

New Approaches to the Study of Religion and Peace

Convenor:

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Abstract

The study of the religious involvement in conflict, peacemaking and peacebuilding has mainly focused on the role of religion in good governance issues, such as state building in the so-called track II or nonofficial diplomacy. In addition, interreligious dialogue, faith-based diplomacy and the role of religion in restorative justice and reconciliation have been some of the main concerns in the field. The majority of these studies have considered religion as an ally to liberal peacebuilding models.

The purpose of this panel is to challenge some of the dominant views in the study of religion and peace by proposing alternative paths of analysis. The papers will enhance the field through the proposal of critical analysis of concepts and theories through theoretical, historical, and empirical contributions. Papers include research on grassroots experiences of peacebuilding, religion and transformative reparation, religion and social justice, and religion and transitional justice from below.

Outline

The debate on the role of religion in the public arena has taken many paths. One of them has been the influence of religion in conflict and peace. There has been significant attention on the role of religion in the justification of violence, often through the lens of counterterrorism policy. With the turn of the millennium, there has been an increasing interest in studying the role of religion for reconciliation, social justice and peacebuilding. Religious peacebuilding can be understood as the (intellectual, political, social, or economic) processes by which religion contributes to achieving positive peace. Literature on religious peacebuilding comes from different disciplines such as political science, sociology, theology, and philosophy. In this literature religion has been recognized as the missing dimension in statecraft and a non-official approach to peace-making mainly through faith-based diplomacy and inter-religious dialogue (Appleby, 2000; Gopin, 2002; Johnston and Sampson, 1994). It has also been studied as a strong ethical resource for the implementation of policies of forgiveness and reconciliation in a context of restorative justice in transitional societies (Philpott, 2006). This concern has also been reflected in the creation of governmental offices dedicated to engaging religious communities (Appleby et al., 2012; Wilson, 2013).

There is no single theoretical model that explains the influence of religion in peace but it has been increasingly seen in relation to 'good governance' issues (Haynes, 2013). In addition, there has been a predominance of descriptive cases, a normative approach, a focus on Abrahamic religions, and a promotion of the liberal peace model in the field. The proposed panel considers necessary to broaden the scope of the field in order to include conflicts that are not religious in nature but where the burden

of peacebuilding often falls on the shoulders of religious actors and communities at the grassroots (Cejka and Bamat, 2003). This should also include transitional societies where religion is considered to be part of the problem and not of the solution (Brewer et al., 2011).

The papers will develop new concepts, methodologies and perspectives that broaden our understanding of the role of religion in peacebuilding. The papers will enhance our knowledge of the field through the proposal of critical analysis of concepts and theories through theoretical, historical, and empirical contributions. Papers include research on grassroots experiences of peacebuilding, religion and transformative reparation, religion and social justice, and religion and transitional justice from below.

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Cejka, M.A., Bamat, T., 2003. *Artisans of peace: grassroots peacemaking among Christian communities*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y.

Gopin, M., 2002. *Between Eden and Armageddon the future of religion, violence and peacemaking* [WWW Document]. URL <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10273345> (accessed 9.5.13).

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Johnston, D., Sampson, C., 1994. *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Philpott, D., 2006. *The politics of past evil: religion, reconciliation, and the dilemmas of transitional justice*. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Ind.

Wilson, E., 2013. Engaging religion at the Department of State « The Immanent Frame [WWW Document]. *The Immanent Frame*. URL <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2013/07/30/engaging-religion-at-the-department-of-state/#Wilson> (accessed 9.5.13).

Confirmed Papers:

Passivity, 'contro la pace': On Buddhist-based efforts towards reconciliation and peace in Sri Lanka

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This paper reflects on the role of Buddhism and Buddhist religious actors in addressing political situations requiring restorative justice and reconciliation efforts, with special reference to Sri Lanka. Buddhism's pacifist image has lately been challenged in Asia by the fury of extremist Buddhist attacks on Muslim communities in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, disrupting, in the former case, the post-conflict reconciliation efforts evident at the grassroots level. Concurrently, academic analyses of Buddhist – based efforts towards peace education and conflict resolution have found that the religiously cultivated passivity and removal from the worldly as taught by Buddhism invalidate its ability to 'build peace'. Against a backdrop of Buddhist extremist violence and the saturation of the 'peace and faith' market by Christian organisations in Sri Lanka, this paper assesses the existence and viability of Buddhist-led grassroots efforts to support reconciliation and promote restorative justice efforts in the years following the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. In doing so, this paper also attempts to further contribute to our understanding of models for peace and reconciliation efforts that can be built from religious philosophies that are not based in a Christian perspective.

Religious Peacebuilding as Emancipatory Peacebuilding: The Recovery of Social Memory by the Diocese of Quibdó (Colombia)

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This paper focuses on the work of the Diocese leading processes of social memorialisation after violence as a strategy of peacebuilding. It pays particular attention to the case of the massacre of Bojayá. The paper discusses the role of religion in reinforcing bottom-up memorialisation activities aimed to broaden top-down official measures of reparation and reconciliation. This paper argues that the framework of emancipatory peacebuilding can help to understand grassroots practices of religious actors working for peace better than other frameworks in the mainstream literature on religious peacebuilding. It analyses the influence of the theological concepts of social sin and structural violence in the construction of claims of transformative reparation. In addition, it analyses some of the frictions between victims' response to official measures of reparation and the church's position.