principle of peaceful coexistence among human societies'. His work is a classic detailing of the human, non-violent values in Islam. Said et al. (2001) presented a valuable collection of essays exploring both Islamic teachings and practice on peaceful conflict resolution. They argued that Islam promotes, in theory and in practice, the values of justice, harmony and absence of war. Said et al also made a case for Islamic approaches to peacebuilding (Said et al 2002), and Kalin (2005) examined the concept of peace in the Islamic tradition to provide a contrast to the focus in the literature on the legal aspects of declaring jihad. He identified four contexts: the metaphysical-spiritual in which 'salam', as one of the names of God, is assigned a substantive value; the philosophical-theological context in which the question of evil is addressed; the political-legal context, which is the locus of the legal discussions of war; and the socio-cultural context, which looks at the Muslim experiences of diversity with other faiths. Kalin (2005) concludes that Muslim communities must start addressing a 'proper ethics of peace' to assist in resolving of ethnic or sectarian conflicts in Muslim societies.

Galtung and MacQueen (2008) analyse in detail the contribution to peacemaking by Asian religions such as Buddhism or Taoism, with reference to Galtung's general theory of mentioned above. By presenting the ideas of 18 eminent Buddhist leaders, Chappell (1999) enlarged the understanding of Buddhist peacemaking traditions. Starting from and underlining the central role of achieving inner peace, he emphasises that Buddhism has a strong track record of providing peaceful answers to social and political violence, in particular through its worldwide grassroots work, and points to the responsibility that Buddhists have for promoting peace. However, others critique Buddhism for being too much of an individualistic tradition that does not really stress the importance of being at peace with the others, and note that it has missed opportunities to achieve peaceful solutions, in Sri Lanka and Tibet for example (Neumaier 2004).

According to Berling (2004), Confucianism has the potential to work for the common good, thanks to its notion of harmony and its stress on moral values and rituals. The works of Johnston (2003) and Little (2007) also contain case studies on Asia as well as other regions.

In their collection of essays, Polner and Goodman (1994) provide a first-hand account of the traditions of non-violent conflict resolution in Judaism. Similarly, Steinberg (2000) argued that there are specific Jewish approaches to conflict prevention and mediation, a theme also developed comprehensively by Marc Gopin, a prominent author and practitioner in the field of conflict resolution, who specialises on the Middle East. Gopin's (2000) central argument is that while the world's major religions, in this case the three monotheistic ones, have historically and until today contributed significantly to violence, they can also be a key source of peace and conflict resolution, and their commitment towards peace can be identified in both classical theology and in modern interpretations. He notes, for example, that in Judaism there is the biblical concept of God fighting battles for the Children of Israel and Rabbinic analyses of *milhemet hova* (obligatory war) and *milhemet mitzvah* (war as fulfilment of a positive deed before God), but alongside those are the Rabbinic belief in 'shalom' (peace) and 'pikuach nefesh' (preservation of life). In Islam, the Qur'an identifies jihad (holy war), but later interpretations split this into state jihad and religious jihad. There are also both peaceful and violent interpretations of the Mahdi tradition of a prophesied redeemer in Islam. Gopin highlights the complexities within all these religions in the way they conceive war, violence, peace and nonviolence.

Gopin (2000) bases his critique of Western diplomacy on its ignorance of religious values and practices. He argues that religion and religious values need to be merged with traditional Western conflict resolution policies and practices, and that religious values, such as empathy, nonviolence and sanctity of human life, should be used to frame the language of conflict resolution. To achieve this, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of religious values, institutions and practices, particularly the ways in which they have traditionally and historically approached issues of war and peace and the complex, variability of interpretations within each of the religions. Gopin cautions that the use of religious values and strategies of conflict resolution will be heavily dependent on context, potentially different each time enemies interact. He emphasises, therefore, the need to work with those involved in the

conflict rather than imposing a particular, albeit religiously educated, view from above (Gopin 2000).

Gopin's work examines the issue of how religions approach 'Others' outside their faith, and both the difficulties and opportunities this presents for conflict resolution. For him, the concept of universal values and homogeneity are not part of the religious traditions, which draw important distinctions between believers and non-believers. He argues that this is not a negative or necessarily conflictual aspect of religion, but a natural part of human identity. Gopin maintains, however, that what is significant is how the boundaries are negotiated and the extent to which 'prosocial interpersonal values of religious tradition exists', as opposed to antisocial values (2000, 80). He also notes that in all religions there is rarely a call to kill on a massive scale, although the existence of proselytisers, those who have a theological issue with the Other, is a problem for his argument that religions promote conflict resolution. He suggests that there is a need to find a balanced world view that does not necessitate the destruction of the Other, and also a need for significantly more consideration and recommendations on how such religious groups can be approached.

In his conclusion, Gopin provides a broad list of recommendations for religious figures and for policymakers, both globally and regionally. Particularly salient for policymakers are his suggestions that there is a need: to support religious leaders and those with important standing to move towards peace in the face of criticisms of heresy; for policymakers to understand the fears of religious groups, both actual and remembered ones, and develop policies that confront them; to become familiar with the potential effects of polices on the religious lives of communities; and, to allow religious constructs as well as religious groups needing to be part of the process of conflict resolution to guide policies, without giving them overwhelming power.

As Fox (2000b) noted, despite his insightful contributions, Gopin (2000) unfortunately centres his study on the monotheistic religions, thus overlooking the potential contributions of other religions. Furthermore, much of Gopin's book is focused on the internal conflict between religious and secular Jews in Israel and on the ways to overcome this, rather than on interreligious conflict. Gopin did suggest applying to interreligious conflict the 'Mahoket' concept, a traditional form of conflict resolution within Judaism, in which there is mutual respect between conflicting parties who 'agree-to-disagree'. Yet this does not

seem to comply with his own emphasis on the need to treat each conflictual context separately and approach each situation according to its unique nature and the particular hermeneutical engagement of the religious actors involved.

Gopin's concluding remarks, unlike his practically grounded and broad recommendations, provide an overly idealistic world view, in which he argues that militant religion will only disappear once 'global civilisation develops into a serious human community with a set of high ideals that are perceived and actually are substantive and attractive from a spiritual and ethical point of view' (2000, 223). Whether or when this will happen is impossible to say, but his theological observations and practical recommendations do show the potential for the successful incorporation of religion into conflict resolution.

In another work, Gopin (2001) examines the role of forgiveness in conflict resolution (as opposed to justice) and approaches this question by studying the concept of forgiveness in several religions, a theme also covered by Helmick and Petersen (2001) in an edited volume. They argue that forgiveness as a tool in conflict resolution can be effective only if it is used to cross religious boundaries and is transferred from the individual to the political arena. Hadley (2001) expanded on this analysis by examining how restorative justice finds expression in religious traditions worldwide.

Religious leaders and religious organisations

A rich strand of research – including a number of works commissioned by DFID – has examined the role of faith-based organisations and religious leaders in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts through mediation. Faith-based mediation is seen as an important contributor to conflict resolution and peace. However, no work sees this as a complete substitute to traditional diplomatic avenues. The pioneering work of Johnston and Sampson (1994) brought together scholars emphasising the comparative advantage of religious actors. Basing their findings on case studies from East Germany, Philippines, South Africa and Zimbabwe, they argued that individuals that based their work on either religious or spiritual thinking were in a better place to reach out to regional and local actors than were politicians that did not. Similarly, Cox et al. (1994) argued that religion can be well suited for resolving particularly prolonged, stalemated or intractable conflicts. The key characteristics associated with (typically local) religious leaders that enable them to help in situations of conflict include authority, trust, professionalism and

also cultural and practical/experiential closeness to the people involved (see among others: Lederach 1996; 1997; Smock 2002).

On a pragmatic level, especially when conflict resolution and peace-keeping are proceeding in collaboration with development programmes, religious organisations and leaders have also proven particularly effective in delivering aid and effective development projects. This is because faith communities, in addition to being trusted, are inexpensive and they work rapidly, relying on wide networks of volunteers that are fervently devoted to the cause and ready to put their lives on the line. This has proven to be more effective than the work of the salaried staff of large and bureaucratic international organisations and secular NGOs (Barnett and Stein 2012).

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) focus on the conditions conducive to the success of faith-based mediation, finding that the legitimacy and leverage of religious actors can be powerful factors in promoting successful mediation processes. Aroua (2010) makes a case for mediators who have a deep understanding of religious beliefs and ideals, which enables them to promote interreligious dialogue by translating codes from one value system to another ('mediators as translators'). Funk and Woolner (2001) emphasise the role of inter-faith dialogue in promoting conflict resolution.

Even when peace processes do not lead to a sustainable peace, religion is nonetheless thought to positively contribute to peace as it can help build trust between and among social groups and individuals. Scholars have also noted that many conflicts do not have a religious component, but that even when that is the case religious leaders can often play a beneficial role in promoting peace (Aroua 2010).

Religious movements and leaders may also promote the setting of national and international norms on peace, and generally contribute to worldwide peace by changing the international discourse on religion and peace. The historic contribution by Martin Luther King to the spread of non-violent resistance and international and national anti-discrimination laws is a prominent example for peace-generating dynamics, discussed extensively in the scholarly literature.

Case studies have analysed the transformative power of religion and contributed to scholarly thinking on what religions have in common, rather than on what divides them. Appleby (2001) gives examples from

different faith traditions: the Catholic NGO Sant'Egidio that promotes ethical values in conflict situations in Africa and uses mediation as a tool to promote peace; Buddhist actors promoting human rights in Cambodia; and Muslim communities that successfully promote peace in parts of the Middle East. More recently, his work has focused on 'Catholic approaches to peacebuilding', looking at the work of many transnational Catholic NGOs such as Caritas, and exploring how Catholic social teaching and the 'preferential option for the poor' have been gradually expanded to go beyond social and economic development, towards 'reconciliation' (Schreiter et al. 2010). Michel (2008) specifically focuses on the role that transnational Islamic movements play in fostering non-violent relations in the Muslim world. The commitment to positive societal change, personal transformation, and interreligious dialogue is fundamental for these movements. 'Study' and 'service' are key elements underpinning the thinking of their adherents (Michel 2008).

Douglas Johnston (2005) also emphasised the crucial role of faith-based organisations in conflict prevention and resolution. He concludes that local organisations can have direct influence within their societies and be particularly effective, as they promote indigenous ways of preventing and resolving conflict and can have important moral authority because they are anchored in local communities.

Weingardt (2007) provided a thorough examination of the peace potential of religions, their inherent positive power, and specifically the role of religious leaders. His first main argument is that more research is needed to understand the role religions can play in de-escalating violent political conflicts and promoting peace. Whereas mainstream scholarly thinking, in particular in the wake of Huntington's work (1993, 1997), focused on the negative role that religion has played in conflicts around the world and throughout history, Weingardt argues that religion has also had a positive role in preventing, controlling and ending conflicts. He accepts that it is difficult, if not impossible, to get a precise measure-ment of the peace potential of religions, but maintains nonetheless that religions have an inherent potential for peace, and should be seen as a factor that contributes to de-escalating conflict.

Weingardt's second main argument is that the peace potential of religions lies in the fundamentals, such as writings, teachings and traditions, rather than in the institutions themselves. 'Religion-based' actors (in contrast to individuals acting on faith or on the basis of an

institution only) base themselves on a comprehensive understanding of their religion and not on a narrow-minded, individualistic and potentially arbitrary definition of it. By doing so, they can promote peace not only in religious conflicts, but also in conflicts with limited or no religious dimensions. Such actors can be: a) religious communities and religious institutions as well as their representatives; and, b) institutions, individuals, initiatives, movements that are not necessarily directly linked (i.e. financially, institutionally or through persons) to religious institutions (Weingardt 2008a, 2008b).

Weingardt cites as examples Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, as well as the Quakers and Sant'Egidio, all of whom were or are inspired by religious values, and have used them to promote peace in a variety of ways, including preventing direct violence, fighting against structural violence and bringing about positive societal change. In addition, he analyses a variety of case studies (about 40) where religion played a positive role in conflict resolution and conflict de-escalation, concluding that the characteristics defining the conflicts, the actors, and interventions are manifold and diverse. The cultural, religious and political contexts, the type of conflict, the issues at stake, the conflict range, parties to the conflict and the outcomes of the conflict vary as much as conflict intensity, duration and development. The 'religion-based' actors belong to different religions and confessions, work as individuals or in interreligious cooperation, and have varying degrees of institutional attachment, notoriety, political influence and implication in the conflict. They also differ in their approaches to reducing violence, their level of interaction, methods, actions, efficiency and their impact on the conflict. In other words, Weingardt argues, the peace potential for religion is manifold; it can be used to promote peace in a variety of ways and there is no one way forward, but a myriad of them to exploit the positive power inherent in religions.

Weingardt (2008a, 2008b) does not stop with this rather obvious analysis. The violent conflicts that he analyses share two main similarities. One is that previous secular activities to reduce violence have not had satisfactory results, and the second is that decidedly religious elements participating in actual activities to reduce violence are of only limited significance and are thus not sufficient to explain concrete positive results. It is therefore important to understand what is common to 'religion-based' actors and also what is the basis of their power to transform conflicts. He argues that these actors share three characteristics. The first is professional expertise, or conflict-specific knowledge.

The second is credibility, or perception of the actors as neutral and fair by the parties in conflict. The third is closeness to the conflict, namely emotional, personal, and/or human proximity of the actors to the conflict parties and/or the conflict.

The confidence and trust that religion-based actors inspire in the parties to the conflict depend on these three characteristics, building confidence in their professional and conflict-specific qualifications, in their ethical and moral qualifications, and also in their emotional qualifications. Weingardt (2008a, 2008b) argues that all actors that want to promote peace should ideally have these characteristics, but he also contends that 'religion-based' actors have a comparative advantage: they often have a credit of trust.

There are three main reasons for this credit of trust. First is that reference to religious thinking can be used in all cultures as a means to justify – in a comprehensible and legitimate way – peaceful and non-violent conflict resolution. Secondly, conflict parties often see 'religion-based' actors as able and willing to consider not just obvious facts, but also underlying and profound dimensions of conflict resolution, such as morality, responsibility, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Lastly, 'religion-based' actors, in contrast to secular actors, are often perceived to be driven less by self-interest than by considerations of general interest of all.

Deep and widespread respect for religion underlies these perceptions by conflict parties, even though religion can also have negative connotations. Weingardt's general view (2007, 2008a, 2008b) is that this respect can be attributed to a general – but certainly not universal – taboo on attacking religious dignitaries or religious sites. He maintains that conflicts in which the religious affiliation of the adversary is used to legitimise violence are the exception and not the rule, and that even in these conflicts (e.g. in Northern Ireland, Iraq, Israel-Palestine), direct attacks on religious leaders and sites constitute a red line.

In the same way as religious leaders are respected, 'religion-based' actors are accorded the respect they require to promote peace. Through their credit of trust, it is relatively easy for them to start a conflict resolution process. In other words, religion provides an opportunity to engage with the conflict parties, but it is not itself a guarantee for successful conflict resolution.

A key lesson from the evidence in all this literature is that there is no single path for religious organisations or religious leaders to make a difference in conflict resolution, and that a flexible approach should be taken in identifying religious 'leaders' capable of playing a significant role. Little's (2007) fascinating account of grassroots peacemakers tells how they contributed to peaceful conflict transformation because they were inspired by religious values and ideals, and they used religion-specific mediation and dialogue tools and communication techniques. He argues that policymakers have not yet sufficiently taken into consideration the need to promote grassroots peacemakers and include tools inspired by religion in their toolkit. The religious actors presented in his case studies are often ordinary clerics, not people in positions of power, and some were even ostracised in their respective communities precisely because of their courageous steps to promote reconciliation in the face of dominating prejudice. Their endeavours were successful because of a combination of qualities and circumstances and the individual ways in which religious beliefs and resources were used. Thus, the communication strategies, language, and symbolism at play in each situation were different, indicating that the outcomes were highly context-specific, including also the personality of the religious figure leading the peace initiative, even if sometimes the same religious tradition was present in different case studies.

4.5. Ways to promote the transformative power of religion

A further strand of academic literature on religion, conflict and peace is oriented around policy and action. It asks in which ways the transformative power of religion and its potential can be used to unite societies and to promote peaceful international relations. Lederach (1996, 1997) argued for and also developed conflict resolution mechanisms that focus on culture and religion as positive tools for bringing about change and for promoting a holistic approach, rather than an antagonistic approach that divides societies along religious lines.

Faith-based peacemaking, for Johnston and Cox (2003, 15–18), is more about 'reconciliation' than about 'conflict resolution', that is, it centres on 'restoration of healthy and respectful relationships between the parties'. This type of intervention in a conflict situation entails four components. First, it offers a 'new (moral) vision' of how reality and relationships with one another can be. Secondly, it builds 'bridges', i.e. 'tangible and intangible connections between diverse groups so that they can

communicate their respective needs and aspirations'. It also 'heals' the actual conflict, usually through mediation, and lastly, it also 'heals the wounds of history', which would otherwise inhibit future healthy relationships.

Complementary to this is the analysis of different stages of religious conflict transformation provided by Appleby (2000). He argues that transformation of religious conflict should take place at all levels of the conflict cycle. Several tools are involved. One is 'conflict management', which needs to be supported by raising public awareness about conflict drivers and origins. Another is 'conflict resolution', which should be based on dialogue and educational activities to promote understanding of the Other. In addition, mediation activities and good offices need to be undertaken by religious leaders. Other tools are 'post- conflict peace-building' and 'structural reform', which require intervention by religious leaders and organisations through humanitarian activities, and social integration activities, particularly for the most vulnerable and poorest parts of society.

Appleby also identifies three modes of religious conflict transformation. First is 'crisis mobilisation', the social mobilisation inspired by religion during an acute crisis, such as the non-violent opposition by Gandhi to British colonial rule. Second is the 'saturation mode', or the long-term peace work at different levels of society that leads to the institutionalisa-tion of peacebuilding activities within a society, such as the peace work done in Northern Ireland for several decades. Third is the 'interventionist mode', or activities undertaken by religious actors, internal and external, such as mediation and training activities.

An important body of literature offers practical advice on how to promote interreligious dialogue, and to use religion for peacebuilding purposes. Steele (2011) emphasises the need for long-term commit-ment to transforming societies to build peace. Other scholars stress that when dealing with conflict situations, practical problems should be addressed first, before value differences are tackled with respect and common understanding.

Academics in this field argue from either an experientialist (e.g. Marc Gopin) or a constructivist perspective (e.g. Jean-Nicolas Bitter 2003, 2009). Experientialists focus on individual experiences, based on the fact that devotees all share experiences of spirituality – this is the common feature of religions worldwide – and can thus come to

a mutual understanding of conflicts and ultimately promote conflict resolution. Constructivists, on the other hand, see religion as a means for the members of a society to obtain orientation and guidance. Religion can thus help its members to create meaning and provide an understanding of conflict drivers. Gopin (2000) argued that policymakers need to develop and actively promote the potential of religions to cope with violence and overcome conflict, that religions can help societies to develop a shared vision of joint responsibility and commitment, and that the in-depth study of religious value systems can help us to better understand conflict drivers within religions, and eventually turn them into peacebuilding factors.

The experientialist and the constructivist approach are both non-functionalist approaches. They see religion as a set of norms and rules that directly form the reality that its adherents experience. In contrast, functionalist approaches emphasise the ways in which religion can be used to decode and decipher principles, norms and rules within a society, and thus contribute to an understanding of the perceptions and values of conflict actors (Aroua 2010).

Scholars apply these different theories to case studies to analyse the transformative power of religion. Looking at local conflicts between Christian and Muslim communities in Nigeria, Smock (1995, 2002, 2009) emphasises the bridging, universal role of religion, based on individual spiritual experiences of the devotees (experientialist approach). Bitter (2009) examines to what extent religious beliefs divide people in Tajik-istan, and shows, nonetheless, how peace can be promoted with practi-cal activities that address concrete problems (constructivist approach).

From a more practical perspective, Weingardt (2008a, 2008b) establishes a list of factors that in his view can strengthen the role of 'religion-based' actors in promoting peace, based on a thorough analysis of case studies from around the world. It is worth summarising these points here.

1. 'Religion-based' actors need sufficient financial, technical and human resources for expert training, networking activities, public relations campaigns, human rights monitoring, electoral observation, conflict prevention and reconciliation projects.
2. Internal 'religion-based' actors are needed. Even if external actors want to get engaged in conflict resolution activities, they are more likely to succeed if they rely on internal actors in the

conflict. Yet, Weingardt argues, such actors need to be identified, strengthened and supported over the long run, through support to relevant organisations and actors through trainings, cooperation, and networking. The value of involving faith-based grassroots actors and whole indigenous communities, and not just religious leaders, is reiterated by a number of scholars (see among others Little 2007; Lederach 1997; Johnston 2003, 2005).

3. Religious education should focus on the positive aspects of religion. Whereas 'religious analphabetism' (or illiteracy) *per se* does not lead to conflict (see also Appleby 2000), religious education that focuses predominantly on the confrontational and violence-supporting elements of religion can be exploited by political and religious leaders to promote violence and foil peace processes. Thus, education on the peaceful elements of one's own religion and of those of other people can be a strong factor for building resilience against violence. The US State Department and the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office have already been taken up this recommendation, and set up training programmes on religious literacy for their personnel, even though participation in both schemes is on a voluntary basis (Mandaville and Silvestri 2015).

4. Moderate religious leaders need to be supported. The crucial role played by moderate religious leaders has been widely acknowledged. Weingardt (2008a, 2008b) believes that the international community should support these leaders early on and that their role as partners in dialogue and cooperation should be strengthened to counteract fundamentalist tendencies in religion.

This last point recommending support for moderate religious leaders, however, deserves some critical consideration because of some inherent hidden downsides. First, it may prove very difficult to identify such leaders, partly because of shifting alliances that they may develop and because it may be a challenge for the layperson to establish the criteria by which a religious leader can be categorised as 'moderate'. Second, a focus on leaders is likely to ignore the voice of women as most organised religions are structured along patriarchal lines, but women have proven to be important actors, often operating on the domestic level both in promoting peace and in condoning violence (Gnanadason, Kanyoro and McSpadden 1996; Skidmore and Lawrence 2007). Third, when governments or diplomats interfere in the religious sphere and start sponsoring particular faith groups or individuals, the autonomy and legitimacy of the latter often become tarnished in the eyes of their own religious communities. This was very clear in the

UK when the government attempted to promote moderate Islam in the context of the counterterrorism policy, 'Prevent', in the course of the 2000s. Among British Muslim communities, it was felt that those organisations and individuals that had engaged with the government or received state funding had lost credibility (see Silvestri 2010).

Galtung (2012) calls upon international leaders to explore the 'enormous reservoirs of experience' that are presented by religions. He emphasises that the insights of religions can help societies to judge political developments. For him, religions provide a 'toolbox' to promote peace; 'their comparative advantage is their transcendence perspective' (Galtung 2012). He believes that different religions can be used to address different forms of violence. Buddhism, for example, provides perspectives on how to address direct violence; Islam can be used to fight against structural violence. However, more research needs to be done to fully understand the lessons that can be learnt from different religions. Similarly, Stückelberger (2012) argues that research in peace studies has not yet succeeded in fully understanding the 'instrumentalisation', of religion, or how it can be organised and adapted for their discipline. Again, more research is needed to grasp the complexity of economic, social, political and ethnic forces. Stückelberger (2012) also warns that excluding religion is a way to postpone problems not to solve them; moreover, integrating religion early can pre-empt the emergence of violent fundamentalism before it is too late.

Johnston and Cox (2003, 14) provide a systematic elaboration of the attributes that enable religious leaders and religious institutions to influence peacemaking . These actors have 'well established and pervasive influence in the community' and typically (though not always) a 'reputation as an apolitical force for change based on a respected set of values'. They also have a 'unique leverage for reconciling confliction parties, including an ability to rehumanize relationships' and they possess the 'capability to mobilize community, national, and international support for a peace process'. But most importantly, they exert 'a transcendent authority for their followers that is the envy of most temporal leaders'.

Some scholars have developed models for specific activities to promote the positive force of religion. Abu-Nimer (2001) described a training model of interreligious peacebuilding, which he sees playing a fundamental, central role in transforming conflicts, given the crucial place that religious identities have and have had in many conflicts, such as those in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and former Yugoslavia. Interreligious

training should focus on the individual experiences of practitioners and they should be encouraged to share their positive experiences. Using a religious narrative to describe peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities can help parties to the conflict better understand and accept outside interveners. Any such training should help the participants expand their perception of a conflict from one that is narrow-minded to a perspective that is open-minded and tolerant. As its main objective, interreligious peacebuilding should strive to change the attitudes towards the Other. Changing attitudes is a process requiring several steps, which has been used for a long time in training workshops on conflict resolution. Abu-Nimer argues that a combination of both the elicitive model, which focuses on the participants' experiences, and the prescriptive model, which focuses on the trainers' experiences and their sharing of those experiences with the participants, is more effective than either of the two models on their own. For Abu-Nimer, an ideal training workshop consists of five phases: 'Getting started', 'Situating our work', 'Know where you stand', 'Meet the other', and 'What can we do together?' (Abu-Nimer 2001, 691). These phases should help participants explore their identities and understand the identities of others. The aim is both to share and understand commonalities, such as common values and understandings of society and conflict, and also to reflect on differences, on their potential for conflict and advantages in promoting peacebuilding. Ultimately, the participants should be encouraged to search for future activities to resolve conflicts peacefully.

For Abu-Nimer (2003), interreligious training needs to be deeply anchored in the religions of its participants. In other words, training for peacemakers must be based on a narrative that originates with the teachings, scriptures and traditions of the religions of these peacemakers. As discussed in Section 4.4, he argues that Islam is based on fundamentally humane concepts and has developed a whole set of non-violent tools for conflict resolution, but that many Muslims do not have sufficient knowledge of the Islamic tradition and experience in peacebuilding. Hence there is a need not only to train Westerners in non-Western modes and rituals of conflict resolution, but also to support the emergence of indigenous (non-Western) actors able to articulate the search for peace from within their own faith tradition.

Stewart (2009, 31) argues in favour of improved monitoring and early warning mechanisms, noting that in 'most conflicts, both religious and ethnic, there are many warning signs, often recorded by independent observers, frequently ignored by decision-makers for a variety of

reasons'. For policymakers, these warning signs and the time span needed to mobilise a population for violent conflict provide important opportunities for the international community to intervene: 'The need for both religious and ethnic leaders to work at mobilisation for some time preceding a conflict gives rise to possibilities of monitoring and intervention to prevent conflict occurring' (Stewart 2009, 1).

In recent years, there have been reports that evaluate faith-based dialogue programmes. These provide a good assessment of practical challenges to such dialogue and point to the need for additional research. Garfinkel's 2004 report, *What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs*, is an attempt to provide a rigorous analysis of how such programmes can enhance religious tolerance and transform societies. It argues that religious dialogue programmes need to include religious dimensions at all stages of the project.

5. Case study I: Religion and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

5.1. Background

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is widely seen as a nationalist struggle, where both sides are concerned with issues of 'security, sovereignty and self-determination' and not on building a state based on Islamic sharia or Jewish halakhic laws (Frisch and Sandler 2004, 78). The roots of the modern-day conflict are identified in 'ethno-political' differences that emerged in the late nineteenth century (Milton-Edwards 2006), since both 'Israeli Jews and Palestinians have legitimate and inalienable rights … which are rooted in the historical experience of each people, rather than other factors' (Tessler 1994, xi). Fox and Sandler (2004) and Frisch and Sandler (2004) argue that the nationalist and state-centric identity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is partially due to the norms of the international system, of which both sides wish to be a part.

Despite the dominance of national identity in both the causation and development of the conflict, religion and religious aspirations have also played a role in the conflict, in many ways intensifying it (Fox and Sandler 2004). It has been argued that the conflict has been 'religicised' (Milton-Edwards 2006), so that growing religious elements are used to perpetuate rather than resolve it. In his study of the role of religion in ethnic conflicts, Fox (2000a, 17) argues that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict conforms to the model in which secular conflicts, those fought over national rather than theocratic claims, often 'evoke the use of religious legitimacy and institutions' and, in doing so, can be transformed into religious conflicts. However, while religion is used to 'promote the national struggle' in almost all cases, the governing bodies will not let religion become dominant in a way that would 'threaten their collective

candidacy in the exclusive club of territorial nation-states' (Frisch and Sandler 2004, 93).

The injection of religion into the conflict can be seen among both Israelis and Palestinians in the emergence of groups inspired by religion that reject compromise on the basis of religious reasoning, and often promote violence in order to achieve their goals. There are similarities in the use of religion and violence by the two sides, although the religious concepts, the ways in which violence is employed, and the identities of those considered to be religious actors highlight differences both between the two peoples and among the various groups concerned.

On the Palestinian side, there is a very clear link between religion, conflict and violence, in the cases of Hamas (Islamic Resistance Move- ment) and Islamic Jihad. According to the former, 'the Palestinian cause is not about land and soil, but it is about faith and belief' (Islamic Resist- ance Movement cited in Litvak 1998, 148). Hamas has used religion to legitimise the use of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Singh 2012) but also, in line with Fox's (2000a) argument, to gain power in the Palestinian nationalist political landscape. Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad promote the use of suicide bombings against Israel. However, in a study of martyrs, it was found that individuals engaged in suicide terrorism in the Second Intifada had several motivations and not only religious ones (Moghadam 2003). Given the changing political reality of the Oslo Accords, Hamas shifted to promote a non-violent, social jihad along- side a military one encouraging the Islamisation of Palestinian society (Hatina 1999).

Based on extensive fieldwork in Gaza, Gunning (2009) has provided a detailed study of Hamas' evolution as both a political party and a religious and civil society actor able to mobilise and strategically articulate its political thought. His analysis pays particular attention to the structural and historical context within which Hamas has operated, and to the way in which the movement's political theory has been coherent with its political practice. This sophisticated and rounded picture thus enables Gunning to elaborate on the power of this actor beyond its religious identity, and to criticise simplistic labels of Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

Fatah, on the other hand, while imbuing its speeches and publications with Islamic symbols (Frisch 2005), was essentially a secular nationalist movement, which aimed to play by the rules of the international system.

However, during the Second Intifadah, they were under pressure both to encourage and to adopt suicide bombings as a strategy (Luft 2002). The emergence of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the military wing of Fatah, which conducted suicide bombings during the Second Intifadah, was not, however, a shift towards the Islamisation of Fatah. Rather it was a strategy of the nationalist organisation to use Islamic symbols and allusions to mobilise the public for Palestinian nationalist goals and, in fact, to discourage the rise of Islamic movements (Frisch 2005; Luft 2002). For Fatah, Islam was used as a means to an end, whereas for Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Islam itself was the end. According to Milton-Edwards (2006, 72) the growing religious dimension and the rise of Islamist movements in the region should be seen not as fundamentalist movements but as resurgent movements, 'riding the wave' of growing Islamism, both internally and externally, for the sake of a wider struggle over 'territoriality, identity, ethnicity, economy, nationalism, colonialism and imperialism', as well as over religion.

On the Jewish side, religious-inspired violence within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more commonly seen among extra-parliamentary groups, although with links to political parties. The aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967 and the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 triggered the emergence of the extreme right (Hecht 1993), steeped in messianic religiosity but constrained by political realities (Sprinzak 1991a). Some argue that there were precursors to this in the religious objection to the Israeli Proclamation of Independence (Peleg 1997), which included universal values of equality between religions and races in Israel and such grievances with secular Israel played a role in the re-course to violence. Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) emerged, claiming that Judea and Samaria (West Bank), which had been conquered in the war, were 'inalienable and non-negotiable…because God had promised them to Abraham' (Sprinzak 1987, 203). According to Sprinzak (1998, 1991a, 1987), the violence of Gush Emunim was incremental because of the combination of a messianic belief in redemption and the context of a national conflict. They were mainly a vigilante movement, aimed at combatting the failures of the Israeli authorities to protect the settlers against Arabs in the territories and to maintain order in the West Bank. The violence was therefore not religiously motivated, although the rabbis opposed none of their actions (Sprinzak 1987).

A Jewish Underground emerged as a revitalisation movement in response to internal changes in Gush Emunim (Sprinzak 1999; 1991a), which included pragmatic decisions that led to the subordination of

religious concepts to the moral authority of the state (Taub 2007).
They were against subservience of traditional Jewish norms of religious
observation to the secular government in Israel, and believed in the
institutionalisation of Jewish theocracy (Sprinzak, 1987). They sought
to blow up the Dome of the Rock, clearly a religiously motivated act of
violence, one that Gush Emunim would not have thought of (Sprinzak
1987). Based on Kahanist ideology, they believed that 'Jewish violence
in defence of Jewish interest is never bad' (Sprinzak 1991b, 56).

In more recent years the 'Hilltop Youth' have emerged as second and
third generation religious-nationalist settlers, mobilised by the failure
of the older generation to halt the 2005 Gaza Disengagement. They
engage in 'price tag' attacks, which are physical acts of violence and
desecration of mosques when compromises are made with the Pales-
tinians or settlements are demolished, and unlike their parents, they do
not affiliate with traditional religious authorities (Boudreau 2014; Byman
and Sachs 2012). Their overriding goal is to 'deter Israeli leaders from
implementing a possible future Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement
that entails removing Israeli settlements from the West Bank' (Nir 2011,
277). Carton (2011) argues that while their actions are religiously moti-
vated, there are also sociological, psychological and political influences.

While a minority of Israeli Jews undertake acts of Jewish terrorism,
Hecht (1993, 14) argued that they should not be viewed as 'an isolated
extremist faction' but as a 'very influential school that has been push-
ing the entire Israeli right towards greater ultra-nationalism, greater
extra-legalism, greater militarism, greater ethnocentrism, and greater
religiosity'. Although Hecht's remark was made over two decades ago,
the outcome of the Israeli elections of March 2015 and the ensuing
alliance between the right-wing Likud Party and ultra-orthodox groups
appear to confirm the societal shift towards greater ethnocentrism and
religiosity. The 'amalgamation of ultra-orthodox religious doctrines with
ideas of nationalism' is said to have caused the violence employed by
the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (Sandler 1996, 148–149).
Religious nationalists are at the forefront of opposing any peace process
that involves territorial withdrawal, resulting in non-Jewish control of
any part of the Land of Israel (Newman 2005). Peace, however, is not
negated by these groups, as their concept is religious, accompanying
ultimate redemption (Newman and Hermann 1992).

5.2. Religious concepts

In the 'Readings in the Laws of Martyrdom' of the Islamic Jihad there is an intertwining of religion and politics (Hatina 2005). The word 'shaheed' (Muslim martyr), itself denotes a religious concept (Moghadam 2003), and the religious doctrine of jihad (holy war) is referenced in the manifestos of Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Fatah (Frisch 2005; Hatina 2005). This refers to the 'moral superiority of Islam' over infidels and other cultures (Hatina 2005, 242). The religious concepts of jihad and shaheed are closely linked to modern secular concepts of 'thawra' (revolution) and 'fida'i' (sacrifice) (Johnson cited in Hatina 2005). Given the identification of Palestine as an Islamic 'Waqf' or trust, jihad is central in the struggle for a Palestinian state (Singh 2012). For radical Islamists, 'the fall of Jerusalem into infidel hands is perceived as a wound that must be healed' (al-Khalifa Khutba, cited in Milton-Edwards 2006, 79). Ignoring jihad is considered a sin and the highest way to please Allah is the intention ('niya') of becoming a martyr (Hatina 2005). Martyrdom comes with the Islamic promise of an 'afterlife replete with gold, palaces, feasts and virgin brides' (Kushner 1996, 333), as understood from some readings of Surah 78 of the *Qur'an* and according to a weak *Hadith* tradition.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the belief that 'only Islam and not nationalism could liberate Muslims from foreign (infidel) rule' (Milton-Edwards 2006, 83), highlights both the Islamic nature of the struggle but also the general confinement of the movements to the liberation of Palestine rather than a global jihad. The concept 'al-siyasa al shar'yya' (subject to political considerations) enabled warfare to include a defensive jihad that allows killing of civilians (Hatina 2005). Unlike Fatah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad both aim to implement sharia law in Palestine and to rule over the infidels. The pragmatic approach of Hamas to agree to ceasefires is explained by the Treaty of Hudabiyya, in which, deriving from the behaviour of the Prophet, Islam gives permission for peace to be made with an enemy for a specific period of time, no longer than ten years (Hatina 1999).

The religious concepts of Gush Emunim are based on the teachings of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who stated that 'ours is a messianic age in which the Land of Israel, in its entirety is to be reunited' (Sprinzak 1987, 198). The Israeli demand to settle in Judea and Samaria is based on God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob made 5,000 years earlier (Jones 1999; Lustick 1987; Sprinzak 1987). Furthermore, redemption and the 'End of Days' would be possible only in the Greater Land of

Israel, and so territorial compromise 'means forfeiting redemption' (Sprinzak 1987, 203). The Holocaust and the Arab-Israeli wars are explained as part of the redemption period of the Messiah Son of Joseph, who would ultimately fail, but as an integral part of the process (Lustick 1987). Kook believed that the Israeli government was legitimate in the process towards redemption (Sprinzak 1987). However, there was a halakhic edict that prohibited the evacuation of settlements in the Land of Israel, and even a call for soldiers to disobey orders in the Gaza disengagement (Arboff 1999).

Rabbi Kahane promoted a more violent interpretation, although he believed his was coming directly from the Halakha, or Jewish religious law (Sprinzak 1991b). He believed in the necessity of a physical struggle against the Gentiles, with 'Jewish violence sanctified and glorified for its own sake', since it 'proves the might of God by reversing the history of humiliation' (Sprinzak 1998, 120). Kahane argued that God could no longer put up with humiliation after the Holocaust and created the State of Israel as revenge against the Gentiles, with 'the very definition of Jewish freedom implying the ability to humiliate Gentiles' (Sprinzak 1991b, 50). Concepts such as 'Kiddush Hashem' (sanctifying the name of God) are used to justify grave acts of terror, including the 1994 Hebron massacre and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (Sprinzak 1998). Sprinzak (1998) also explains the use of certain rulings that underpinned the attack on Rabin, although there was no Rabbinical sanction. 'Din Rodef' refers to a ruling against someone who provides Gentiles with information about Jews or gives them Jewish property and 'din moser' refers to the ruling on Jews who surrender Jews to Gentiles. Jews are obliged to kill a 'moser' (a Gentile that surrenders Jews to Gentiles) without trial (Sprinzak 1998). Kahane also called for violence against Jewish Hellenists (Boudreau 2014), that is those open to the infiltration of Western values into Judaism. This underpinned some of the 'price tag' attacks against left-wing peace organisations in Israel. In these more radical groups, the term 'Amalekite' is used to identify enemies of the Jewish people. The Biblical story, where God demanded the destruction of the Amalekites by the Children of Israel, is used to sanctify violence (Jones 1999).

The Hill Top Youth, while inspired by the teachings of Kahane, do not use messianic language and the land is seen as the end in and of itself, not just a means to redemption. Settling the land as their biblical ancestors had done is their form of redemption (Carton 2001).

5.3. Religious actors

Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade all promoted violence with reference to Islam. Leaders of the political movements, as well as Sheikhs and Muftis, can be identified as key actors. Youth movements played a role in education and mobilising, as did mosques. Individuals identified in Frisch's (2005) study of suicide bombing showed few similarities, however. They were not core members of the political organisations and went through a significant period of training from the organisations before undertaking the task. They were recruited from mosques and schools (Kushner 1996).

Rabbis played a significant role in inspiring certain religious worldviews through interpretations of the Bible and the Halakha. They were also consulted in order to sanction certain acts of violence; the two greatest acts of Jewish terrorism were conducted by a rabbi and an unconnected individual, who had apparently been raised with these interpretations (Sprinzak 1991a). A number of Kahane's followers had been members of the Jewish Defense League in Brooklyn, New York, and moved to Israel to follow their rabbi (Friedman 1986). The Hill Top Youth are young, second or third generation settlers. The ideology they espouse was disseminated through synagogues or institutes of higher Jewish learning (Newman 2005), as well as from the Bnei Akiva youth movements, encouraging younger participation (Newman and Hermann 1992).

5.4. Evidence

In the case of the Palestinian studies cited here, evidence was drawn from speeches of leaders from the political movements, and from their websites (Frisch 2005). Quotes from sheikhs and muftis and publications from the organisations were also used (Moghadam 2003; Hatina 2005), as were newspaper articles (Milton-Edwards 2006; Moghadam 2003; Litvak 1988). In his study of the motivations for suicide bombings, Frisch (2005) consulted the obituaries of the martyrs. Milton-Edwards (2006) conducted interviews. Gunning (2009) did interviews and observed participants. The Qur'an and commentaries of it were also consulted (Hatina 1999; 2005).

Evidence for the studies on Israel also came from a wide variety of sources. In particular, the writings of the leading rabbis were sourced, including those of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and his students (Lustick 1987;

Sprinzak 1998, 1991a, 1987), and the speeches and writings of Rabbi Kahane (Sprinzak 1991b). The writings of the leaders of the movements were also consulted, including the Gush Emunim journal, *Nekuda* (Sprinzak 1998, 1991a, 1987; Friedman 1986). Newspaper articles provided evidence of attacks that had occurred and interviews with groups responsible (Nir 2011; Newman 2005). Some also involved primary interviews with settlers (Boudreau 2014).

5.5. Confliction resolution

Bar-Siman-Tov (2010) argues that the political power of religious movements and their use of terrorism have the potential to prevent the possibility of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For this reason, it is necessary to diffuse the radical religious elements of both sides if there is to be resolution of the conflict (Bar-Siman-Tov 2010; Jones 1999). Moderate religious commentary from religious sources is needed to legitimise a political compromise and one that removes the 'emotionally charged elements from religious values' (Bar-Siman-Tov 2010, 256). Jones (1999) noted that in the Jewish case, religious teachings do sanction territorial compromise but the centre-left, which promotes a two-state solution, gives only lip service to Judaism and it needs to incorporate the 'language and values' of religious nationalism if it is to gain support from religious groups and diffuse the violent tendencies of some of their members. Following the 1995 assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, there was a 'conscious rabbinical effort to exercise control over the rhetoric of the extreme right and to rule out political violence' (Sprinzak 1991a).

Although currently based in the US, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, founder and director of the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice in Washington, DC, is a Palestinian from Israel and a major voice on interfaith reconciliation. He maintains that there is a need for a process of moving from 'religiocentric' perspectives to 'religiorelative' ones, which calls for interreligious awareness that focuses both on the similarities between the religions and their differences (Abu-Nimer 2004; 2011). Furthermore, religious leaders should be consulted in peace negotiations, particularly on religiously sensitive issues (Landau 2003). One suggestion is that religious leaders draft their own peace agreement alongside a political peace agreement (Abu-Nimer 2004). The 2002 Alexandria Summit brought together religious leaders from the Middle East to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace on the basis that, 'according to our faiths…

killing innocents in the name of God is a desecration of His Holy Name, and defames religion in the world' (cited in Landau 2003, 19).

While the Israeli peace movement is said to be made up mainly of secular, middle-class Ashkenazi Jews (Hermann 2009), there are a number of peace organisations in Israel that are explicitly religious. Oz V'Shalom/ Netivot Shalom (Strength and Peace/ Peace) was a religious group that was set up in 1975 to counter the teachings of Gush Shalom. It argued that occupation and control of another people goes against Jewish values such as sanctity of the soul, or 'pikuach' (Hermann 2009), and that there is in fact Jewish precedent for giving away territory in the Bible (Jones 1999). Rabbis for Human Rights, a human rights organisation made up of Reform and Conservative rabbis, is based on the belief that, 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him' (Genesis 1:26–27). Eretz Shalom (Land of Peace) is a group of religious Jewish settlers who engage in peacebuilding with Palestinians in the West Bank, based on the leadership of Rabbi Froman who believes that the land does not belong to anyone and coexistence and sharing should be the paradigm for peace.

Among the Palestinian non-violent resistance groups there are some key religious actors. One is the Mosque Protection Committee led by Shiek Raed Salah, who promotes a discourse of non-violent resistance that is rooted in the Qur'an and the Hadith (Abu-Nimer 2011). There are also some interreligious dialogue groups that bring together leading religious figures to discuss how they can promote peace (Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven 2006). Jerusalem Peacemakers is one example of the interfaith groups working in the region. They believe that all three monotheistic religions should live together as the children of Abraham. The pioneering work of Archbishop Elias Chacour to promote tangible reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians in Israel is remarkable. A Palestinian Catholic priest, of the Melkite church, he is the founder and president of Mar Elias Educational Institutions in I'billin, Israel. He has devoted his life to facilitating mutual understanding between youths of different religions and ethnic backgrounds through the kindergarten, elementary, junior and high schools of Mar Elias College. There, students from the three Abrahamic traditions live and study together, speak each others' languages and learn about their reciprocal faith traditions.

5.6. Women in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Both Israelis and Palestinians have used the concept of 'motherhood' to define the role of women in the conflict. Israeli prime ministers have referred to women's fertility as a national priority (Sharoni 1995), partly to produce future soldiers and also to 'win' the demographic war. In the 1993 Hamas Charter, a similar role is assigned to Palestinian women, whereby they have, 'the most important role in taking care of the home and raising children of ethical character and understanding that comes from Islam and training her children to perform the religious obligations in preparation for the Jihadic role that awaits them' (cited in Jacoby 1999, 518). Beyond their role as mothers, women in both Israeli and Palestinian societies have taken an active role in aspects of the conflict, most clearly through the emergence of independent women's or feminist movements. Religion does not seem to have an explicit role for women in the Israeli side, whereas either rejection of or promotion of Islamic teachings have played a role in the Palestinian women's movement, which was particularly prominent in the First Intifada.

Women have played a significant role in Israeli peace activism, initially in the formation of the Four Mothers movement, in which women voiced their objection to the first Lebanon war because of their role as mothers protecting their sons (Lemish and Barzel 2000). The women's movement became more explicitly feminist during the First Intifada, with the founding of Women in Black that sought to find legitimacy for their anti-occupation stance through their role as citizens, not as mothers (Sharoni 1995). They sought to highlight the connection between women's issues and the occupation. Since the Second Intifada, as women took up more combat roles in the Israeli Defence Forces, a new anti-war voice emerged from their experiences where they served alongside men in the Occupied Territories. They criticised the immaturity of their male counterparts, while showing empathy for the Palestinians (Sasson-Levy, Levy and Lomsky-Feder 2011). Since the Second Intifada, there has been a shift in Israeli peace activism from Israeli towns to the West Bank, in solidarity with Palestinian activists. This has meant that Israeli activists, particularly women, have had to be conscious of the cultural differences in the West Bank villages, and dress appropriately for the demonstrations, which has sometimes conflicted with the feminist ideologies of the Israeli activists (Fleischmann n.d.).

Religion has played a greater role in mobilising Palestinian women. The mobilisation of Palestinian women to the nationalist cause was

most prominent in the First Intifada, which is generally seen as a non-violent uprising. The emergence of a Palestinian women's movement dealt not only with the nationalist struggle but also simultaneously focused on women's issues. Jacoby (1999) identifies three strands of the women's movement. One is an explicitly secular movement formed from the communist and Marxist factions, another an Islamic women's movement promoting sharia law, and third is a Muslim women's movement that sought to 'rearticulate Sharia to accommodate indigenous feminism' (Jacoby 1999, 521). According to Hasso (1998), the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees, an affiliate of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, with its anti-religious Marxist roots, was the largest and most influential women's organisation during the First Intifada. However, in recruiting women, they had to de-emphasise their anti-religious beliefs. The rise of Hamas in the second year of the First Intifada and their imposition of the hijab on women in Gaza then created difficulties for the progressive women's movement (Berkovitch and Moghadam 1999). This created a space for the Islamist women's groups to provide 'an "authentic" space for women … to organise without having to worry about violating social norms' (Berkovitch and Moghadam 1999, 650). Jacoby (1999) notes the complexity between feminism, nationalism and religion in Palestine, suggesting that the motivations for joining the women's nationalist struggle in the First Intifada came from a spectrum of religious beliefs that highlighted different roles for women in the conflict.

While religion may not be a shared driving force for Israeli and Palestinian women seeking to change the status quo and work towards peace, it has been argued that their identity as women has enabled them to transcend the Israeli-Palestinian/Jewish-Muslim-Christian divides and connect more easily than men. Their shared experience of gender oppression has helped them to cross the national and religious boundaries (Sharoni 1995). According to Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven (2006), during the Second Intifada, joint Israeli-Palestinian activities in general declined but this decline was not as significant for joint activities of women's organisations.

6. Case study II: Mali

6.1. Background

Mali has experienced a long history of conflict between the centre and its periphery. Tuareg rebellions in northern Mali, which pitted parts of the population in the north of the country against the central government in the capital Bamako and the population in the south have shaken this West African country for decades. There have been numerous attempts at conflict resolution, including some by the international community. None of those has led to sustainable peacebuilding. In 2012, another Tuareg rebellion brought to the fore the rising influence of the Tuareg national liberation movement (MNLA: *Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad*). Benefitting from a power vacuum of the central government due to a coup d'état, these non-state armed actors took control of major population centres in northern Mali, including Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. This essentially secular Tuareg movement saw its power rapidly decline due to the advent and rise of Islamic extremist movements aiming to take control over large parts of North and West Africa and create an Islamic state. These were: Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith), a Malian Tuareg movement; the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), and; Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM). These movements rapidly established their terrorist rule in northern Mali until they were dislodged by French and African military intervention in January 2013, although cells and attacks continue to date. Peace negotiations between the Tuareg groups (and other groups from northern Mali) and the Government of Mali, with mediation by the international community, are ongoing at the time of this writing (August 2015).

6.2. Concepts

Three main concepts are used by the relevant actors in Mali to denote their relationship with religion.

1. The Malian state and society apparently embraced the French ideal of state secularism or laicity ('laïcité' in French), with an evident separation of religion and the state.
2. A moderate version of Islam, mixed with cultural traditions, is prevalent among the Muslim population in Mali.
3. Extremist and fundamentalist interpretations of Islam are apparent among Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM. Although local religious groups do not use fundamentalist and radical interpretations of Islam, the media often frame this conflict as being connected to religious extremism and fundamentalism, even with regard to laic Tuareg groups.

6.3. Actors

The Malian government and Malian civil society show a strong attach-ment to laicity and the need to define government–society relations, as well as inner-Malian social relations, in secular terms. Most Malians – 90 per cent of its population – are Muslim (predominantly Sunni), while approximately nine per cent practise indigenous faiths, and about one per cent is Christian (Coleman 2014, 175). Christian, indigenous or traditional religious minorities lived peacefully and were tolerated in the country until the recent conflict in 2012 (Jeffrey 2013). Religious free-doms are guaranteed by the Constitution and are again being respected in practice after the terrorist occupation of northern Mali ended.

The national self-determination movement MNLA publicly states its adherence to secular values and spoke out against the attempts by Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM to install sharia law in northern Mali in 2012–2013. However, although it is an essentially secular movement, the MNLA created alliances with Islamist movements, in particular in 2012, as it hoped to be able to use those movements to increase its power and influence.

AQIM and Ansar Dine propagated an extremist and radical interpretation of Islam and proclaimed the institution of sharia law in northern Mali. There were widespread human rights violations in 2012 and 2013, as

well as the destruction of ancient Islamic monuments, seen by Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM as un-Islamic. Both groups are militant rather than religious organisations and both were established by prominent leaders and militia fighters of the failed Tuareg rebellions in the 1990s. These two factors combined, the role of the Tuareg militiamen and the frustration of the attempted rebellions, may explain the radical turn to Islam. AQIM adopted its current name only in 2007; before that its name was Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). Although the GSPC claimed to be religiously motivated, prior to 2007 it engaged primarily in local and transnational criminality, mainly the kidnapping of international tourists. Inspired by AQIM, Ansar Dine has also sought to impose radical sharia law across Mali.

6.4. The role of religion in conflict and peace

Before the conflict escalated in 2012–2013, religion did not appear to play a particular role in the conflicts and in peacebuilding in Mali. With the rise of Islamic extremist movements in northern Mali, however, religion came to shape the dynamics of conflict and of peace processes. The implementation of sharia law in northern Mali from March/April 2013 to January 2014, on a scale not previously experienced in the country, led to a massive and rapid deterioration of the human rights situation. Despite the laic nature of the country, the violence exercised meant that the population had limited chances and opportunities to resist. Very quickly, the tolerant model of Islam practised by the populations was undermined by imposing strict rule based on sharia law (Primo 2013; Lecocq et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, Malian society is marked by a strong resilience to extremist Islamist thinking. Its long history of laicity and Sufism, in a society marked by the peaceful co-existence of different religious groups and by fundamental human rights and freedoms, has made it difficult for Islamists to gain a strong foothold. AQIM relied on some marabouts, or local religious teachers, to preach their interpretation of Islam, but many marabouts would not support AQIM. Thus, it relied on a 'pre-existing traditional structure of cultural importance'; to obtain their allegiance, AQIM paid marabouts money and provided them with cars and weapons (Bøås and Torheim 2013a). In addition, AQIM applied a strategy of integration into local communities with the aim of overcoming its image as an external actor, using a combination of military, political, religious, economic and humanitarian means (Bøås and Torheim 2013b, 1287).

For all this, AQIM quickly realised that they could not win the hearts and minds of the population of northern Mali by imposing an extremist version of sharia law. In a letter found in Timbuktu the leader of AQIM cautions his supporters not to impose sharia too rapidly, given the resistance from the population (Callimachi 2013; Associated Press 2013). Public opinion in the south of the country – and also in northern Mali after January 2013 – clearly exposed the incompatibility of such thinking with a Malian understanding of Islam. Malians also realised that the jihadists persecuted everyone, not just Christians and the followers of traditional beliefs. Rather than viewing the jihadists as ardent practitioners of Islam, the local population in northern Mali saw them as an organised crime syndicate, using their religious profile as a cover for criminal activities, particularly drug and human trafficking (Jeffrey 2013). For instance, a local citizen of Timbuktu said, 'The jihadists are not Muslims, they are terrorists. They came here just to destroy and to steal. In Timbuktu we know Islam and we teach Islam, and what they think is something completely different' (Jeffrey 2013, 32).

Scholars have also pointed to the fact that religion has played only a secondary role in the conflict in Mali, and that Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM instrumentalised religion to justify their violence and criminal activities and promote their power struggle. These movements also are characterised by the absence of religious leaders within their ranks and of a sound theological basis for their actions. Yet, they claim to be driven by Islamic values. Wise (2013) claims that conflict and intervention in northern Mali are rooted in a profound history, both Arab and Western, of self-interest and racism. He maintains that northern Mali has been invaded to further Arab interests in a black African region, and not to spread the Islam. Jeffrey (2013) emphasises that the current conflict builds on the foundations of prolonged ethnic and tribal rivalries over land, which have plagued the Sahel region, including northern Mali, for centuries. He argues that desertification, climate changes and the shortage of resources exacerbate these troubles. Le Meur and Hochet (2010) claim that previous conflicts and rebellions in Mali were, in principle, about access to and control of resources; yet these conflicts were also strongly linked to identity and social tensions.

The peacebuilding power of religion has created important elements of resilience within the Malian population and has contributed to peacebuilding efforts, although additional efforts could be made to fully exploit its beneficial capacities to create sustainable peace. There is still a need to tell in detail the many stories of the widespread individual

cases of bravery and opposition to Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM in northern Mali. Some examples of these, such as the acts of individual citizens of Timbuktu, among them religious leaders (Kim 2013), to save their cultural heritage (their historic manuscripts, for example) are already in the public sphere. Reconciliation efforts, inspired by traditional Islamic conflict resolution models, have played a major role in Mali, particularly in the north of the country, to overcome ethnic divisions and build sustainable peace. Broad-based national and local debates, within all strands of the Malian society and including religious civil society and religious leaders, have helped to start reuniting Malian society. Traditional mediation efforts have also made an important contribution to peacebuilding in Mali (Konaté 1999), although more efforts are needed to further promote long-term and effective reconciliation.

Given the claim of the terrorists that they are promoting Islam, the importance of moderate religious leaders and moderate religious civil society organisations in Malian politics to counter this has increased. In a blog for the *New York Times,* Armstrong (2013) argues that the High Council of Islam (HCI) 'has gradually emerged as the country's strongest political force'. The High Council, in essence a civil society organisation, promotes a republican form of Islam. The HCI is remarkable insofar as it unites a whole range of people with different beliefs, from more liberal to the more conservative Muslims. The crisis has allowed religious leaders to demand a stronger role in Malian politics. At a rally for peace in Bamako in August 2012, the HCI was able to gather over 50,000 people. The Malian prime minister felt obliged to attend and to show the backing he enjoys from the HCI. Religious civil society movements have played a crucial role in mitigating violence. The HCI was key in mediating agreements with Ansar Dine and secured the release of prisoners of war (Armstrong 2013). In addition, they mobilised public support, including financial assistance, to help the Malian army in its fight against the terrorist occupation of the north of the country.

Moreover, individual religious leaders in Mali have also played a positive role in conflict resolution in Mali. Although there has been strong criticism of the early positioning of Mahmoud Dicko, president of the HCI, during the arrival of Ansar Dine, MOJWA and AQIM in northern Mali, he later publicly welcomed military intervention by Western countries, in particular France, but also the US, and did not label it as yet another example of the alleged US war on Islam, as US foreign interventions elsewhere have been called. He also argued strongly in favour of moderate interpretations of Islam throughout the crisis

(Soares 2013). The international community has clearly acknowledged the positive role played by Mali's traditional religious organisations and leaders in promoting resilience to conflict and contributing to peacebuilding. The current draft of a peace agreement between the Government of Mali and non-state armed actors in northern Mali emphasises the need to include traditional justice mechanisms to promote reconciliation, while specifically recognising the laic nature of the Malian state (Draft Peace Agreement for Mali 2014, chapters 14 and 1). The UN Security Council also affirmed that terrorist, extremist and armed groups in the north of Mali cannot legitimately claim to speak in the name of any religion (United Nations 2013, preamble).

Nevertheless, the growing role played by Muslim civil society organisations in southern Mali during and in the aftermath of the most recent crisis also led to a strengthening of extraneous conservative forces of Islam, with potentially negative effects on the social fabric of the country. This had its origins in an earlier period, particularly in that following political liberalisation in 1991. Attempts to liberalise family law in Mali have failed largely because of the strong role played by the HCI. Instead, in 2012, a law was passed that the international community and women's groups view as compromising the rights of women. In addition, 2012 also saw the creation of a Ministry of Religious Affairs and Worship, although it is yet to find its exact place in Malian society. Soares (2006) observed that since September 2001, Islamic fundamentalism and conservative attitudes have been on the rise in Mali, even if only to a limited degree. Still, religious leaders, newspapers and radio stations did begin to raise their voices while opposing the influences of neoliberal, modern and secular lifestyles and politics (Soares 2006). However, more research is needed to fully understand the slow and limited, but discernible rise of radical religious views over the last two decades in Mali, including in the south of the country, as well as the long-term effects of public views of Islam among the populations occupied by Ansar Dine, MOJWA, AQIM in the country's north. The international community needs to support measures to prevent radicalisation by building upon the existing resilience factors in Mali.

Gender issues related to religion have also played an important role in the conflict in Mali. Because of the rather liberal interpretation of Islam in the country, women can participate to a great extent in its social, economic and political life, and they thus have a crucial role to play in the use of sustainable peacebuilding strategies. Not only have their

livelihoods been affected by the conflict, but they were also the first to start reconciliation processes at the local level. Also, women were disproportionately affected by the violence in northern Mali, as armed groups committed widespread violations of women's human rights due to their rigid interpretation of the Qur'an (Amnesty International 2012).

7. Case study III: Bosnia and Herzegovina

7.1. Background

From April 1992 to December 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the setting for an armed conflict involving several parties, essentially the military forces of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and those of Republika Srpska and Herzeg-Bosnia, self-proclaimed entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and after a referendum, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence, which was rejected both by the political leaders of ex-Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serbs. Bosnia and Herzegovina was a multi-ethnic political entity, the population of which comprised Muslim Bosnians (or Bosniaks, 44 per cent), Orthodox Serbs (31 per cent) and Catholic Croatians (17 per cent). War soon broke out, opposing, at different times, the three main ethno-religious groups. The conflict was marked by massive and indiscriminate war crimes, perpetuated by all sides, but mainly by Orthodox Serbs. International intervention by NATO forces eventually led to an end of the war and allowed the parties to sign the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. The Dayton Agreement divided the country into two political entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. It also made some rearrangements of the cantons and provided constitutional recognition for all three of the recognised ethnic groups. To date, Bosnia and Herzegovina is marked by a fragile state of peace, with strong divides between the different ethno-religious groups.

7.2. Concepts

'Ethno-religious conflict' and 'ethno-religious warfare' are the main terms scholars and politicians use to denote the religious dimension of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The countries of ex-Yugoslavia are characterised by the fact that the various communities are marked by their affiliations with specific religions. Their ethnic and religious identities overlap. Academics, in particular ethnologists, differ in their assessment of which identity – the religious or the ethnic – is predominant. Most people in Bosnia and Herzegovina tend to identify with their religion rather than with the state. Political and religious leaders of the three groups also emphasise the long-standing historic oppression of their respective religions or religious persecution. Ethno-nationalism is also prevalent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the members belonging to a nation are defined in terms of ethnicity rather than citizenship. 'Citizenship-based mentality' exists in a state where the members of the state identify themselves as members simply because they are citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation. This term was used by scholars to describe the pre-war phase until 1992, at least with regard to the official state policy (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012, 12). 'Holy war' and 'religious war' were concepts that all conflict parties used to justify the warfare and their use of violence, although to differing degrees.

7.3. Actors

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a multi-dimensional conflict, involving a multitude of actors. In the name of simplicity, for this case study the actors with different perspectives but who were nonetheless on the same side, have not been differentiated, but include:

• Muslim Bosnians;
• Orthodox Serbs;
• Catholic Croatians;
• local religious leaders;
• international religious leaders;
• religious relief organisations;
• Croatia;
• Serbia;
• international community (in particular NATO).

7.4. The role of religion in conflict and peace

Religion played a negative role in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with regard to the role of local religious leaders and of religious identities. Peace-promoting voices either did not exist or were not heard sufficiently. Whereas the conflict was mainly about power and territorial issues, ethno-religious identity played a crucial role, both fuelling and maintaining it. The 'centrality of identity-based conflict motives' was a major factor in the conflict, which was exploited by both religious and political leaders (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012, 15). In the aftermath of and during the war, and even until now, the peacebuilding potential of religion has been underutilised and has come to the fore only through dissident voices. Substantial efforts could have been made to use the capacities of religion to the benefit of creating sustainable peace. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a prominent example of what some have called a 'new war', in which identity instead of ideology (as during the Cold War) underlies the politics of the conflict and where group identity is the cornerstone for mobilising popular support for it (Kaldor 2012). Three dimensions of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to be addressed for sustainable peacebuilding, namely identity, grievance, and power sharing (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012).

Long-standing historic conflicts that are centred on the questions of religious identity, as well as their exploitation by political leaders, have exacerbated the perceived cleavages among the different ethno-religious groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The geopolitical location of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Christian and Muslim spheres of influence have made it a battleground for centuries for both Christian and Muslim forces. Historical developments were perceived as unjust and impacted directly on the conflict dynamics (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012). Before Yugoslavia fell apart, politics under its president, Josip Broz Tito, did not contribute to reducing religious and ethnic differences among its citizens, but simply obscured them (Patterson 2013). Past injustices figured prominently in the public discourse and made it difficult to disconnect ethnicity from religion. This created a situation that could be easily exploited by political leaders. Most importantly, state-building efforts in Yugoslavia utterly failed, as Serb leaders ruled along ethno-religious lines instead of creating an all-inclusive society, respectful of the multiple identities of its citizens. As a result, the citizens of ex-Yugoslavia continued to identify primarily along ethnic and religious lines.

Religion has played a 'pivotal part in the ethnic identity of the three groups' in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012, 17). This amalgam between religion and ethnicity does not in itself lead to conflict, but when the religious and political discourse takes an out-group/in-group approach rather than one with a universalist message of humanity, this amalgam exacerbates conflicts. Political leaders instrumentalised religion to help them achieve their own ethno-nationalist objectives, justify war and also massive war crimes, including ethnic cleansing (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012), although the official state policy was to promote citizenship-based identities. A strong argument can be made that it was not religion that was at the origin of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but rather politics and power struggles and that the political parties, by involving religion in their politics, did nothing else but create 'tension and hatred between the people' (Stefanov 2012). The ethno-religious identities of Bosnian Serbs and Croats were strengthened and exploited for political objectives by their 'homelands', namely the former Yugoslavia and Republic of Croatia (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012, 16).

However, some argue that religion itself was the cause of the conflict. They use Huntington's model (1993; 1997) of the clash of civilisations and argue that the Balkan countries constituted a series of interconnected fault lines between the Western Christian, the Eastern Orthodox and the Islamic civilisations (Cline n.d.). Yet, these writers also admit that the presumed clash of civilisations in the Balkans could only happen because all three groups laid claim to the same territory, thus basically accepting that the main underlying conflict factor was a struggle about territory and power. Other scholars use a slightly modified argument. For example, Robinson (2007) saw the conflict as 'largely a religious one'. And Rubin (1999) claimed that 'religious identity has been present constantly in the antagonisms that have fragmented the Balkans for centuries – setting neighbour against neighbour, Muslims against Orthodox Christians, and Orthodox Christians against Western Christians'. Current opinion polls show that today, the Croats in particular blame the Bosnian Serbs for 'excessive influence of religiousness on public life' (Skoko 2010). Such a perception is fuel for potential conflict.

Local and national religious leaders and groups played a negative role in exacerbating the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina by contributing to a radicalisation of the ethno-religious groups. For instance, Bosnian Serb religious leaders mobilised popular support for the punishment of secular leaders (Kivimäki, Kramer and Pasch 2012). Non-Orthodox

Christian groups did not sufficiently use their potential to promote peace either. International religious leaders played a prominent but at times negative role in the conflict. Eastern Orthodox churches fostered the kind of negative and destructive nationalism that fuelled and sustained the war; they indirectly supported war crimes by providing cover for war criminals such as Karadzic. The Catholic Church, in particular the Vatican, did not fully exercise its potential influence over Croat leaders to mitigate tensions and find peaceful solutions to the conflict. Foreign Muslim fighters, mostly from Afghanistan, provided military assistance to Bosniak forces (Patterson 2013). Religious leaders of all denominations failed to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the positive, peace-promoting messages of their religions, which: '… had neglected … to engage in mourning, honestly confess the crimes which had been committed by all sides in the course of the centuries, and ask one another for mutual forgiveness … there can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions!" (Küng and Kuschel 1993, 43–44). Reverend Professor Adrian Hastings of the University of Leeds, a leading Catholic historian, goes further, accusing the European religious community of having closed 'its eyes to the tragedy unfolding in Bosnia' (cited in Patterson 2013, 7).

On the positive side, international religious organisations, in particular in the field of humanitarian relief, have provided important assistance to war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina in the aftermath of the war, among them Islamic Relief, the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR), Catholic Social Services, Caritas and Benevoilencia (Patterson 2013, 7). Eurodiaconia, the Council of European Churches and the World Council of Churches have actively engaged in and promoted conflict resolution and peacebuilding in different forms at international, national and local levels. Youth organisations such as the Ecumenical Council of Europe and the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations have launched their own and even joint initiatives, including training courses and seminars on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina (as well as in other Balkan countries). Numerous independent Western, and particularly North American denominational organisations, have also engaged in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in the region with the use of interreligious dialogue as a main tool (Merdjanova and Brodeur 2010).

A number of local religious leaders and communities have only gradually started to talk and to work together on building sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, the edited volume

on peacemakers by Little (2007) contains a story of Ivo Markovic, a Croatian Franciscan friar, who was engaged in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. Young people with religious devotion were found to be more likely than older generations to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities. In addition, women's groups were more concerned with peacebuilding activities than were men's. A few independent religious councils have also been established to help with conflict resolution between the religious communities and to facilitate interdenominational cooperation in peacebuilding (Merdjanova and Brodeur 2010). Based on an opinion survey, Wilkes et al (2013) argue that the commitment to a process of reconciliation directly correlates with the religiosity of the individual concerned. He notes that religious people prefer to focus more on dealing with issues relating to the past in the reconciliation process (such as creating public spaces of commemoration) than do less religious or non-religious individuals, who, in general, are more sceptical about reconciliation initiatives. Respondents in the survey also accorded greater importance to the involvement of women than men in the reconciliation process. No significant differences, however, could be identified with regard to the importance of trust-building initiatives among all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or of focusing on the future and the younger generations.

On the role of gender in the conflict, women were disproportionately affected by the war. The most notorious example was the prevalence of rape, which was employed deliberately as a weapon of war. Importantly though, women have played a crucial role in peacebuilding initiatives. Scholars such as Zilka Spahic-Šiljak (2010, 2012, 2014) and Ina Merd-janova (2013; with Brodeur 2010) discussed and observed the distinctive role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

8. Conclusions

The vast body of literature and evidence on links between religion, conflict and peace does not point to the possibility of establishing a clear-cut model or theory for the relationship between these phenomena, nor does it provide simple recipes for promoting peace or avoiding war. However, this should not lead to the disillusioning conclusion that all is relative and contextual, nothing matters and nothing can be done.

What does emerge clearly from the literature is that religion does matter in both preventing and resolving conflict, and in making and building peace, but it needs time to analyse the complex interplay and specific articulations of religion in each individual context. This means taking a critical approach to the notion of religion that considers which aspects of the constellations of meanings associated with it are at play in each case. Shaped by history and context-dependent, religion is also culturally loaded, with shifting meanings that can include anything from sacred scriptures, to rituals, communal identity, norm-setting institutions, a focus on a deity or on the inner self.

There is no evidence to indicate that particular religious traditions are, by virtue of their theology, more prone to violence or more likely to lead to conflict or peace than others. However, attention can and should be paid to the underlying and enabling factors that make it possible for individuals, religious or political leaders, or communities to embrace a religious discourse, symbolism or institution to carry out or justify violence. Simultaneously, it is necessary to remain intellectually flexible and cognisant of the fact that religion is not *always* relevant in conflict or peace dynamics.

The relationship between religion and conflict or peacebuilding is neither static nor one-dimensional. It is crucial not to impose secular Western parameters when evaluating situations of potential or actual conflict, and

developing policy responses for them. Contextual variables (historical, socio-economic, cultural) affect outcomes and thus no situation is identical to another, so even a most successful group or leader that was able to negotiate peace in one country may be unable to alleviate a conflict in a different country or in a different historical moment.

Religion matters in contemporary international affairs in essentially four ways.

1. It offers powerful views of cosmic order that often also generate political articulations. This is particularly evident in the monotheistic religions where there is an urge to connect transcendent beliefs to transform human life (in God's ways) in the immanent world.
2. Religious beliefs, scriptures, rituals and symbols can easily become the foundation of ethnic or nationalist projects because they provide powerful narratives. But they can equally generate narratives of human dignity and reconciliation.
3. Religious actors comprise a variegated spectrum of ordinary individuals, leaders, grassroots movements, NGOs, transnational networks, and organised institutions. Hence the potential to engage with religion should not be limited to narrow hierarchical (Western-centred) understandings of which people and groups constitute legitimate interlocutors.
4. Most religions are constructed around patriarchy and male leadership; this feature has not only had the effect of institutionally marginalising women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, but has also enabled the justification or even perpetration of violence against these groups and to exaggerate masculine narratives of war and martyrdom. Contemporary Western emphasis on equality for women and LGBT rights can be contrasted with supposedly immutable traditional religious values (for whatever religious tradition) and thus rally sympathy for a cause from traditionally minded people who might otherwise be repelled by programmes of militant action in the name of religion.

The literature and the case studies presented here have addressed specific features and dynamics involving religion in conflict and peace. The following conclusions can be drawn.

Research on the causes of conflict, on faith-based terrorism and Islamic radicalisation is inconclusive in its attempts to identify patterns or variables such as poverty, personality traits, inequality or others that

can determine the degree to which one religious identity or another is prone to violent actions. Although it has been shown that religion can contribute to the escalation of conflicts, there is no fixed recipe for establishing which combination of actors, claims, external factors and religious features can ignite tensions and violence, where religious dimensions are central.

Recognising the role of religion and engaging with its multiple facets do not replace the other work required to address the other interlocking issues (e.g. deprivation, marginalisation, institutional malfunctioning, state failure, global dynamics of dependency, etc.) related to conflict and peace. Even in those conflicts where religion appears to be a strong causal element, research shows that political manipulation of it rather than bodies of doctrine are what matters most. Quests for power and authority by opportunistic religious and political leaders are often behind their strategic mobilisation of community identities to aid them achieve their aims.

In diplomacy and peacemaking, emphasis has often been put on the potential of religion to promote transformation, rather than on delivering immediate solutions to conflicts. We have also learnt that involving faith in conflict resolution is not about converting the parties to a particular religion or abandoning secular international human rights standards that underpin peace processes. Rather, it is about reinforcing the path to peace and reconciliation with a religious grammar that is familiar to the actors involved and that enables them to fully engage in a process that also requires a degree of self-transformation.

9. Recommendations for policymakers and future research

The growing interest of the international community in the role of religion in conflict and peace is most welcome, but for it to proceed in concrete terms needed to understand and apply this perspective, the subject must be tackled with great sensitivity and nuance. The following recommendations for policymakers provide some general guidelines of how that might be accomplished successfully.

- Religion is not a tangible and self-contained object and it would be reductive to try to understand it exclusively as a body of doctrines, a specific institution, a particular person or group. Rather, it should be understood as a system of interlocking variables with a role that changes, shrinks and expands depending on a number of specific circumstances, historical trajectories, and external factors.
- Secular and Western presuppositions and philosophies are still hegemonic ideas hindering a nuanced and full appreciation of religion, and in fact these can limit the definitions that we use and the approaches that we take when encountering religion.
- Caution should be taken not to overestimate the role of religion in conflict or peacemaking situations to the exclusion of other factors and dynamics involved.
- Similarly, it should be remembered that engagement with religion cannot be a substitute for other approaches to finding solutions to problems.
- Governments and diplomats should avoid taking a purely instrumental approach to religious communities, leaders and NGOs to ensure that the legitimacy of faith-based actors remains intact.
- Academically, there is no best or ideal methodology or discipline for acquiring a full understanding of what religion is and how it works.

Hence debates about the 'scientificity' of quantitative versus qualitative approaches for the study of religion are inappropriate.

- Instead, it is crucial that holistic approaches be encouraged and that a variety of disciplines continue to address the multiple aspects of this subject from different perspectives.

- Seeking to identify a cause and effect relationship between religion and violence, and between religion and peace, seems both useless and inappropriate. Although many studies have addressed how these factors interact in a multiplicity of contexts, no researcher has come up with a scientific formula to predict when radicalisation happens or whether or how the outcomes of a war depend on religion.

- Recognising that religion can play a role in conflict and peace does not mean just searching for or consulting with faith-based NGOs or religious leaders because:

    - There are many less visible ways in which religion can be woven into a particular context, for instance when it takes the shape of symbols or moral guidelines and decisions.

    - There is a risk that the burden of solving crises would then be shifted onto their shoulders, while governments and the international community remain focused on finding solutions rather than accept their own responsibilities towards humanity.

    - Because of the patriarchal imprint of most religions, their leaders tend to be men; thus, engaging with them exclusively would exclude by default other important segments of society.

- At the policy level, there is a need for great discernment to appreciate the ways in which different components of the broad phenomenon of religion come into play in conflicts, and to recognise those situations when religion is actually not a primary factor in them.

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The role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding has all too often been depicted in binary terms: it is seen as a source either of violence or of reconciliation. This simplification obscures the complexity of the subject and shows that there is no common understanding of the central terms of the debate. Religion is never a static or isolated entity but should rather be understood as a fluid system of variables, contingent upon a large number of contextual and historical factors. By observing how religion operates and interacts with other aspects of the human experience at the global, institutional, group and individual levels, this report aims to gain a more nuanced understanding of its role (or potential role) in both conflict and peacebuilding.

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