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INTRODUCTION: RELIGION AND PEACE

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All the world's faith traditions, at their core, hold peace as a central value. It is therefore not surprising that there is linkage between religion and peace. Yet, the nature of that linkage is intensively debated among scholars. This volume presents the most central texts engaged in a discussion about the connection between religion and peace. There is a set of questions that the debate has evolved around. In order to progress, there is a need to avoid the naïve intellectual position that religion is inherently peaceful, or alternatively, automatically belligerent. In fact, religious traditions can be either – or simultaneously – peace-promoting forces or war-mongering, but *under different circumstances*. What those circumstances are, then, is something that is yet to be fully understood, and that the texts in this volume provide some answers to. In a previous volume in this series (Vol. II: *Religion and War*), we discussed some of the main explanations for why religious traditions sometimes create conditions for conflict, risk escalating violence, and impede peaceful settlement. Here we focus on the peace end of the spectrum.

Kristian Berg Harpvingen and **Hanne Eggen RØslien** start their analysis with the claim that religions have the *potential* of contributing to peacemaking and peacebuilding processes around the world but that this potential is variably realized. They identify the main categories through which religious influence can help to shape peaceful developments in situations of political violence, armed conflict, and instability. It is by disaggregating religion into three conceptual components – religious norms, religious identities, and religious organizations – that we can better understand how exactly religion builds peace. Religious peacemaking can consequently be thought of as transformation of contexts of violence and injustice by challenging and shaping spiritually based norms, by affecting faith identities, and by working in and through religiously based organizations.

Focusing in on the third of these elements, religious organizations, **Cynthia Sampson** helpfully identifies four broad roles played by religious actors participating as third parties in conflict. The focus here is on the functional aspect of religious peacebuilders and the way religious actors can help to bring about peaceful transformation of violent conflicts and situations on injustice. The roles that religious actors usually play is that of advocates, intermediaries, observers, and educators. When religious peacemakers act as advocates, they address the underlying grievances and causes of conflicts and bring them to the attention of the world in order to transform the structural problems that underlie much of political violence. As intermediaries, religious peacemakers act as go-betweens, trying to get belligerents to reconcile their differences. When religious peacemakers serve as observers, in a third-party role, they contribute less to bringing issues to a resolution and more to making sure that already-agreed deals are in fact implemented and adhered to. Finally, as educators, religious peacemakers rely on their knowledge and awareness to empower local actors in peacemaking.

R. Scott Appleby has been an immensely important scholar in this literature, laying out the research agenda of religious peacemaking. His underlying assumption is that the impact of religion varies significantly from context to context and that religion, under different conditions, can play either a constructive or a destructive role. His rich historical account provides a useful definition of religious peacebuilding: “the various phases, levels, and types of activities, by religious actors and others, that strengthen religion’s role in creating tolerant and nonviolent societies” (page 211-212). The ability of religious actors to engage in such religious peacebuilding is to no small extent contingent upon the social and

religious location, that is, the institutional and cultural basis of religious actors and organizations.

In the analysis of faith-based actors by **Jacob Bercovitch** and **S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana**, the starting point is the core conflict resolution concepts of legitimacy and leverage. These have proven important in mainstream conflict resolution theory to explain both the participation of mediators and the successful outcome of mediation processes. These concepts are applicable, according to Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana, also to faith-based actors acting as mediators but the concepts carry quite different meanings in this context. Faith-based mediators derive their legitimacy primarily from being cultural insiders with local respect due to their moral and spiritual standing. Faith-based mediators also have a different form of leverage: high-ranking leaders possess moral and spiritual leverage and can influence their communities.

A cautionary note is important here. **Gerald Power** underlines the inherently public nature of religion and how it influences its strategic role in peacebuilding. The religious peacemaking literature runs the risk of ‘instrumentalizing’ religion, in treating religious traditions, experiences, and actors as mere tools for peace, without a deeper appreciation of the value of religious traditions themselves. Such an instrumentalization of religion, even for the sake of peacebuilding, may risk undercutting its effectiveness as it affects the authenticity of religions. Acknowledging and building on an authentic religious experience, religion can play a useful role. For example, moderate religious actors can help win the ideological battle with extremist interpretations. Some of the most important religious resources for strategic peacebuilding are the willingness to engage in self-sacrificial work and the role of religious precepts.

A final important aspect of religious peacemaking, according to **David Smock**, is interfaith dialogue, that is, processes to defuse tension between followers of different faith-traditions. This dialogue can occur even in situations where the tensions between religions are high and emotions have escalated. In many conflicts around the world, Smock points out, religions are, in some way or another, complicit in the dynamics of armed conflicts and political violence. But religious actors can, through inter-faith-dialogue (among other processes) potentially contribute to more peaceful developments. In fact, interfaith dialogue proves most meaningful in the most contentious interfaith relationships.

Andreas Hasenclever and **Volker Rittberger**, whose text we include in volume IV of this project, identify an important strategy for religious peacemakers, the ‘dialogue strategy’. According to their analysis, some faith-based actors can re-formulate militant religious ideology to arrive at an interpretation that is characterized by tolerance, compassion, and justice. Thus, religious peacemaking is not only about bridging two views but also about confronting one’s own views and challenging rhetoric, behavior, and structures that contribute to injustice or violence, and that derive their legitimacy from religious sources.

Scholars of faith-based diplomacy have wondered about how to best bring the resources of religious traditions into diplomacy and international relations. In particular, **Douglas Johnston** and **Brian Cox** paved a new scholarly path by identifying the need for a faith-based diplomacy that can deal more fruitfully with identity-based conflicts. Faith-based diplomacy is distinguished from secular diplomacy due to its reliance on spiritual resources and spiritual authority. It assumes a more holistic ‘transcendent’ approach and benefits from longer time horizon and perseverance. A leading authority in the field of religious peacemaking, **Marc Gopin**, also identifies a set of religious values that can be harnessed for the cause of conflict resolution, including the central role of relational empathy. For members of the monotheistic traditions, this compassion finds its basic motivation in God’s empathy with humanity. Additional values that can lead individuals towards a deeper commitment to

conflict resolution include the sanctity of life, nonviolence, and the role of interior or spiritual practices (including fasts, mediation, prayers).

Ron Hassner contributes to this literature by employing the theoretical framework of indivisibility to the empirical domain of sacred space. Indivisible resources are those that cannot be divided without losing their significance and value. Because of their integrity, their well-defined boundaries, and the absence of substitutes (non-fungibility), conflicts over sacred spaces are particularly difficult to resolve. The implication of this is that if essentially religious issues are seen as merely demographic, administrative, or legal problems rather than taking the religious aspect seriously, conflict resolution processes are seriously impeded.

At the foundation of all modern restrictions on warfare, be they United Nations documents or the charters of non-governmental organizations like the Red Cross, lies the just war tradition. Its roots, in turn, are located in the great religious traditions. The Hebrew Bible dedicates significant portions to outlining the requirements for wars of annihilation but it also details restrictions on war. Jewish tradition has gone even further, restricting the conditions for the most brutal of offensive wars so as to, in effect, eliminate that category altogether. In Christianity, it was Augustin of Hippo who first suggested the category of just wars but it was the medieval scholar **Thomas Aquinas** who laid out the conditions for launching a just war. These conditions are now recognized as comprising the category of *ius ad bellum* (the laws of going to war), later supplemented by the *ius in bello* (the laws of conducting war) and, more recently, the *ius post bellum* (the laws of concluding a war). Aquinas confirms Augustin's stance: War is not always sinful. He proposes three conditions for waging a just war: Just authority, just cause, and rightful intention. Though he does not lay out precisely what these criteria entail, let alone how compliance is to be ascertained, his brief outline sufficed to inspire centuries of Christian thinking about the limits of warfare.

A good example for this tradition is the pastoral letter of the **Catholic bishops**, written during the Cold War, when the threat of global nuclear annihilation was seen as a realistic and acute scenario. The text is valuable in setting out the basic tenants of a Catholic approach to peace and conflict and in presenting the criteria of the just war in a manner that is applicable beyond the specific time in which this document was written. Just war is a way to both constrain and legitimize political violence by means of religious tradition. It entails the idea of a just cause, comparative justice, right intention, proportionality, last resort, probability of success and competent authority. **Turner Johnson** traces the historical roots and sources of this idea. He points out that every culture has an explicit or implicit idea of a just war, a cultural consensus regarding the legitimate use of force as well as ideas about constraints and limits. However, these constraints on the use of force are difficult to apply when conflicts arise that cut across cultural boundaries.

Overall, the literature of religious peacemaking has relied heavily on Christian experiences, without sufficiently incorporating insights from other religious world traditions. It is therefore important to have a more inclusive take in this volume. The roots of Islamic just war theory can be traced to the Qur'an and to work by early Muslim scholars, like **Muhammad ibn al-Hassan al-Shaybani**, an 8th century jurist considered by many the founder of Muslim international law. In his *Siyar*, he puts forth the *Islamic Law of Nations*, a text published in Baghdad at the height of Muslim imperial expansion. Shaybani's work thus influenced the manner in which Islamic rulers conducted war and helped launch a venerable Muslim tradition in the study of constraints on war. His *Law of Nations* requires, among others, that prisoners of war be spared death if they convert to Islam, that assurances of safe conduct be respected, and that prisoners of war with mental or physical disabilities may not be killed. Setting an example for future just war theorists, Shaybani combines ethics, grounded in religious principles, with pragmatism. For example, he proposes that inaccurate siege weapons may be used against cities even if Muslims are known to reside among the besieged.

He bases this particular approach not on lofty ethical principles but on practical grounds, arguing that an absolute prohibition on such weapons in the presence of Muslim noncombatants would make war impossible. At the same time, he is quick to emphasize that Muslim noncombatants cannot be intentionally targeted and should be spared harm as far as possible.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer offers a contemporary example for how Islamic values can be utilized in dispute resolution and in peacebuilding more broadly. Two central Islamic notions are particularly important in this regard: the emphasis on social justice and the notion of the community (*Ummah*). By tracing the normative foundation of social justice and community to their Islamic foundations it is possible, he surmises, to arrive at more effective peacebuilding practices that are religiously informed and anchored. The analysis by **Harvey Cox** builds on Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as well as Sikhism and Judaism. In order to understand the role of the religious traditions in social conflicts, it is crucial to study how different world religious traditions view other faiths. His analysis points to the debates that occur *within* each religious traditions and calls for strengthening interpretations that emphasize universal values and that highlight the intersection of religious traditions.

Lastly, we wish to highlight one of the main lacunae in the literature on religious peacemaking, and in research on religion and international relations overall: As is evident in our collection of major works, very little systematic research has been conducted on the topic of gender. Yet, we cannot hope to fully understand the contribution of religion to peaceful development if we do not take into account the contribution of gender roles and perspectives. The picture here is complex. Whereas many of the main religious traditions have taken conservative, patriarchal, and even reactionary positions towards issues of gender rights, many women have also been empowered through their active involvement in their religious traditions. IR research on gender and religion is growing in importance and scholarly interests, and we will very likely see an increasing scholarly attention being paid to how religious values interact with gender ideologies and roles in shaping patterns of violence, peace, and international relations.