

International Conference on Islam and Conflict Transformation

University of Manchester
24th January 2013



CONFERENCE REPORT

THE HUMANITARIAN AND CONFLICT RESPONSE INSTITUTE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
& ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE

The University
of Manchester



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Islam and Conflict Transformation: Conference Report

University of Manchester, 24th January 2013

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary: Atallah Fitzgibbon.....	5
---	---

Key Note Address 1: Mohammed Abu Nimer	8
---	---

The conceptualisation of non violence initiatives and conflict resolution methods in the Muslim World and their applicability with traditional forms of mediation

Panel Session 1	11
------------------------------	----

Anicée Van Engeland: *Conceptualisations and Causes of Conflict: “Neo-ijtihad as a Peace-maker: Interpretations of the Verse of the Sword”*

Saad Abbasi: *Reinterpreting Civil Society in the Muslim Context: Investigating the Materialization of Wired Civil Societies in Muslim-Majority States*

Victoria Biggs: *‘I am a Woman, No More and No Less’: Muslim and Jewish Women facing Militarism in Israel and Palestine*

Farid Mirbagheri: *Peace Within, Peace Without: An Islamic Critical Approach to Peace*

Panel Session 2	23
------------------------------	----

Hüsrev Tabak: *Islamic reconsideration of ‘ethnicity without groups’ as a conflict transformation mechanism: Would Islamic reinterpretation of ethnicity be a cure for Turkey’s Kurdish issue?*

Khurshid Khan & Yahia Baiza: *Decoding the Genesis of Ethnic and Religious Tensions in Pakistan and Afghanistan: A comparative Analysis*

Jerome Drevon: *Renouncing Jihad? A New Interpretation of the Revisions of Islamist Armed Groups in Egypt*

Philipp Bruckmayr: *After Genocide: Cambodia’s Muslims, the State, and the International Community in the Post-Khmers Rouges Era*

Key Note Address 2: Ayşe Kadayifci-Orellana	35
--	----

Women’s Contributions to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in the Muslim World

Panel Session 340

Amjad Saleem & Shafiur Rahman: *Understanding Principles relating to Consensual and Representative Governance in the Peaceful Resolution of Conflict in Islamic Tradition*

Ahmed Al-Dawoody: *Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars Under Islamic Law*

Michelle Garred & Joan Castro: *Conflict-Sensitive Expressions of Faith in Mindanao: A Case Study*

Executive Summary: Atallah Fitzgibbon, Islamic Relief Worldwide

Islam and Islamic organisations, both historically and in contemporary conflicts, have played a central role not only in providing relief and rehabilitation, but have also acted as agents of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Whilst there are a range of approaches in conflict resolution and transformation, Islamic faith principles, methodologies and instruments are not as yet widely researched. Islamic Relief Worldwide was delighted, therefore, to work closely with the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute of the University of Manchester to facilitate this Conference to share knowledge and encourage academic and policy oriented research in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Muslim world.

The result was an excellent event that drew together academic and practical expertise from multi-disciplinary fields including Anthropology, Theology, Area, Peace and Conflict, Legal, Development and International Studies. Through this audience a unique platform was provided for knowledge-sharing and dialogue between policymakers, academics, researchers, graduate students, and practitioners to address the question of conflict transformation in the Muslim world and beyond, as well as current thought and research on where Islamic studies and conflict transformation meet. We are confident that this conference will result in a number of collaborations and knowledge-application amongst those in attendance and beyond to their colleagues and readers.

This report aims to provide an overview of the research presented and the subsequent discussions. While the research presented was diverse – both in terms of context and content – there were a number of themes and points shared and reinforced across the sessions that are valuable for academics and practitioners alike:

The Need for Community Ownership over the Conflict Transformation Process

Agencies working at a local level should be sensitive in not imposing external values. They need to tap into local traditions, language and culture, including religious concepts and teachings, while ensuring that local representatives clearly see their roles and responsibilities within their own faith and cultural lenses.

No ‘One size fits all’

We learnt from the Salaam Institute the importance of ensuring that any intervention is made context-specific to the culture and traditions of the local community concerned. Investment in researching this and ensuring local people do not feel that external values and culture are being imposed on them contribute towards ownership. Funding and incentives for participation can be wasted unless this happens and people feel their moral responsibility as actors. Ultimately change may very likely be rooted in the heart, and so to achieve this, substantial spiritual input is required.

The Need for Faith Literacy

Outside actors require faith literacy to enable Muslim communities internalise the responsibility and management of conflict and in order to engage influential opinion formers such as Imams and religious/community leaders. Religious language and secular language are often alienated from each other and actors need to work to provide connections between them through using religious/local terms or concepts, such as *Rahma* (Mercy), *Afwa* (Forgiveness), *Fitrah* (the universality of humans), *Sabr* (Patience) and *Tawhid* (The unitary/unique source of all existence), and cultural/religious traditions and rituals such as Jirga, Sulh and tribal/community meeting processes.

The Importance of Education

The work presented at the Conference reminded us of the importance that education plays, particularly in learning about other groups and the role their cultures, beliefs and values play in ensuring trust-building within communities. Much conflict and prejudice emerges from needless fear of 'the other'. Building relations and understanding amongst groups helps 'humanise' them in the minds and hearts of protagonists. The example was given of Afghanistan where sectarian and ethnic conflict has actually reduced over the last twenty years as a result of greater familiarity and education provided on groups within the country, making people feel less threatened.

The Need for Gender Sensitive Approaches

We were reminded by the Salaam Institute that women in Muslim communities can either play an explicit and active role in mobilising for peace (examples of which include Wajir in Kenya and recently in the Arab Spring) or a behind the scenes 'influencing' role. Very often women can succeed where men fail, particularly where they are playing parts that are not immediately visible to those coming from outside of the community. Care should be taken to include women as stakeholders and analyse gender relations, power dynamics and perspectives.

The Need for Parallel Approaches to Strengthen Governance

We learnt from The Cordoba Foundation and Zayed University representatives about the importance of understanding traditions of governance and consensual politics in Islam including: the social contract from Islamic traditions and the responsibilities of actors, traditions of 'Shura' (consultation), the religious justification for violent struggle against oppression and the command to patience with leaders (*Sabr*). Reminding parties of the responsibilities related to their role as '*Khalifa*' (Vice-Regency on Earth) and the accountabilities inherent therein can be valuable.

Although no 'blueprint' for governance was handed down as part of revelation, important principles and traditions exist from the Prophet Muhammed's (PBUH¹) own example and the

¹ Prophets of God are honoured by Muslims with this saying when their name is mentioned. For the purposes of concision, this is not continued through the report.

constitution of Medina. The concept of choosing or electing a leader from amongst the community is deeply rooted in that tradition. However it is important for many Muslims to feel that the political constitution within their nation recognises the 'Sovereignty of God' whilst much law will be derived from divine guidance but man-made.

Working in a Multi-faith Context.

We learned from the inspiring Mindanao case study presented by World Vision that working in a multi-faith context requires yet another set of skills. Important amongst these is the importance of developing concepts of fellowship and local solutions by faiths working together. The programme in Mindanao used an organisational planning approach originally developed to help humanitarian and development assistance practitioners understand the complex interaction between aid and conflict or the environment called 'Do No Harm' (DNH), which was re-structured to enable participants to recognise and minimise unintended, negative impact of faith and community practices on the conflict dynamics, while maximising positive impacts. The adjusted approach was called 'Local Capacities for Peace'.

DNH has made a remarkable contribution towards the development of inclusive mindsets in Mindanao. However the religious sector differs in important ways from the world of humanitarian aid. Effort is needed to extend it to all socio-cultural groups and contexts and faith leaders need to be sensitised to being self critical. DNH lends itself to the use of religious scripture and teaching in enabling religious actors to understand their own faith's peace teachings as a rationale for conflict-sensitive practice.

Islamic Relief Worldwide considers conflict transformation to be a key strategic area of activities where we are engaged in working with the most vulnerable to address the root causes of poverty. We wish to thank all those involved with the Conference for being part of efforts to develop expertise and knowledge on this topic. In particular, however, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of those that enabled the event to take place, namely Tim Jacoby, Co-Founder and Teaching Director of HCRI; Betty-Ann Bristow, HCRI Institute Administrator and Mamoun Abuarqub, Policy and Research Analyst with Islamic Relief Worldwide.

The knowledge gained and the conversations begun at this Conference, we hope, will enable the community of practitioners to move towards better knowledge and practice in this area, and that this Conference will mark the start of further collaboration in this field, not only between those participating in the Conference but also with the wider audience of this report.

Key Note Address 1: Mohammed Abu Nimer, Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, School of International Service, American University

The conceptualisation of non violence initiatives and conflict resolution methods in the Muslim World and their applicability with traditional forms of mediation

Session Summary

In his keynote address, Mohamed Abu Nimer provided a rich introduction to peacebuilding in Islam that formed a detailed backdrop to the rest of the day, drawing on three main themes: Qur'anic exegesis (such as interpretation of the 'verse of the Sword', a theme taken up by Anicée van Engeland's presentation), the development of reconciliation and mediation strategies across the Muslim world, and the culturally sensitive and context-specific approach to peacebuilding adopted by the Salam Institute. To make it clear that there is space for pacifism within Islam, he gave specific examples of how non-violent approaches to conflict resolution have emerged in Muslim societies, pointing to Badshah Khan, 'the non-violent soldier of Islam' who allied himself with Gandhi in the struggle for Indian independence, as an exemplar of modern-day Islamic pacifism. Having identified non-violence as an under-researched and underemphasised approach to conflict within the broader Islamic tradition, he moved on to discuss the Salam Institute's own work in promoting non-violence through peace and civic education programs.

Salam Institute does not operate generic interfaith and educational programs, but tailors each one to the needs of the precise community in which it is to run. "We frame it within the Islamic context. We use the language of the local community. We use Qur'an, hadith, traditional stories. It is amazing – to speak to a Qur'anic school teacher who tells you a story about Imam Sha'fi – when he tells it, he tells it as though Sha'fi is living now. And he believes every word. So for him that story is the meaningful one that teaches pluralism and coexistence. It's not a quote from Einstein or somebody else." Abu Nimer emphasises the need to draw on the rich cultural and religious resources already present within a society in order to foster peace. Related to this, he counsels international humanitarian practitioners to be sensitive to actual rather than perceived needs of a community, citing the case of a Pakistani madrasa that was given a consignment of computers by an American aid agency. The school lacked the facilities to house the computers, so the donation – intended to improve children's understanding and awareness of communities other than their own – could not be used to help in the school's educational work as the donors had hoped.

Abu Nimer also outlined a key distinction between peacebuilding in the Islamic world and peacebuilding as envisaged in urban Western culture. "In Western culture the best way to solve a conflict is not usually through a mediator, but through direct face-to-face negotiation, because we assume that individuals are responsible for their conflicts. But if you come to my

village and you insult me, you did not really insult me, you insulted my extended family. So to solve the problem, you have to meet with my parents and my grandparents. So we don't individualise the conflict... I am not talking about all Muslims everywhere, but mainly rural societies. This is applicable there."

Abu Nimer presents religious and cultural ritual as a means of resolving conflict and building relationships, suggesting that this framework is preferable to a legal one that treats peace as a contract. To illustrate the pitfalls of the legal approach, he describes a mediation seminar he led in Gaza in 1993 that was based on the Harvard negotiation model. "I insisted at that time for them to go through the six stages of mediation. The sixth stage was to sign a contract, write it down. And they got so annoyed with me, and they said, 'Abu Nimer, you have been only four years in America and already you're so American. You know we don't take the time to sign and write it down.' They reminded me, we invite three or four hundred people to the public, and the signature is public. We don't sign in a lawyer's office behind closed doors." Throughout his presentation, Abu Nimer repeatedly emphasised the need to be sensitive to the local context, criticising international funding bodies that make funding conditional on an organisation's ability to work from a particular agenda that may not be suited to the needs of the local community.

Finally he detailed the other obstacles that he faced in conducting his educational work in Muslim societies, specific to his role as a Muslim peace worker. Internal factors include cultural practices, theological interpretations that are blocking peacebuilding in the society, lack of professional training, and lack of resources. He notes that people in Muslim societies often attribute conflict to external categories that have given birth to widespread paranoia and conspiracy theorising. "Colonialism, Zionism, globalism, all the isms. It's correct in some ways, but it is not the whole story... The product of these 'isms' is suspicion. You cannot work in peacebuilding with a Muslim community without going through this gate, overcoming suspicion, overcoming these antagonisms, and gaining a trust and a credibility that you are not advancing the interests of any of these groups. That's gate one. Gate two is their internal issues." Abu Nimer identifies religious sectarianism and divides between rich and poor as internal issues that require a peaceful resolution, along with the existence of authoritarian regimes and a corresponding authoritarian mentality that fuels the aforementioned sectarianism. "Peacebuilding and conflict resolution inherently contradict this. So here you come to people who are trained to work under one leader and one authority, and you say, 'No, you should not work under one leader, you should always expand it and get consensus. Everybody is equal around the table'... Your peacebuilding approach contradicts that inherent cultural approach." This, along with a cultural system that privileges loyalty to a tribe over loyalty to a state, is the reason behind the failure of many peacebuilding efforts in the Muslim world. Abu Nimer offers civic education with a special focus on citizenship as a partial solution, along with economic development that will heal breaches between richer and poorer groups in society.

“Conflict resolution brings one major principle: you have to be critical of your surroundings. You cannot accept things just because they have been said to you.” While recognising the importance of cultural sensitivity, it is important to challenge established traditions, such as through encouraging women’s active participation in peacebuilding as a way of challenging social gender divides. “It is very hard to find individuals who are self-reflective about reality, but the majority conform and are obedient to the system, because critical thinking can end in the jail.” Peacebuilding means working to allay these fears and providing a supportive environment in which people can express ideas freely, which for Abu Nimer means using community values and ethics as a starting-point for exploration.

Discussion

An audience member asked if Islam has an equivalent of Christianity’s ‘turn the other cheek’ principle. Abu Nimer replied, “That’s easy. Imam Ali was asked, ‘If someone comes to kill you when you are praying, what do you do?’ He replied, ‘I cover my head while I am praying, so I don’t see the gleam of the sword.’ That’s Imam Ali, the leader of the Shi’a tradition. In practice, both Christians and Muslims do not turn the cheek, they militarise and weaponise, but the resources for non-violence are there. The Prophet Muhammad, when he was being persecuted by the Meccans – for years they were throwing trash at him – repeated the same words of Christ in Jerusalem, ‘God, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing. You can find the resources... The highest virtue in Islam is not revenge, it is forgiveness.” Another listener asked when outside mediators ought to be used, and Abu Nimer responded that outside involvement is usually necessitated in the larger conflicts.

Panel Session 1

Anicée Van Engeland, School of Oriental and African Studies

Conceptualisations and Causes of Conflict: “Neo-ijtihād as a Peace-maker: Interpretations of the Verse of the Sword”

Abstract

Alternative textual readings of the Qur'an via the new hermeneutics of the Shari'a have been crucial in responding to war-mongering readings of Islamic legal sources. Reformed interpretations obtained via neo-ijtihād allow for reforms, especially regarding the respect of humanitarian law and the enforcement of universal human rights in Muslim countries. Yet, these alternative and reformist readings sometimes seem to face limits.

The paper looks into one of those possible limits, a verse that is difficult to re-interpret: the verse of the Sword (Qur'an 9:5) that fundamentalist groups like al Qaeda use to justify their deeds. In appearance, the verse leaves very little doubt about its meaning: “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” Meanwhile, the author challenges textualist interpretations serving extremist agenda and states that the Qur'an is a religion of peace which prepares for war, but does not encourage permanent jihad.

The author presents several different interpretations of this verse to challenge the idea that verse 9:5 encourages jihad against those called “Infidels”, looking at issues of translation, historical background, contextualisation, and more. The aim is to demonstrate that the theory of the new hermeneutics of the Shari'a can be applied to all aspects of the Qur'an, opening therefore new doors for reforms. The other purpose of the author is to deconstruct distorted interpretations of Islam which are at odds with the peaceful message of Islam.

Session Summary

Dr Anicée van Engeland's paper was born of her research into the reformation of Islamic law and the rich hermeneutical possibilities afforded by neo-ijtihād, a process she defined as ‘using [Qur'anic] interpretation to promote compatibility between Islamic law and human rights’. Centring on the interpretation of Qur'an 9:5, the verse of the Sword, the presentation opened with a basic introduction to neo-hermeneutics of Shari'ah and the limitations of this exegetical technique (e.g. its inapplicability to torture). Discussing these weaknesses, van Engeland states, “This is extremely important in that reformists are now facing the limit of their work, and we are trying to find other ways of providing new interpretations and new readings of the Qur'an.” She proceeds to examine verse 9:5 in light of both Islamic and

international law, with this comparative analysis being the distinguishing feature of her approach to the topic.

Verse 9:5 was selected for special consideration partly because 'it is used *in extremis defenda*, but also because it is used and abused by Western media and academics. There is a focus on that verse...[W]hen you look at the verse, the question is, do you read it as encouraging jihad, or do you actually read it as providing a limit to jihad?" If war is accepted as an inevitable feature of human society, the verse can be seen as seeking to limit its occurrence by placing conditions on how it may be waged; and the guiding question becomes, "If war is a reality, how do we frame it within Islamic law?" In answer, van Engeland first considers how war has already been framed in various Islamic discourses. She cites a USA-based study (conducted in July 2012) that found the verse of the Sword to be largely absent from the theological and political discussion taking place within extremist religious groups, which is instead dominated by verses on dishonour and victory. However, she argues that the verse is nonetheless 'a reality that must be dealt with by academics and practitioners', especially given its centrality in classicist and neo-classicist understandings of war, and that a new reading could help to curtail violence and minimise suffering.

Van Engeland identifies two main exegetical stances on 9:5 within Islamic jurisprudence, the abrogation and context-based approaches, which she positions in dialogue with one another: "I am going to use that dialogue, which is based on *ijtihad* and interpretation, to go further with my comparison between Islamic and international law." Sketching out the principles of abrogation as laid out by Sayed Qutb, according to which Muslims went from being urged to refrain from any fighting to being encouraged to fight an ever-widening group, she establishes that 'what we have here is an argument for an offensive *jihad*'. Van Engeland looks at possible ways of mitigating this approach, such as attempts to read the Qur'an in light of its general philosophy as opposed to specific verses and the application of relevant hadith that act as human standards. "These attempts to mitigate abrogation are all legitimate. The problem is that from the perspective of Islamic law they aren't strong enough." She offers the context-based approach as an alternative. Any interpretation of 9:5 must take into account both previous verses and those that came after, enabling a thorough and holistic reading of Qur'an. Historical context is also crucial. When viewed in light of this, the surah becomes a narrative about a broken treaty with the Quraysh, and verse 5 may be seen as the response of the early Muslim community to that specific circumstance. The verse of the Sword can consequently read as an argument for self-defence, dovetailing with the provisions made in international law for defensive responses to a breach of a peace treaty. "If you carry onto verse 4, what you have is a framework for negotiation for a broken treaty. The treaty was broken, you've got four months to fix it, let's give you space and possibility to try and find a solution." The declaration of war in 9:5 is to occur if the preconditions are not met, and it is followed in verse 6 by a pledge of safety in response to repentance. This context-based interpretation has strong parallels with the policy on war as laid out in chapter 7 of the UN charter.

Both sides – the scholars arguing for abrogation and those arguing for context – are engaging in *ijtihad*. “What is really interesting from a purely Islamic law perspective is the way we are using *ijtihad* both as a source and a method... We do interpretation of the primary and secondary legal sources, and from there we actively create sources of law about how we should go to war; and then, as a method, we use *ijtihad* to justify an agenda – whether it’s an offensive agenda or a defensive agenda.” Van Engeland concludes with the argument that no matter which interpretation a person takes, offensive or defensive, “we are walking away from the strict classical interpretation of Islamic law”. Verses such as 9:5 must be seen as an invitation to adapt Islamic principles and translate them into a modern context where they can continue to serve as thoughtful sources of humanitarian guidance. However, engagement in neo-ijtihad must be tempered by the more sobering knowledge that “while we do this as reformists, the other side as extremists will be doing the same. We use the same verses and the same technique, and we come to radically different decisions.”

Discussion

An audience member asked if it would be possible to look at the question raised by van Engeland in the opposite way: how to get the international laws of war to fit the understanding laid out in the Qur’an, as opposed to getting the Qur’an to fit the international laws of war. He gave as an example a 1400-year-old injunction that a combatant is prohibited to fight the enemy’s cook, as the cook would not qualify as a combatant under those ancient terms, and asked how van Engeland could reconcile Qur’anic law with changing international understandings. Van Engeland clarified that she is not seeking to superimpose international law on Islamic law, as Islamic law predates international conventions on warfare and is often far broader in scope (e.g. in terms of protections afforded to the environment during wartime). Her chief preoccupation is the way in which Islamic law has influenced the development of international law (e.g. through the participation of Muslim representatives at Geneva) and how common ground might be found through the process of dialogue laid out in her talk.

Saad Abbasi, University of Western Ontario

Reinterpreting Civil Society in the Muslim Context: Investigating the Materialization of Wired Civil Societies in Muslim-Majority States

Abstract

Presently, civic Islam, understood as citizen action in the non-state sector, is directly relevant to contemporary civil society, and is evident in what has been coined as the “emerging public sphere”. Fuelled by the vitality of the new media and information communication technologies (ICTs) that are able to circumvent state regulation, this novel public domain has

emerged as the *hub* for the reinterpretation of Islamic discourse. When shifting focus to Muslim societies scattered across the developing world, the increasing presence of the internet has operated as a basis for the evolvment of an online civil society since citizens and civil society organisations are able to utilise the internet as a mechanism that facilitates logistics, organisation, and communication. The outcome of this phenomenon has been the materialisation of a wired transnational civil society which encourages debates across Muslim communities, and consequently generating social capital necessary for democratisation. An investigation into the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions following the onset of the “Arab Spring” reveals the importance in both countries’ “wired civil societies”—which comprised of dissidents, banned political factions, moderate and radical Islamists, journalists, and ordinary citizens—in playing an important role in motivating the political uprisings. The paper contends that unlike traditional civil society in various parts of the Arab-Muslim world which has taken on an Islamist tone, an increasingly plural and liberal civil society is emerging in the Muslim world. Specifically, the successes of the Arab Spring coupled with the growth and expansion of ICTs across the Muslim World is facilitating the emergence of an online transnational civil society which is fostering political communication and civic debate amongst individual citizens of various religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, which is also enabling debates that are multidimensional, culturally diverse, inter-disciplinary, and moving beyond the frontiers imposed by religious orthodoxy and nationalism.

Session Summary

Saad Abbasi’s primary argument is that since new information and communication technologies (ICTs) began to proliferate in 2000, an increasingly pluralistic and liberal transnational online civil society has emerged in the Muslim world, particularly evident in the Middle East and North Africa (where its growth has been expedited by the Arab Spring). Abbasi begins by noting that in the literature civil society is viewed “as something very open and very flexible, to the point where it encompasses almost anything that is social”; it is also frequently equated with civic aspirations. Using Marc Morjé Howard’s definition of civil society as a baseline (“Groups that are formally established, legally protected, autonomously run, and voluntarily joined by ordinary citizens”), Abbasi went on to examine the way in which civil society is understood in Muslim countries, focusing on Egypt and Tunisia as case studies. His examination is guided by the work of Aryn Sajoo who has questioned whether civil society as it is commonly understood is exclusive to the West. “He challenges the assertion that Islam is uniquely different in its resistance to the conditions for civil society... Sajoo points out that, throughout Muslim history, the evidence for civic institutional and cultural elements is substantial.” Having established that “institutions organised along civic lines” have a long historical pedigree within the Muslim world, Abbasi asks whether the contemporary situation calls for the reinterpretation of ‘civil society’ as a concept.

He begins to formulate an answer by paraphrasing the late Muhammad Arkun’s caution not to employ Western civic institutions as templates for Muslim-majority states currently undergoing democratic transitions, as such models are ill-equipped to manage the sociological

and historical challenges in the region. The development of a robust civil society in the Muslim world will require citizens to break out of their 'ideological cages', identified by Arkun as uncritical nationalist and religious orthodoxies. The role of women in civil society is crucial and must be developed. A greater pluralism is also called for: debates on civil society must be multifaceted and cross-disciplinary, 'and they must move beyond the frontiers imposed by monolithic religious communities or even nation-states'. Abbasi argues that this civil society as envisaged by Arkun has already begun to take shape through the use of ICTs, with new media reflecting the diversity of novel public spheres emerging in the Muslim world. These public spheres are difficult for state authorities to police and may serve 'as a hub for the re-intellectualisation of Islamic discourse', in addition to fostering pluralism.

Abbasi then addressed the role played by social media and other ICTs in "energising these movements [for democratic change] and allowing them to spread across the Arab world", stating that the well-debated question of social media's centrality in achieving this phenomenon is not his chief concern. For him the principal question is how social media has come to function as a platform for the development of civil society. Tunisia and Egypt provide fascinating examples of this process in action. "With regard to Tunisia the case is intriguing, given its location in North Africa and also with it being the country that sparked the Arab Spring. Regarding Egypt, it's the largest Arab nation, and it's considered the vanguard and the intellectual soul of the Arab world... There's also a strong connection between the two countries." Abbasi contends that ICTs have built on this historical connection by providing 'a valuable logistical tool for organisation and communication between civil society groups', independent of the state. Independence from the state is a hallmark of civil society and the key reason for the importance of ICTs in the Muslim world.

However, despite its importance, civil society – especially virtual civil society – is notoriously difficult to measure, and this poses challenges for research. Highlighting Howard's contention that the size of a country's online civil society is roughly congruent with the size of its general Internet population, Abbasi notes that "in 2006 Egypt had a medium-sized online civil society... it had an Internet penetration rate of 12.6%. By 2011 that number jumped to 35.7%. Based on that, we can say that Egypt has a growing, medium-to-large online civil society". This growth ran parallel to the Arab Spring, signalling that people were following events through social as opposed to state-broadcasted media. A clue to the democratic and participatory nature of the online civil society that was developing can be seen in the fact that broadcast media such as al-Jazeera were now treating social media as a source, effectively transforming citizens into journalists in a reversal of the normal course of events. This was evident from the Arab Spring's inception, when Mohamed Bouazizi's condition after his self-immolation was reported by a young woman via Facebook before filtering to al-Jazeera.

Another distinctive feature of this emerging wired society was its youth, with reportage and political organising on social media being driven by people under thirty. Their technological knowledge meant that they were able to frustrate attempts at state censorship. The

transnational element meant that thousands of non-Tunisians joined relevant Facebook pages in support, ensuring that information was widely disseminated and that strategies used in Tunisia were imported to neighbouring countries. "There was a page in Egypt called 'Egyptians supporting the Tunisian revolution'... Tunisia's success would stimulate Egyptian youth, who also represented 80% of all Facebook users in that country at the time, to call for political change." Abbasi also notes that this extended beyond challenging the Mubarak regime; some Salafi youth banded together to use social media to challenge popular conceptions of Salafi Islam. Meeting in an area popular with secular urbanites, the Salafyo Costa group gained a curious following on Facebook, and was also able to form a productive partnership with young Coptic Christians in a reflection of the potential that wired civil society has to change the composition of physical civil society. Abbasi concludes with this novel image of the wired society that has emerged through ICTs, commenting, "It gives some hope, because this group has an inner circle of 130 members and has an active membership of 31,000 members. What I found most amazing was that the demographic was 30% Salafi Muslims, 30% Coptic Christians, and 30% secular Muslims."

Discussion

An audience member asked how Abbasi felt 'civility' in the Muslim world could be conceptualised and whether such a definition could be truly cross-cultural. Abbasi described Aziz Ismail's idea that Qur'an and hadith can be used as guidance in establishing what it means to be civil and the nature of civic institutions, before referring back to Muhammad Arkun's statement that Muslim societies should draw on indigenous sources rather than seeking to replicate Western civic institutions.

Victoria Biggs, University of Manchester

'I am a Woman, No More and No Less': Muslim and Jewish Women facing Militarism in Israel and Palestine

Abstract

Over the past two decades the impact of militarisation on the lives of Israeli and Palestinian women has received substantial academic attention, with one of the earliest articles on the subject, 'Every Woman is an Occupied Territory: The Politics of Militarism and Sexism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', making an explicit connection between institutionalised misogyny and military occupation (Sharoni 1992). This increasing body of research has been paralleled by the growth of joint women's peace and justice groups that identify nationalistic militarisation of society as a particular area of concern to women.

However, to date there have been few attempts to evaluate feminist peace work in light of the religious experiences and theological outlook of the women involved. Secondly, most studies on women's experiences of militarisation have focused primarily on Israel's occupation. This

paper explores militarisation within Palestinian liberation movements, particularly what is now termed the popular resistance. It provides a brief overview of the constraints this has placed on women's formal participation, before turning to examine the possibilities afforded by feminist Islamic theologies for crafting an alternative and inclusive vision of justice and liberation for Israel/Palestine.

This evaluation is also attentive to the experience of observant Jewish women, many of whom report a sense of alienation from feminist peace and justice work, feeling that its predominantly secular character has left little room for their experiences as religious women (Emmett 2003). By placing Palestinian Muslim and Israeli Jewish women's voices alongside one another in creative dialogue, this paper aims to illustrate the specific potential of Islamic feminist theologies for engaging people who have hitherto felt themselves excluded from movements of peace and liberation.

Session Summary

Drawing on her experiences at a Palestinian women's peace centre in Bethlehem, which was created to rehabilitate a neighbourhood that had been fragmented through curfews, the building of the separation barrier, and army violence, Victoria Biggs examined women's peace and reconciliation work in Israel/Palestine through a theological lens. She drew a parallel between Palestinian and Israeli women's attempts to participate fully in the justice struggle with the challenges faced by feminist theologians in developing theology that honours women. Rosemary Sayigh has described Palestinian women's participation in their liberation struggle as "a history without historians", and Biggs sees this sentiment reflected in the work of the Jewish feminist Judith Plaskow: "Women have lived Jewish history and carried its burdens, but women's perceptions and questions have not given form to scripture, shaped the direction of Jewish law, or found expression in liturgy...[I]t is not possible to speak into silence, to recover our history, or to reclaim our power to name without first confronting the extent of exclusion of women's experience." Biggs argues that "analysing women's involvement in the struggle for liberation using the same principles that govern feminist theology and scriptural exegesis adds texture and depth to the story of the conflict, perhaps making a different ending possible".

She began by summarising some of the internal barriers to religious women's participation in peace work, such as the idea that focusing on women's rights in addition to national liberation is traitorous to the cause, the assumption that peacebuilding is a secular preserve, and finally the conflation of religion with militaristic nationalism made by some feminist scholars. She argued that nationalism is detrimental to women, exemplified by the way in which women's bodies are often conflated with the land in nationalist rhetoric, and women's role reduced to that of child-bearer: "The struggle to possess the land is mirrored and reinforced by the struggle to possess women's bodies. An alternative understanding of homeland is made possible by looking at how women themselves have described their relationship with land."

Unpicking the stories of village women whose principal duty used to be to fetch water, and mothers who led their families on pilgrimages to multiple local shrines, she found a spiritual theme emerging. Focusing on Nefissa Naguib's anthropological study of women and water, she noted, "Women did not work to subdue the land; they worked with it... allowing it to give shape to their lives. As one interviewee put it, "We lived between the spring, the oven, and the olives." Another added, "We knew God. We are Muslims and we knew how to thank Him." Their engagement with the land has a visible devotional quality." Biggs places these women's voices in dialogue with the work of the Jewish ecologist Aurora Levins Morales, who in her essay on eco-theology and nationalism has written, "Ownership shatters ecology. For the land to survive, for us to survive, it must cease to be property." Feminist eco-theologies, which share many similarities despite emerging separately in different faith traditions, could foster a more respectful attitude to the land as home and form the basis for coexistence.

Biggs observes that family pilgrimages, or *ziyarat*, could be said to have an interfaith element as they involved visits to shrines from all three Abrahamic faiths (and also to shrines whose original provenance had become blurred). "Interestingly it was women who seem to have presided over these rituals in the liminal spaces where three faiths touch, which calls to mind Mary Daly's comment that feminists inevitably work 'on the boundaries' of the places where they find themselves. Daly referred to women's political marginalisation, but in this context, the phrase takes on a more positive meaning: due to their existence in liminal spaces, women can enable meaningful contact between different communities and traditions to take place." Biggs sees this theological reality reflected in women's political activism, highlighting the efforts made by the women-only Israeli group Machsom Watch that aims to reduce army abuse of Palestinians at checkpoints. The group has both secular and observant Jewish participants, but its work is imbued by a theological quality as defined by the Jewish feminist theologian Melissa Raphael: "Religion...is not merely the hearing of divine words, but the production of a witnessing presence in resistance to the forces of erasure." Recognising the checkpoints as an assault on Palestinian dignity the Machsom Watch women provide such a presence. Standing in the space between the Occupied Territories and the Israeli state, they may be said to be engaging in a very literal form of *tikun olam*, a Jewish religious term for 'healing the world' – they are stitching together two places that are kept apart.

Biggs argued that this is the hallmark of women's peace activism, religious women's activism in particular. She notes that one of the first peace groups to emerge in Israel/Palestine (Oz v'Shalom) was initiated by observant women. In Israeli society it functions as a bridge between the secular left and the religious right. In Palestinian society groups like the Women in Hebron Co-operative have managed to connect rural and urban communities, which rarely have contact, in an effort both to improve women's rights and to act against the occupation. "They describe their activities as a form of 'cultural resistance'; not just to the occupation, but to patriarchal elements of Palestinian society."

Summarising such work, Biggs highlighted the potential of women as bridge-builders; the relationship between nationalism, misogyny, and state oppression; and the role of feminist theology in peace activism. Emphasising that such theology stems from women's lived experience as opposed to pure academic discussion and as such must be treated as a natural everyday response to what they are facing. She concluded her presentation with lines from Mahmoud Darwish poem that encapsulates this spirit of the everyday: "I am not a land or a journey. I am a woman, no more and no less."

Discussion

An audience member asked if the women's peace group is a funded NGO or if it operates on a purely grassroots level, before asking how the group feels about the PA's approach to Palestinian liberation. Biggs outlined the organisation's history, starting from its beginnings as a neighbourhood social group and progressing to its formal establishment as a NGO. Regarding the PA, she stated, "There is a lot of disagreement over this. There are polarised attitudes in the group, and how they feel about the PA depends more on the social class of the women and their economic situation... Also, many of the women have not been politically active in any formal sense and have little sense of the wider politics, but I do not think you necessarily have to be an activist or to be knowledgeable in order to make an important contribution."

Farid Mirbagheri, University of Nicosia

Peace Within, Peace Without: An Islamic Critical Approach to Peace

Abstract

Systemic approaches to war and peace in International Relations advocate an out-in approach whereby structures appear to operate above the agency of the individual. Evidently this approach suffers from serious short-comings. It overlooks the significance of the role of the individual and the accumulated global impact that can make. Islamic mysticism could contribute to filling that void. Emphasising the important position of the individual in an existential setting it subscribes to the concept of self-negation, whereby containment of the self is encouraged in order to promote the greater collective interest. Conflict within is thereby minimised and by attempting to establish peace and tranquility within the individual, mysticism aims to radiate harmony without. Devoid of internal serenity, seeking global peace would be next to impossible.

This paper views the question of war and peace from an Islamic mystic approach. In *neo-realist* terms in International Relations that would be a first-image analysis that locates the ultimate cause of conflict within the individual (in-out approach). Whilst adequate structures are necessary for establishing and safeguarding peace, they are not in themselves sufficient.

The paper will make repeated reference to Rumi, the Muslim Persian mystic of 13th Century AD, as well as other mystic figures.

Session Summary

Farid Mirbagheri examines the contribution of Islamic mysticism to the discourse of peace. Noting that conventional modern approaches to peacemaking operate “in a very systemic way”, based on the assumption that liberal democracies result in stable environments, he asserts that Islamic mysticism does not look to international political structures as a means of securing and ensuring peace. Echoing Anicée van Engeland’s earlier remark on the complementarity between *Shari’ah* and international law that can be uncovered through the process of neo-*ijtihad*, Mirbagheri notes that an alternative to liberal systemic approaches is encoded in the UNESCO charter’s statement that “wars are started in the minds of men”. This is a theme that is well-developed in the rich literature of Islamic mysticism, giving rise to the pragmatic conclusion that “if wars can be located in the minds of men, so should the origins of peace be sought in the minds of men”.

In the conventional liberal peace paradigm, which sees war as the result of certain traits in society and as detached from individual people, a fragmentation is taking place that prevents the development of a holistic approach to peace. “Liberal societies can be liberal in themselves but they can have a very non-liberal foreign policy. They can sell arms to lots of other countries, and that’s fine.” Such approaches to peace are divisive rather than unifying as its philosophy cannot be reconciled logically with the behaviour of state actors. Mirbagheri states that Islamic mysticism offers an alternative to peace paradigms that “are egocentric, state-centric, and driven by the pursuit of national interests” through its emphasis on the ethical responsibilities of the individual, forming what C.M. Constantinou terms “a transgressive politology and a critical theory of international relations”. He identifies selflessness, love and reason, freedom, and empowerment as crucial themes to emerge in Islamic mystical philosophies that are of particular relevance to peacemaking.

In his analysis of these concepts and their importance to peace, Mirbagheri draws a distinction between reason and rationality, which is encapsulated in a couplet by a Persian mystical poet: “Wondrous and wandering is love, nay rationale / Goes only after self-interest wisdom, ay so banal.” Rationality leads to a calculated desire to maximise profit and personal gain, whereas “reason has a degree of fairness attached to it that rationality has not. States are rational actors. They are not necessarily thought to be reasonable actors”. Mysticism respects this division between reason and rationality, allying reason’s justice to the love that is “the overriding drive for creation” and that is distinguished by a generosity and selflessness that often cannot be thought rational. Stating that the purpose of rationality is to “fulfil your desires and avoid your aversions”, Mirbagheri argues that “a human being that is so rational can only create a community with the same egocentric characteristics”, and that mysticism enables the development of a qualitatively different society. However, he takes care to emphasise that mysticism is not anti-intellectual, quoting a poem by Rumi to demonstrate the

importance of reasoned thought and its close relationship to spirituality: "From deficiency of reason / The moth does not remember the flame."

Mirbagheri then turned to the junction between mystical thought and political life, asserting that Muslim mystics have traditionally made no claim to be crafting policy. "This is not another branch of religious politics that mysticism is advancing – it has no such claim. However, it is a holistic view of life, an ontology that views peace and war in the greater scheme of things." The liberation and empowerment that may result from the self-knowledge generated by mystical practice can make themselves felt on a wider socio-political level, it enables the individual to become independent from fear. This in turn benefits the wider community. Finally, Mirbagheri gave tangible examples of when mystical devotion has stimulated political activism for peace and justice, citing the death sentence given to Hallaj. He was ostensibly executed for his esoteric theology but new research indicatives that his death was brought about because of his socio-political activism on behalf of slaves in Baghdad, demonstrating that "mysticism is not a detached and isolated discourse – it actually engages with the life of the community".

Quoting extensively from Rumi, Shams, and other mystical poets, Mirbagheri argued that mysticism's emphasis on God's oneness with creation (which in some texts may be read as pantheistic) renders violence impossible. "This is the true collective security that they talk about in international relations: 'The human race are members in a body all related / For of a single essence are they all created'." Self-awareness and knowledge of God are intimately connected, and they give birth to unqualified and unrelenting compassion for the wider society. While recognising that it may not be practically possible for everyone to devote their lives to Islamic mysticism, Mirbagheri argues that cultivating mystical practice in a small way could enable individuals to mitigate the violent individualism and consumerism in the world around them by directing their attention to "the inner foes... the grievous war in thyself". In conclusion, he comments, "We have to work on the individual. None of the conventional paradigms in the West offer anything in terms of working on the individual. They're all systemic. It is mysticism – and actually I think Christian mysticism as well – that contributes and builds the individual." This focus on the role of the individual person is not intended to replace systemic justice, but rather to augment it; it creates people who can live peaceably within a just community and safeguard its maintenance.

Discussion

Mohammed Abu Nimer queried the applicability of self-examination and reflective spirituality to real-world contexts, asking how these principles can be brought to life in conflict settings (both Muslim and non-Muslim). Mirbagheri responded that the answer lies in peace education starting from a younger age, which must aim "to cut the sharper edges of excessive individualism". Abu Nimer requested a concrete example, so Mirbagheri pointed to the development of specific educational programs that teach youngsters to think about life differently. "It is going to be difficult, because it goes against the idea that is at the cornerstone

of international relations, which is sovereign statehood. The state will oppose it. But it's a start."

An audience member volunteered information about an Ismaili group that is promoting a similar philosophy in schools, and Abu Nimer shared details of an organisation called Human Oneness that is taking Sufism into Egyptian schools and promoting a philosophy of loving-kindness amongst the children. Mirbagheri then described a venture to place a quotation from the UN Declaration of Human Rights in every school textbook, which faced its greatest opposition in Islamic countries and ultimately did not pass. More positively, Ayşe Kadayıfci-Orellana reported that a Sufi Sheikha is teaching in Turkish schools and working with educational authorities on integrating Sufi ethical philosophy into the curricula. Mirbagheri responded that the implementation of such curricula in countries like Saudi Arabia (where Sufism is regarded as a heresy) is "doable, but difficult" and that it will be necessary to work to find common religious ground before wider implementation is possible.

Panel Session 2

Hüsrev Tabak, University of Manchester

Islamic reconsideration of 'ethnicity without groups' as a conflict transformation mechanism: Would Islamic reinterpretation of ethnicity be a cure for Turkey's Kurdish issue?

Abstract

Through reinterpreting Rogers Brubaker (2002 and 2004)'s propositions on "transcending ethnicity and going beyond groupism" in line with the Islamic view on ethnicity and invention of ethnic groups, this paper aims at offering an alternative but localised conceptual framework to deal with ethnic conflict issues within the Muslim communities. Ethnicity has been an inseparable part of political conflicts in the 20th century as in many instances it was the driving force of the conflict- the massive bloodshed was in the name of and for the sake of it. In other instances, the ongoing conflicts turned to be ethnic ones due to the practicality of ethnic mobilisation in sustaining the combat. Despite the fact that Islam in essence promotes a sense of closely-tied brotherhood within the broader Islamic community (*ummah*), Muslim communities over the world alike have fallen into ethnic conflicts. Having been in search of indigenous or localised solutions for ethnic conflicts, this research puts forward Islamic interpretation of going beyond ethnicity as not only a *conflict transformation* but also a *conflict pre-emption* or *peacebuilding* mechanism for Muslim communities. Our case study will be centred upon Turkey and its historical Kurdish issue. Ethnicity, for both parties (Turkish state and Kurdish community), has been the primary determining factor in defining the ongoing conflict -which was started during the early republican era. Our adoption of Brubaker's 'ethnicity without groups' would help us to possibly portray the emancipation of ethnicities from the *nationalism* and *groupism* of conflicting parties which are explicitly banned within Islam.

Session Summary

Hüsrev Tabak opened his paper with a description of how social categories such as ethnicity and nationhood are defined in the field of social sciences, before moving onto a discussion of how ethnicity is understood in Islamic terms and the possibilities that this conceptualisation presents for a just resolution to the Kurdish situation in Turkey. He argues that much sociological thought is woven from "the ontological assumption that ethnicities are fixed entities based on objective commonalities, separated from one another by culture, language, and race", an approach that cuts out swathes of social experience and that ultimately produces the idea of "bordered communities". "There was a perennialist approach to ethnicity... that claimed to find continuity in ancient and modern concepts of ethnicity and nation in different places." According to this approach, ethnicity is an objective historical fact; and its current existence attests to its validity in previous times. Tabak notes that scholarship

within the social sciences has sought to challenge the perennialist conception of ethnicity by highlighting its subjective features, but he concludes that this is not a sufficient remedy for an “anthropological nationalism” that “treats nations and ethnic groups as substantial entities”. “Speaking of groups such as Serbs, Turks, and Croats is not only articulating their names, it is contributing to their reification.” Tabak turns to Islamic scholarship as a means of unpicking these ethnic categories and stitching together a new understanding of social experience that is more conducive to peace and community cohesion.

Tabak identified the Islamic concept of *Ummah* as providing a strong cognitive framework for understanding and developing peaceful community relations. Muslim-majority countries found themselves in conflict with this Islamic conception of society when they adopted nationalism as seemingly the only viable challenge to colonial rule, and intra-community ethnic tensions have been heightened in consequence. “Nationalism is something alien to Islam... While trying to solve [colonial] problems, these societies treated ethnicity as something perennial and historically present.” Tabak connects this problematic understanding of ethnicity to Kurdish aspirations for national sovereignty, stating that arguments for self-determination as a nation are founded in the understanding of ethnicity as something primordial and even divinely created. In conclusion, he suggests that the best response would be to focus on unity of the Muslim *Ummah* worldwide, which would require ethnicity and nationhood to be transcended in favour of a richer understanding of community and its possibilities, perhaps even leading to the unification of the *Ummah* as one polity.

Discussion

Commenting that Turkey is an ethnicised state, an audience member asked about the place it occupies in Tabak’s analysis of primordial approaches to ethnicity. Tabak responded that the Turkish state has adopted an Islamic approach to ethnicity in two specific instances, beginning when its founding fathers drew on Islamic scholarship to found the nation. “These Islamic intellectuals used Islamic sources to justify Turkish nationalism and to support their claims for Turks being a legitimate nation. In the second instance, the state used religion as a way to assimilate other ethnic groups, using the discourse of Islamic brotherhood.”

Khurshid Khan & Yahia Baiza, Institute of Ismaili Studies

Decoding the Genesis of Ethnic and Religious Tensions in Pakistan and Afghanistan: A comparative Analysis

Abstract

This paper discusses the roots of inter and intra community tensions in Pakistan and Afghanistan within the religious, ethnic and political makeup of the countries and explores the ways in which the existing religious and ethnic conflicts could possibly be resolved. The paper

sheds light on how and why a quest for political power was translated into full-fledged ethnic conflicts in which religion was used to mobilise forces to achieve some set political goals in these countries. The paper argues that Pakistan and Afghanistan share a significant part of their history, especially since the 1970s onwards, and face the consequences of the decisions made in this period, especially with regard to politicisation of Madrasas (i.e. religious schools) for the holy war (*Jihad*) and religious militancy, therefore, an understanding of the ethnic and religious conflict in one country could possibly lead to comprehending the situation on the other side of the border.

While Afghanistan's history shows many examples of cyclical episodes of religious and ethnic tensions in the country such as religious and ethnic prosecution of Shi'a Hazara in the remote and recent past and ethnic tensions among Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks culminating into a full-fledged civil war in the country in the recent past, paradoxically, the country has started to exhibit a decline in active forms of religious and ethnic tensions amid a rise in political uncertainty and instability over the recent years. In the Pakistani society, on the other hand, the extreme levels of religious and ethnic antagonism; evident from the recurrent and countless target killings, bombings of places of worship, religious and mourning processions, shrines, educational institutions, markets etc.; with great loss of life and resources, have been showing a gradual upward trend for last four decades.

In Pakistan, the religious conflict between the Shi'as and the Sunnis, the Deobandi Sunnis and the Barelvi Sunnis and between Muslims and other religious groups such as Ahmadis (Qadyanis), Christians and Hindus in different parts of the country and the ethnic tension between the Pathans and the Urdu-Speaking population in Karachi, are important examples of respective inter and intra religious and inter ethnic fault lines existing as a direct result of the decades old politicisation of faith and political power play in the country. Studies have shown that strong indicators of conflict in these countries such as militancy arising from politicisation of religion and religious institutions, if left unnoticed, may lead to even greater unpredictable repercussions for the countries, the region and the world.

The paper concludes with a critical discussion on the lessons that both countries can learn from each other on their road to long lasting religious and ethnic harmony and the ways in which the existing religious and ethnic tensions could possibly be resolved in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Session Summary

"You cannot meaningfully and constructively analyse these two issues without considering the influence of the European era in that part of the world." With this statement, Yahia Baiza provided the basic context for his discussion of ethnic and religious tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan, pointing out that even the current language used to describe ethnicity and conflict has been influenced by colonial history. He also stated that with the emergence of a variety of new political parties (both secular and religious) in the 1960s religious tension in

Afghanistan began to decrease, while ethnic frictions remained present. Having sketched in this colonial backdrop and identified a decreasing trend in religious tension, he and Khurshid Khan then discussed the complex relationship between present-day ethnic and religious tensions in the two neighbouring states and how these play out today.

As a demonstration that religious tension in Afghanistan remains on a downward trend, Baiza gave a vignette from his 2012 fieldwork. During *Muharram* friction developed between Sunni and Shi'a students at the university in western Kabul, with certain Sunni students objecting to the planned commemorations. Radical factions, both Sunni and Shi'a, attempted to exploit the situation on campus. "If this had happened in 1992, when the *mujahideen* were in power, there would have been a conflict across the country. But this time, in eastern Kabul, we didn't even hear about it." Although two Shi'a students died at the hands of a Sunni mob, the violence was defused by the students themselves who reported that after taking time to reflect on the situation (time provided by the administration, who suspended studies for ten days) their own strong feelings about the propriety of the commemoration subsided and they were able to prevent further bloodshed by offering support to friends from the other community. The resultant dialogue on campus revealed that while Shi'a students were well-informed about Sunni religious ritual, Sunni students lacked knowledge of Shi'a religious practices. This caused Baiza to conclude that "the war of the future is the war of education", with universities providing the necessary space for informative dialogue to flourish.

Khurshid Khan offered a comparative description of the emergence of ethno-religious tension in Pakistan, identifying the twentieth-century wars in Afghanistan as a serious source of sectarian violence in the country. Arguing that Pakistani involvement was motivated partially by strategic political interest and partly by 'religious solidarity', and stated that the involvement of Pakistani fighters in Afghanistan transformed the balance of domestic sectarian power-sharing as "in the 1970s the state started to sponsor the Deobandi sect of Islam and ignored the majority, which is the Barelvi Sunni". While *jihad* in Afghanistan (directed against a clearly defined non-Muslim 'other') initially served as a tool to fulfil state economic objectives in relation to petroleum, "after the war the *jihadis* became kind of jobless. During the war they were fighting people who were outside the circle of Islam. After the war they focused on people inside the circle of Islam, and this is why we now see a mix of inter-ethnic tensions as well". Involvement in external fighting had generated political instability within Pakistan that led to increased intra-community tensions, which are still felt in the present day (exemplified by a recent failed attempt to prosecute a Christian girl with learning difficulties under the blasphemy laws). These tensions have been exacerbated by poverty with deprived areas becoming fertile recruiting grounds for militants adhering to extremist religious ideologies. Both ethnic and religious tensions in Pakistan therefore have a strong economic component.

Khan then echoed Baiza's call to address these challenges through educational means, arguing that both Pakistan and Afghanistan need to eradicate poverty and illiteracy in order to

increase people's capacity and opportunity for informed choice, a change that will consequently be felt in the political sphere. Madrasa curricula should be brought in line with those used in mainstream schools. She added, "Pakistan has to learn lessons from the ethnic tensions that have happened in Afghanistan, and Afghanistan can learn from Pakistan that they have to check the uncontrolled expansion of madrasas... There should be interfaith dialogue, there should be sincere political will." In conclusion, she highlighted attempts to foster good relations at a local level by showing pictures of the graffiti and other street art that has appeared in areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan affected by religious and ethnic tension, comparing them to the poignant and often subversive peace graffiti that adorns the 'peace walls' of Belfast. "When people are writing these things on their walls, they are speaking out their minds... The future I see is full of hope, because despite years of war, people look forward to see days of peace."

Discussion

A member of the audience asked about ethnic identity in Afghanistan. "One of the challenges of governance in Afghanistan is the lack of social cohesion and unity. Do you think that Afghanistan is now going to[wards] a more unified identity? Secondly, in recent years a more ethnic approach has been taken on a lot of issues. Do you think this will be positive or counter-productive?" Yahya Baiza responded that "The problem when we talk about Afghanistan and national identity is that we don't have a nation-state." He explained that the whole concept of nation-state is a European import, and that the identity of people resident in Afghanistan remains primarily tribal. He stated that there have been many positive developments in social cohesion through educational endeavours that promote coexistence between different groups. "Before 2001 we never had above one million children in school, but now we have around seven million, and the number is growing." He also linked the development of social cohesion to the cultivation of internal resilience and post-conflict reconstruction: "People have been rebuilding their houses and their businesses. They are not worried." He also mentioned that he has been interviewing members of the Taliban and their groups, stating, "The voice of the Taliban never reaches the media. What reaches the media is what the Americans, the Afghan government, and the Pakistani government want to hear. What the Taliban want is peace, given that they will not be persecuted and not be put in prison. The prospect for Afghanistan in future is social cohesion on a grassroots level if not on a state/political level, and people's confidence is quite high."

Another audience member asked about the relationship between conflict and control over land, asking, "If you concentrate on education, are you not looking at effects rather than causes, when the cause is actually inequitable control of land, especially in the south?" In reply Baiza detailed the way in which non-Pashtun land was handed to Pashtuns as part of the Anglo-Afghan alliance, in which Afghanistan became a buffer state against Russia. "This is exactly the same strategy as was used in Northern Ireland." However, he argued that while land control is certainly an issue, it is not the only issue, and it is important not to simplify the situation too far. He then gave further details on proxy wars that have been enacted in

Afghanistan to illustrate other crucial contributory factors to conflict that need to be considered.

Jerome Drevon, Durham University

Renouncing Jihad? A New Interpretation of the Revisions of Islamist Armed Groups in Egypt

Abstract

This case study of the revisions of al-Jamaah al-Islamiyah (Islamic Group) and Jamaah al-Jihad (Islamic Jihad) in Egypt investigates the first and most influential ideological and behavioural renunciation to the use of violence by Islamist armed groups. It intends to explore the historical processes that led to this outcome and to analyse their implications for scholars and practitioners. It is based on a year fieldwork in Egypt where the author has interviewed leaders, muftis, military commanders and footsoldiers of these two groups.

This paper attempts to reinvigorate the debates on the ideological transformation of Islamist armed groups. It revises prevailing perspectives in the literature and draws on a qualitative research based on a Social Movement Theory framework and the use of process tracing to demonstrate three findings. First, it asserts that a study of the groups' revisions has to dissociate the acceptance of the end of violence from their ideological and doctrinal legitimisation. Second, it illustrates this corollary by the acknowledgement by members and leaders of these groups, including their muftis, of their refusal of the religious justifications to the end of violence despite their strong support for the later. Third, it argues that rather than considering that the ideologies of these groups are flexible and subjects to substantial changes, scholars should rather focus on the flexibility of the formulation and articulation of these ideologies in the groups' practices.

This paper is consequently of interest to academics and practitioners. First, it promotes new methodological and theoretical directions in studies of Islamist political violence and substantiates the merits of qualitative field research and interviews of armed group's militants. Second, it promotes new direction in conflict resolution, discourages solutions that are exceedingly based on ideological revisions and rather favours a limited focus on armed groups' ideologies.

Session Summary

Jerome Drevon's presentation emerged from the year of field research he conducted in Egypt in 2012 which focused on the evolution of militant groups in Egypt from the late 1960s to the 2000s. The paper concerns itself with three main points: the role of ideology in the decision by militant groups to adopt violence; the timing of such violence; and the ideological revisionism that has taken place in some militant groups, leading to a renunciation of violent

tactics. These questions are crucial for both academics and practitioners as they may help to uncover causes of violence and establish effective peacebuilding techniques.

Drevon has chosen Egypt as a case study as “it was one of the main countries where Islamist violence emerged in the 70s”. Two strains of Islamist ideology developed in Egypt in this period, which are indicative of broader political patterns in the region. One strain was represented by Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), “a small elitist group that aimed to topple the state through a military coup”, and the other by Gama’at al-Islamiyyah, “which aimed to convince the population that the Islamic state should be their long-term objective, and to choose violence in the meantime”. As part of his research Drevon interviewed members of both groups, ranging from senior figures to loosely affiliated sympathisers. He opened his paper with a brief description of the evolution and composition of these groups, noting that Gama’at al-Islamiyyah initially drew much of its support from university students across the country who were committed to the spread of *Salafi* religious observance, while EIJ originated as small military cells operating mainly in Cairo. While Gama’at al-Islamiyyah worked to recruit students to its cause, EIJ focused on persuading intelligence officers and Egyptian soldiers to stage a coup for the transformation of the state. It lacked the organisational structure and central coherence of Gama’at al-Islamiyyah, in addition to having different goals: in its earliest incarnation Gama’at al-Islamiyyah aimed to bring about personal conversion to a more devout way of living as opposed to campaigning for a particular polity to take shape in Egypt. However, both groups coalesced between 1979 and 1981, with a shared objective of ‘changing the regime by force, combined with popular revolution’. After the assassination of Sadat, most active members were jailed; following their release there was a mass dispersal with many militants going to Afghanistan. The mid 1990s saw an official renunciation of violence as policy, with both groups publishing books detailing this revision of their former principles. Following the 2011 Egyptian revolution, both groups created political parties and began to participate formally in the political process.

Having described the evolution of these two groups Drevon pinpoints episodes in their history in which they have explicitly engaged with the issue of violence (either adopting it or rejecting it) and the influence of religious ideology on their decision-making process. “In the 1970s their decision on tactics and strategy was not influenced by ideology. For example, in 1974, when they actually tried to topple the state, the leader of the group did not want to use violence at that time because he felt that people were not ready, but he was pressured by his followers. So in that case what expedited the violence was group dynamics.” The Islamist groups attempted to use similar tactics with the assassination of Sadat, relying on the president’s killing to spark a popular uprising among Egyptians dissatisfied with the state in a plan inspired by the Iranian Revolution. While radical religious ideologies were a motivator in the killing, the discussions around its necessity and its timing were informed chiefly by practical strategic concerns rather than by ideological ones (i.e. concern for how the assassination would affect militants currently in jail); “the ideology of violence existed, but they did not want to use violence at that time.” What Islamist leaders saw as ill-advised timing

was to influence the discussions on the utility and advisability of violent strategy throughout the 1980s, with a fissure emerging between proponents of violence and those who opposed its use in the current situation. The split was ultimately repaired by the ceasefire that took place in 1995 and then by the formal renunciation of violence by both groups that occurred in 2001 (Gama'at al-Islamiyyah) and 2006 (EIJ). "The first lesson from this is that ideology can precede or succeed the use of violence. It does not explain the timing of the decision to resort to violence."

Drevon then turned to the current academic debate on countering radicalisation, which aims to devise methods to change radical ideas. Drevon argues that this approach is based on the assumption that ideology is at the root of violence, as opposed to political repression, and identifies as a weakness its attempt to impose its own interpretations of Islam on militant groups rather than fostering ideological critique from within. The risk inherent in this approach is that militant groups become alienated from peacebuilding attempts, seeing them as something externally imposed rather than as an open and participatory process. Drevon points to the experiences of EIJ leaders in prison as evidencing the importance of internal change: here they were exposed to other types of Islam and were able to synthesise new theological and political ideas in order to reach first a ceasefire and then a renunciation of violence as a tactic, and they remained in control of their own strategy and political development. Drevon also states that his field work has shown him that the revisionists remain in a minority, with most of the groups' membership accepting that violence is politically legitimate. However, they draw a distinction between legitimacy and necessity, arguing that after the Egyptian revolution violence is no longer required. "This means that what we have to focus on is the translation of ideology into practice, rather than on ideology itself... Even if they [militants] still hold radical ideas right now, this does not mean they are going to use violence. Even the most radical militant leaders in Egypt now do reject the use of violence, although they still believe it's legitimate to fight under Islamic law – now they feel that it's more about convincing people." Consequently the establishment and maintenance of a secure peace requires academics and practitioners to grasp the crucial distinction between the ideological beliefs of political Islamist groups and their actual policy and practice.

Discussion

An audience member asked where Ayman al-Zawahiri fits into this story. "Is it the case that he was spat out by one of these organisations and had to go and hide in Sudan or Pakistan before launching his attack on the West, or is it more the case that the intra-community violence you talk about – Muslims killing Muslims – is what really distinguishes al-Qaeda today?" Drevon replied that Zawahiri did emerge from EIJ, and explained that he was responsible for its ceasefire in 1995. Influenced by the imprisonment of his colleagues, 'Zawahiri was the one who decided that the jihad route should stop'. Drevon asserted that Islamist leaders connected to Zawahiri, including his brother, agree that violence should not be used despite technical ideological support for it.

The convenor asked about the class dynamics between the leaders of these movements and the foot soldiers, as Drevon had stated that sympathisers were often more radical than their leadership. Drevon replied that the issues were not class-based, but rather generational, with older leaders feeling pressurised by younger militants. The leaders' ability to change their ideological position is constrained by the fervour of their young followers. Asked about how he had managed to gain access to these people for interview, he spoke about the importance of establishing trust and making it clear that he wanted to represent the groups fairly in his research.

Philipp Bruckmayr, University of Passau

***After Genocide: Cambodia's Muslims, the State, and the
International Community in the Post-Khmers Rouges Era***

Abstract

The genocide allegedly perpetrated by the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime (commonly known as the *Khmers Rouges*) against Cambodian Muslims is currently among the main charges against the surviving senior leaders of the regime at Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) established in Phnom Penh in conjunction with the United Nations. An obvious reason for the importance of this specific charge is the fact that, contrary to the so-called auto-genocide committed against Cambodia's overall (overwhelmingly Khmer-Buddhist) population, it constitutes crimes against humanity directed at a specific group, in this case defined as an ethno-religious minority, persecuted on ethnic as well as religious grounds. Besides the ECCC, especially the internationally funded Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), which has in recent years collected and provided large amounts of documentary evidence from the DK era for the ECCC proceedings, plays an active role – through a wide range of research schemes and outreach programmes - in bringing both Cambodia's Muslims as well as Cambodian society as a whole to engage themselves with the fate of local Muslims under DK.

The present paper seeks to highlight both the ambiguous character of the prosecution of genocidal acts against minorities at the ECCC as well as the dubious role played by the West and many Arab countries, all of which are now channelling international Islamic aid into the country, in the more than three decades leading up to the current trial. Moreover, the state's policies of both supporting and instrumentalising its Muslim minority for political expediency shall be scrutinised besides the inadvertent consequences of the endeavours of ECCC and DC-Cam, such as the construction of a neo-ethnic group denoted as "Cham Muslim". Although arguably representing a very specific case, the peculiar intersection of transnational bodies, NGOs and local politics influencing the affairs of a formerly severely persecuted Muslim minority may serve as an interesting case study.

Session Summary

Philipp Bruckmayr's paper looked at the post-genocide experiences of Cambodia's significant Muslim minority, comprising 5% of the population and predominantly Cham in its ethnic and linguistic makeup. The death toll amongst Cambodian Muslims under the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime was proportionally higher than in the general population, with religious leaders being specifically targeted and only 10% of Muslim community leaders surviving the genocide. Bruckmayr began by outlining the function of the internationalised court established to try the perpetrators (the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia), noting that the killing of Muslims has particular ramifications for the court's mandate to try individuals on charges of genocide. "The specific case of Cambodian Muslims is of great importance for the genocide charge, because following the Genocide Convention, genocide is 'the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group'. This of course fits very well the suffering of the Cambodian Muslims, but it doesn't apply, in this wording, to the so-called 'auto-genocide' of the Khmer majority population in Cambodia, which accordingly has to be labelled under 'crimes against humanity'." Bruckmayr also describes the role of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam), a non-governmental organisation founded to document atrocities committed by the DK regime and enable the prosecutions undertaken by the Extraordinary Chambers. "The DC-CAM has a specific research focus on Muslims under the DK regime, and it engages the community actively through a wide range of initiatives like minority education programs." As hybrid national/international organisations, the ECCC and the DC-CAM provide a basic framework for analysis of the post-genocide relationships between Cambodian Muslims, their state, and the international community.

Data gathered by DC-CAM also casts light on similarities between the politico-religious stances adopted by both Muslim and Buddhist survivors of genocide. Bruckmayr cites interviews showing that Buddhist monks and Muslim imams were both likely to indicate a preference for life imprisonment over the death penalty in the case of Comrade Duch, giving the importance of karma (Buddhists) and Allah's final judgment (Muslims) as their reason. He then detailed the Cham oral history project sponsored by DC-CAM which began in 2005 and has a special focus on the Muslim community. Genocide memorials in Muslim villages are planned as part of the project, which Bruckmayr points out will open up these communities to the growing 'ethnic tourism' and even 'genocide tourism' that is attracting international visitors to Cambodia. Having identified this darker and more cynical strand of the internationalisation of post-genocide Muslim society, Bruckmayr turns his attention to the proliferation of Islamic NGOs and transnational Islamic movements following UN-brokered elections in 1992. "The NGOs stem especially from the Arab Gulf countries and from Malaysia, and this has caused consternation among some observers, firstly in the context of the 'war on terror' and alleged terrorist linkages. Secondly, and more pertinently, it was clearly observable that in connection with these activities there arose a high degree of intra-community strife, a kind of factionalism." However, Bruckmayr stated that from his perspective as a historian of Cambodian Islam, this is nothing new. "Intra-community strife

associated with circulation of ideas throughout the Muslim world has been a constant feature of the Muslim community in Cambodia at least since the early twentieth century. This process was interrupted through the civil war, the Khmer Rouge rule, and the following isolation.”

Bruckmayr sees this isolation as indicative of the international community’s poor track record in responding appropriately to Cambodia’s needs, singling out the major donors among Muslim countries for particular criticism. He points out that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Malaysia consistently voted for the DK to retain the UN seat for Cambodia, which “was of course a major impediment to having the senior leaders of the regime tried in a court of international law”. By contrast, from its inception, the People’s Republic of Kampuchea gave great attention to the plight of Cambodian Muslims with a Muslim being appointed as Chief Prosecutor for the state in the tribunal that tried Pol Pot in absentia. Bruckmayr argues that the new regime used Cambodian Muslims “as a showcase to demonstrate its tolerance in comparison to the Khmer Rouge, and also earlier regimes in Cambodia. These policies have remained in place to the present day”. He points to the widespread building of new mosques since 1992 as evidence of these policies in action, noting that the mosques have often been inaugurated by senior politicians.

Finally Bruckmayr addresses “the common assumption within Western scholarship that Islamic NGOs are often overly concerned with the religious factor in the communities they are working in”. He acknowledges that most of the funding is channelled into mosque and school construction, with very little being allocated for the development of desperately needed skills such as sewing or English language classes. “Nevertheless, the valorisation of religious capital and making religious leaders the natural spokespersons of the community is not at all peculiar to these NGOs, but also applies to the ECCC, which usually invites the imams or the religious heads of the Muslim villages to its events. It also applies to the DC-CAM and its activities.” Bruckmayr then looked at this tendency in light of the prior “attempts of the state to erase the ethnic difference of Cambodian Muslims, for example by calling them not Cham Muslims but Khmer Islam”. He noted that in response to this history, “ethnic difference has been strongly reinforced in recent decades”. Such difference is now honoured through the development of mourning sites such as memorials and the emergence of mourning rituals. Encouraged by the activities of national and international groups such as the DC-CAM, the genocide has come to serve as the Muslim community’s new focal point and a central feature of its identity, both religious and ethnic. In summation, Bruckmayr remarked “This long-term perspective goes to show that the workings of international justice and Islamic charities are complex matters, because they are necessarily tied to local and global political developments. They involve much more than just a desire for to implement universal standards of justice or to comply with the Qur’anic injunction to do *sadaqa*.”

Discussion

An audience member asked if there are any cross-border dynamics in the region, with Cambodian Muslims connecting with Muslim communities in Thailand or Myanmar.

Bruckmayr answered that there have always been strong connections with neighbouring countries, particularly those with important Malay populations. Ties with non-Malay Muslims are less pronounced.

A participant who works for World Vision with Cambodian colleagues (Buddhist and Christian) stated that she has often heard that prior to the establishment of the ECCC “the local approach was forgetting and trying to move on rather than finding out who did what to whom”. She was curious to know if this attitude is found at all amongst Cambodian Muslims. Bruckmayr replied that it does exist, which is presumably why the DC-CAM is running so many outreach projects “to convince people of the relevance of the trials”. He does believe that Muslims are more likely than other groups to recognise the importance of trials, perhaps because of their own significance as a group to the genocide charge.

The convenor asked whether Islamic organisations played any role in confronting the DK regime through legal cases, to which Bruckmayr replied that they have no involvement.

Key Note Address 2: Ayşe Kadayifci-Orellana, Georgetown University, Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

Women's Contributions to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in the Muslim World

Session Summary

Kadayifci-Orellana identified the topic of her keynote address as particularly important because “as a Muslim woman myself, I’m often asked – told, actually – that ‘you must be so liberated living in the United States’... I had never actually intended to work on Muslim women and peacebuilding, but the accusations of Muslim women being imprisoned behind the veil – which is usually the way it’s depicted – has created a lot of defensiveness in me.” For Kadayifci-Orellana this defensiveness was cemented by the paternalistic attitude of certain international NGOs who appear to style themselves as rescuers of Muslim women. Here she focuses on the ‘power and courage’ that women in the Muslim world are deploying in order to build just and peaceful societies. She began by emphasising the importance of faith in Muslim women’s peacebuilding, challenging both the idea that women are oppressed specifically by their religion and the resultant belief that secularisation is key to women’s emancipation. “I am very comfortable looking at my texts, looking at my tradition, and finding ways to transform unjust structures in my society.” Her presentation looks at how women are engaging in this creative exegetical and interpretative process to advance conflict resolution, with a focus on positive peace (sustainable justice) as opposed to negative peace (the mere absence of violence).

She sees female participation as vital to the creation of positive peace, as “for peace to be sustainable, it has to be owned by a community”. This means it cannot be imposed from the outside. To be successful, peacebuilding techniques must be embedded within the traditions of a community. Stating that although it emerged in the West as an academic discipline, peacebuilding must not be viewed as a Western invention, Kadayifci-Orellana cites the *jirga* in Afghanistan and the *musalaha* tradition in Palestine as examples of how predominantly Muslim communities have drawn on their own religious and cultural resources “to address physical, cultural, and structural forms of violence”. She declared that Muslim women have played a significant role in this process both historically and in the present day, before sharing some of the special characteristics that distinguish contemporary Muslim women’s peace work. Here she added a cautionary note, stating that Muslim women are not monolithic in terms of their religious practice or their politics and cannot be depicted solely as peace-builders – some are fighting in the front lines. Her talk reflects her experiences with specific women.

Stating that “one of the characteristics I have noticed in these women”’s peace work is that they see Islam as a resource for peace, not an oppressive force”, she gave a brief analysis of

the way peace as a concept is dealt with scripturally. "When we look at the way the term 'peace' has been used in the Qur'an, as the main unifying text of Muslims, we see that it treats peace as a process that aims to establish foundations for interacting with one another in harmony. It is not only peace and harmony between human beings, but with all of God's creation." Kadayifci-Orellana notes that she has found many Muslim women to be inspired by this holistic understanding of peace as a process, and not an end point, and that belief in *tawhid*/unity is the driving force behind their activism. "Only God can be one, unified. Everything else is multiplicity. The Qur'an talks about diversity of races and religions. But the second meaning of *tawhid* is that everything can be integrated into a harmonious whole." Related to *tawhid*, the second principle underlying women's activism is the concept of *fitra*, an innate capacity to recognise goodness and right action. The concept of *fitra* has two functions within conflict resolution. Firstly, it impels people to recognise the innate and universal dignity of each human being, irrespective of gender, creed, or other distinguishing factors. "Also the *fitra* is an important concept for rehumanisation. When you see the other person as having divine presence in them... from an Islamic perspective, many of these women feel very connected." Due to these principles Muslim women peace activists believe that they are accomplishing the will of God.

A third vital principle is that of *khilafa*, or stewardship, which encompasses a covenant with God to care for creation. Consequently Islamic 'Just War' theory gives special attention to the preservation of the environment during conflict. The practical responsibilities that come with this covenantal understanding of war and peace are encapsulated in the Qur'anic reminder, "God will not change the condition of a people until they have changed themselves." Kadayifci-Orellana points to this as a source of social empowerment for Muslim women, who read it as a command to take a proactive role in shaping their society. "And what kind of action should they take? It has to be motivated by the principles of justice, equality, and fairness. When you look at the Islamic notion of peace in the Qur'an, peace cannot be brought without justice. This is a justice that is universal. The Qur'an says that even if it is against you, yourself, and your kin, you have to pursue justice... This has been another important element when Muslim women have been reaching out and protecting others in their communities."

Another aspect of Muslim women's peacebuilding is relational, built on the principles of *rahman* and *rahim* (mercy, compassion). These principles encourage them to think about how relationships can be transformed in times of conflict. "When there is war or violence, we have to dehumanise the other, because otherwise people cannot kill. So how do you build peace with the people that you demonised or dehumanised?" Kadayifci-Orellana relates mercy to being in a position of power and also to being morally in the right, which provides the opportunity – and the imperative – to make compassionate choices in order to restore peace. She also links this to forgiveness, telling the story of the Prophet Muhammad's compassionate treatment of the men who had killed his relatives. With regard to Muslim women's involvement in these social transformations, she takes issue with the idea that it is a modern phenomenon, pointing to the Prophet's wife Aishah as an example of an early Muslim

peacemaker and then highlighting two other Muslim women whose contributions are of special interest to her own work. “The first is Lalla Aziza in Morocco, from the thirteenth century. She was known to go and face a military Sultan who came to invade her town, and use the Qur’an to persuade him that what he was doing was completely unIslamic and wrong... Her grave has been used as a sanctuary for peace even today... Ghazal Ahmad Magarishiyeh of Yemen was a woman known for her conflict resolution through poetry. The Yemenis have this tradition that you resolve conflicts through the wit and wisdom that you display through poetry. There was an institute under her name until very recently.” For Kadayifci-Orellana, these two women demonstrate that the nature of peacebuilding in the Muslim world is highly context-specific, due to their different historical experiences. She sees this diversity as another invitation to think about peace in the light of Islamic beliefs on unity. “All these different experiences provide unique challenges and opportunities for women... [T]hey were able to harness certain cultural elements and combine them with the Islamic values that I mentioned in creative ways to respond to their communities.”

Kadayifci-Orellana then addresses the absence of Muslim women peace activists from official political negotiations, stating that in Islam, peacebuilding is not understood as a separate field. “It was always seen as part of social services and charitable work. There were never Islamic peace institutions. We did this research on Muslim peacebuilding actors in Africa and the Balkans, and it was hard to find the ‘Islamic’ element as it was always embedded – the mosque imam was doing peacebuilding, the sheikh was doing it, but it was never institutionalised in the Western sense... Also, religion is very much part of everyday life. We don’t necessarily say ‘this is religious, this is not religious’. It’s everywhere.” Muslim women perceive this as a strength. However, this means that they are disadvantaged when it comes to joint peace initiatives with Western organisations, as their participation is often overlooked due to a tendency to single out clergy as natural and visible partners. The fact that most Muslim religious leaders are male means that women’s activism is rendered invisible. A similar pattern is evident in Turkey, where there are a high number of women CEOs in business but a very low number of female politicians; their participation and influence in public life cannot be measured simply by looking at their level of direct political representation, yet sadly this is often the only yardstick used. Kadayifci-Orellana also described how North African women explicitly characterise politics as a male (and useless) preserve, seeing themselves to be doing the real work unseen. “They choose, based on their understanding of politics, not to be involved in official mediation. It has not been the pattern.”

Kadayifci-Orellana states that because traditionally there have been no dedicated peacebuilding institutions in the Muslim world, they now typically emerge in response to a current event. “It’s more ad hoc, rather than established and long-standing.” Women tend to reject this framework as they do not want to be perceived as officials, thereby losing their “identity as mothers, as sisters”. She also mentions that due to the way gender identity is constructed most of women’s peace work has centred on relationship-building, as this is treated as a feminine capability. This most frequently manifests itself as education, advocacy

work, and interfaith dialogue, with women usually being absent from areas such as transitional justice, although a notable exception to this can be found in Morocco.

Having pinpointed the areas where they are most likely to be present and absent, Kadayifci-Orellana moved on to a discussion of the challenges facing women who wish to be involved in peace work, the first of which is varying interpretations of Islam and women's role in the world. "Where we are standing in history and our social-political context, our frustrations, our angers, our emotions – without us being really conscious about it, they influence the way we understand texts. Many women are saying that historically, when men were interpreting Qur'an, they did not look at it from the perspectives of us women." Kadayifci-Orellana calls for women to take possession of their scriptural heritage and work out how best to apply it in the modern world, a process that requires them to grapple with the unsavoury legacy of colonialism and paternalistic approaches to women's liberation in the Muslim world. It also means challenging the idea that violence is a byproduct of Islam, as opposed to a consequence of injustice that needs to be changed, and recognising that patriarchal oppression is a universal and not specifically a religious problem.

In conclusion, Kadayifci-Orellana gave some further examples of women peace-builders at work, beginning with Asha Hagi, a Somali woman who realised that conflict in Somalia was based on ideas of clan from which women are doubly excluded due to marriage practices. A woman from one clan who was married into another would, in time of conflict, be accepted as a member of neither. "They realised that women form a clan of their own, so they established the Sixth Clan party, saying that 'we as Somali women are marginalised, so we are our own group'." Hagi, the first female Muslim signatory to a peace agreement, was successful in identifying misogyny as a key issue in conflict. For her and other women like her, "their piety and Islamic knowledge base was an important source of legitimacy in the society". A second example was Sakina Yacoubi, the founder of eighty underground schools for girls during Taliban rule. "Within that context, she was helping them find ways to better negotiate their Islamically given rights and solve their problems. What really helped her was the fact that her education system was completely based in the Qur'anic system." Kadayifci-Orellana then named peace activists from Kenya, Palestine, and Thailand as being inspirational to her in her own work, before opening up the audience discussion.

Discussion

There was a dispute in the audience over whether the Taliban had actually forbidden girls' education, with an audience member calling it an over-exaggeration. Kadayifci-Orellana asserted that the women she has worked with in Afghanistan were explicitly forbidden from receiving any kind of schooling, but added, "If you have a different experience I am very happy to incorporate that in my research." Yahya Baiza then pointed out that the Taliban had never had control over the entire country, which accounts for why some women were able to continue to go to school openly while others went underground, before asking about the invisible role of women in peacebuilding. "Every man who decides on war or peace definitely

has a discussion at home. There are wives, there are mothers, there are sisters. In your research, have you focused on this?” Kadayifci-Orellana replied that she meant women are only invisible from a certain Western position that conceptualises peace work in a very formal way, which excludes the routine everyday contribution of women. A further question concerned her methodology, which she confirmed to be primarily ethnographic.

Another audience member asked for a specific example of feminist interpretations of Qur’an and hadith. Taking the hadith that declares ‘a community that has a woman for a leader will never progress’, Kadayifci-Orellana described women’s study groups that have deconstructed these problematic traditions by focusing on context-based and metaphorical interpretations. In a practical example, she juxtaposes the Qur’anic depiction of Pharaoh with the depiction of the Queen of Sheba, saying that according to religious feminist understandings, nothing in the Qur’an can be random; it is important that the wise ruler is personified as a woman and the unjust foolish leader is presented as a man.

Another questioner asked how women can be involved in peacebuilding at the official international level in a culturally meaningful and effective way, and Kadayifci-Orellana described efforts by the United States Institute of Peace to create alternative and culturally sensitive avenues for women to make their views and understandings known.

Additional materials and information

The powerpoint presentation for this session is available on the Islamic Relief website:

http://www.islamic-relief.com/uploads/Policy/I&CT_Conference_Kadayifci.ppt

Panel Session 3

Amjad Saleem & Shafiur Rahman, The Cordoba Foundation

Understanding Principles relating to Consensual and Representative Governance in the Peaceful Resolution of Conflict in Islamic Tradition

Abstract

Democracy is highly promoted and sought after these days but its principles are hard to practice and protect. It is also very difficult to transplant from one environment to another. What we know is that no “one model fits all environments” exists. The journey of democracy is a “generational initiative” that must carefully consider internal and external dynamics, contexts and histories. In the wake of the Arab Spring, questions are once again being asked about Islamic Governance and the compatibility of Islam with democracy in particular with its relationship with conflict transformation.

The paper, commissioned by Islamic Relief Worldwide, explores theories and concepts that are elucidated with a historical context before a more thorough look at some deeper issues with regard to Islamic governance in the Islamic Law. It will discuss issues of authority and legitimacy in the establishment and running of institutions of governance, looking at the concepts as developed by the traditions key theorists. The paper then looks at how these concepts and theories have manifested themselves throughout Islamic history and what the historical examples of best practice are. Finally, the paper will also look deeply at issues related to pluralism and the rights of minorities within a Muslim State. The issues that are looked at include civil liberties, diversity of belief; gender issues, as well other important issues to do with the modern state formulation and wider issues with regard to secularism and the interaction between the state and its minorities.

Session Summary

Introducing the paper, Amjad Saleem identified solid democratic principles of governance as a means of minimising violence and ensuring peaceful transformation of conflict. “You can draw a small correlation between the Muslim world, where a lot of violence is taking place, and the governance structures that are currently available.” The paper explores the place held by democracy in Islamic teachings, a topic that is of special relevance as several countries in the Muslim world enter a phase of political transition. This exploration means analysing these transitions and the possibilities they afford in the light of fourteen centuries of Islamic history and philosophical thought, revealing the locus between theology and politics. “How do we understand the issue of theology and democracy, and what are some of the challenges there? When we talk about democracy, are we talking about sovereignty of thought? Sovereignty of

people?” Due to time limitations, the research focused exclusively on the Sunni tradition. The paper argues that Sunni Islam is by nature inhospitable to theocratic government, as it recognises no divinely guided human being since the Prophet Muhammad, and the prevalent question in many Sunni Muslim societies today is how to apply religious principles to the democratic process. “We found that there is a space for this type of discussion.”

Shafiur Rahman followed by breaking the discussion down into three broad areas: the foundations, role, and functions of political authority in Islam; Islam and political representation in democracy; and pluralism and minority rights in an Islamic state. “In terms of the foundation and function of political authority in Islam, many writers have observed the lack of an Islamic political theory, in the sense of a theory that has been consistently developed through a genre of literature.” He gives two main reasons for this stating that in mainstream orthodox thought the lifetime of the Prophet is regarded as the epitome of pure Islamic governance, causing scholars to turn away from the idea of political theory as something that must develop with time. The second reason for the lack of a coherent Islamic political theory is that relevant writings are scattered across a broad range of disciplines. “You find political theory in *tafsir*, in the multi-volume explanations of the Qur’an throughout the early period, you have it in the *hadith* literature, you have it in principles of Islamic jurisprudence... You have a vast array of literature in which Islamic political theory is to be found, and there has been no comprehensive research yet to connect all these disparate areas.” Rahman pointed out that classical jurists identify Islamic law as the foundation of political governance and ‘its central point of reference’. Consequently any Islamic political theory concerns itself “with the substance rather than the form of Islamic governance”, and questions of form are closely connected to the idea of succession and deputyship. Rahman uses the Qur’anic story of Adam to illustrate this preoccupation, noting that the first man is referred to throughout the Qur’an as a *khalifa*, or deputy. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, this concern with deputyship (with its implications for human stewardship over the divine creation) manifested itself in the *khalifa* system of governance, with the caliphs presenting themselves as deputies to Muhammad and guardians of community life as he had envisaged it. “So from the beginning, there wasn’t any separation of Islamic law, religion, and politics within the Muslim community. When the scholars looked at the purpose of political authority in Islam, they summarised it in one statement that has been repeated again and again: it is the protection of religion and promotion of the citizens’ welfare.”

Rahman identifies concern for social justice and equitable distribution of resources as recurring themes in the Qur’an and therefore a hallmark of Islamic political theory. He quotes Qur’an 4:135 (“O believers, be enforcers of justice, even if it is against yourselves...”) to demonstrate that this is not exclusively the concern of the political leadership but of the citizenry. This flows into a discussion of democracy and free political participation in the Muslim world. “The difficulty with this idea today is that there are two camps: one that says democracy is totally incompatible with Islam, the other that there is no real difference between democracy and Islam.” Rahman states that while the core elements of democracy are

compatible with Islamic values, the question of sovereignty poses extra challenges. “Does sovereignty belong to the people, or does it belong to God?” The answer has serious ramifications for law-making, as human agency plays an important role in creation democratic legal systems. Certain jurisprudential perspectives do not allow room for such agency within Islam. To counter this Rahman argues that Islamic law is compatible with the development of democratic legal processes. “Yes, there are certain aspects of law that come from a divine source. Ultimately God is sovereign in all spheres, including political authority. But there are issues here: Islamic law doesn’t cover all aspects of life.” Human agency is necessary for the complex and dynamic process of its interpretation and application, especially to areas of life where the Qur’an is silent. This means that the discussion on Islam and democracy has to be more nuanced than it often is.

Finally, Rahman addressed pluralism and human rights, identifying the crucial question as whether there can be such a thing as universal values. “The idea of pluralism in itself is in opposition to that, with every group and every culture having its own valid systems. On the grander scale there are issues to do with relativity and universalism when it comes to rights.” A second question is whether the nation-state is really the best structure in which a pluralistic society can flourish. Rahman points out that at various points in Muslim history, Islamic community life has been distinguished by a ‘legal pluralism’ that allowed non-Muslim sub-communities to have legal autonomy. A nation-state with a universally applicable law cannot allow for such autonomy. When considering the role of democracy in conflict transformation, it is therefore necessary to grapple with the merits and demerits of relativist versus universalist approaches to rights and governance. Saleem closes by stating that this is the context in which any discussion of Islam and democracy must be addressed.

Discussion

An audience member asked whether the term ‘Islamic law’ can be meaningful considering that certain people living under it and engaging with it daily are non-Muslims, and suggested that perhaps it should be replaced by the term ‘law of Muslims’. Rahman replied that any Islamic law that is relevant to the public space – shared by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike – can fairly be said to be applicable to non-Muslims too. “It’s not discriminatory in any way, and I am not sure what the real difference is between ‘law of Muslims’ and ‘Islamic law’.”

Philipp Bruckmayr commented that Islamic political theory has also been developed through poetry and asked why poetic literature had not featured in the talk. Rahman agreed that poetry has made a contribution, but said that its implications are different from the ideas laid out in *tafsir* and Islamic law. “Poetry has no legal implications. It is part and parcel of how societies express themselves, but it has different implications from *tafsir*, hadith, and so on.” Saleem expressed a preference to focus on the explicit formulations of political theory in Islamic law, which is finally becoming a clearly defined field of its own. Mohammed Abu Nimer remarked that the two approaches reveal the difference between political theory as understood from a strictly Islamic perspective and political theory as understood by a social

anthropologist. He perceives this dichotomy as a false one, established by jurists who saw Islamic thought as their own especial property, and calls for the integration of a wider range of perspectives.

Ahmed Al-Dawoody, Zayed University

Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars under Islamic Law

Abstract

In 2008, I wrote that civil conflicts and domestic terrorism will remain the dominant form of the use of force in the Muslim world, at least in the near future. I related this to the lack of true and genuine democratic experiences in the large part of the Muslim world.² This paper investigates the conflict resolution approaches in civil wars in the Sunni four Schools of Islamic law, the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools. It starts with discussing the rights and obligations of the state towards its people and the permissible boundaries of political opposition to the state including peaceful demonstrations. It discusses the permissibility of the resort to the use of violence to quell the political opposition, on the one hand, and to overthrow the government, on the other, and the regulations put on the use of force on both the state army and the rebels. It examines the approaches which the state and the civil society are Islamically obliged, or motivated, to take in order to resolve civil conflicts before and during the resort to the use of force. This paper tries to find out the ways in which the discussions of this subject by the classical Muslims jurists of these four schools can impact the possibilities of conflict resolution in the contemporary civil conflicts in the Muslim world. Earlier research argues that conflicts motivated by, or framed according to, religious claims are less likely to be resolved through peaceful negotiations.³ However, this paper argues that in the case of civil wars among the Muslims, Islamic law can play a prominent role in preventing and resolving conflicts through negotiations, arbitrations and applying the rule of law.

Session Summary

Professor al-Dawoody began by stating that according to research by Monica Toft, religious civil wars are less likely to be resolved peacefully, twice as likely to recur, and four times deadlier to non-combatants than are non-religious civil wars. Toft adds that thirty-four of the forty-two civil wars that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century involved Muslim societies. Al-Dawoody's paper examines what the four schools of jurisprudential thought within Sunni Islam can bring to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in such wars, arguing that "Islamic law can play a prominent role in resolving civil conflicts through negotiations and arbitrations". In his introduction he examined the factors that may give rise to civil

² Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 170.

³ See Isak Svensson, "Fighting with Faith: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 51, No. 6, Dec. 2007, pp. 930-949.

conflict in Islamic states, commencing with the perception of the role of political leaders. He highlights problematic attitudes to governance that “have exaggerated the concept of obedience even to unjust rulers, to the degree of supporting dictatorships under the pretext of preventing civil war”, while glorifying just rulers and assigning them a position similar to prophets. “They give a quotation attributed to the Prophet: that the Sultan is the shadow of God on earth, basically because he protects the weak and supports the oppressed.” This fervent loyalty can be used to crush legitimate political dissent, as can the argument made by the fourteenth-century Hanafi jurist al-Izz, who stated, “Sixty years under an unjust ruler are better than one night without a ruler.” Al-Izz also perceived unjust societies as a means of cultivating patience and piety in the populace, and therefore not to be resisted. Another problematic viewpoint holds Muslim populaces responsible for unjust leaders, arguing that the leaders simply reflect the state of the wider society.

Countering these approaches, which are epitomised in the present day by religiously sanctioned prohibitions on publicly challenging the leadership in Saudi Arabia, al-Dawoody states that Muslims are Qur’anically commanded ‘to enjoin the good and forbid the evil’, quoting a hadith that asserts ‘the best *jihad* is a word of truth’. He gives peaceful political demonstrations as one clear and uncontroversial means of enjoining good, before turning his attention to armed civil rebellion in Islam. Rather than entering into the debate on its permissibility, he asks, “If such armed conflict does occur, then how does Islam attempt to resolve it?” Islamic law states that if a group of Muslims initiates armed conflict against the state, the head of state is required to send an envoy to listen to their complaints. Consequently negotiation emerges as the first measure explicitly sanctioned by Islamic law for conflict resolution. “If the rebels insist on the use of force, even after the removal of any injustices inflicted on them, they have to be advised about the dangerous consequences of their resort to force. If these discussions are of no avail then, according to some jurists from the second and third Islamic century, the rebels have to be called to a public debate so that the public can judge the justness of their cause.” Al-Dawoody sees this strategy as analogous to referendums and presidential debates in the modern day as they provide an open forum for people to discuss hotly contested and politically charged ideas on an equal footing. The strategy also enables the public to exercise its right to self-determination, giving citizens the opportunity to resolve issues of public concern. If these measures of conflict resolution fail, the state still has no right to use force, unless the rebels either assemble for fighting (in the Hanafi school) or initiate the fighting (in the other three schools). “This paradigm of resolving potential conflict peacefully is based on Qur’an 49:9 and the precedent set by the fourth Caliph.”

Al-Dawoody states that Islamic law on conflict resolution after the onset of violence aims to humanise the participants and minimise the casualties on both sides. “The state army is permitted to attack the rebels only when they are actually fighting... The rebels cannot be pursued in rout. If the rebels are escaping, the state army cannot follow them. They cannot be targeted if they are injured or captured.” These rules of engagement are laid out in the work of ibn Taymiyyeh, who is clear that the aim of warfare is to achieve the restoration of stability.

“In a word, the state army must engage only in defensive actions and must be subject to the conditions of necessity and proportionality. This is very clear.” Al-Dawoody cites Islamic injunctions to release rebels immediately after the cessation of fighting as proof that resort to armed violence against the state is not criminalised under Islamic law, contrary to opinions taken by certain contemporary jurists. The brutal repression even of peaceful demonstrations during the Arab Spring revealed an unfamiliarity (or an unwillingness to comply) with Islamic law on the part of Arab Muslim leaders. Al-Dawoody offers the GCC-brokered peace agreements in Yemen and Bahrain as a more positive example of applied Islamic law in times of civil strife, particularly the establishment of an independent committee to investigate the disproportionate force deployed by the Bahraini government against protestors. “In fact, *tahkim* (arbitration) is a conflict resolution mechanism deeply rooted in pre-Islamic Arabia. The famous arbitrators include the Prophet’s grandfather... With regard to the role of women, it is interesting to note that the Arabs resorted to female negotiators even before Islam.” Al-Dawoody gives the names of some distinguished women negotiators, before describing the Prophet Muhammad’s own arbitration skills and his successful averting of conflict. These pre-Islamic arbitration traditions have been refined by Islamic law and now form the nucleus of civil conflict resolution methods under Islamic governance. However, Al-Dawoody emphasises that military intervention is not only permitted but obligatory in cases where peaceful means of resolution have failed, citing Qur’an 4:75-76 as his proof text.

Finally Al-Dawoody spoke on post-conflict justice in the Muslim world, noting that the primary victims of civil unrest often fail to be treated according to their rights as described in Islamic law. It is important to bring the law as practised in Muslim states into line with the religious legal theory that guarantees these rights. Due to the suspicion and mistrust that Western military intervention have provoked in many Muslim societies, Al-Dawoody postulates that conflicts between Muslims ought to be easier to resolve, especially as all parties share the same religious legal heritage and are able to draw on the same religious resources when devising strategies for transitional justice. He states that developing Islamic constitutional law ought to be a priority in the Muslim world, as it will both provide an incentive for governments to intervene on behalf of the victims of oppression and violence and strengthen Islamic civil society, which also has a significant role in peacebuilding

Discussion

An audience member asked whether the term ‘Islamic law’ can be meaningful considering that certain people living under it and engaging with it daily are non-Muslims, and suggested that perhaps it should be replaced by the term ‘law of Muslims’. Al-Dawoody built on the response given by Shafiur Rahman and pointed out that Islamic law allows for the exercise of legal autonomy by non-Muslim sub-communities, and that their participation in conflict resolution is facilitated through this means.

Additional materials and information

The powerpoint presentation for this session is available on the Islamic Relief website:

http://www.islamic-relief.com/uploads/Policy/I&CT_Conference_Al-Dawoody.ppt

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Conflict-Sensitive Expressions of Faith in Mindanao: A Case Study

Abstract

This case study explores a promising, though imperfect, new way of equipping religious actors to improve their own socio-political impact in societies vulnerable to destructive conflict. The focus is not on religious actors who engage directly in matters of peace and conflict, but rather on religious actors who influence conflict as an unconscious side-effect, or an externality,⁴ produced during other forms of service. Such unintentional impact is not always positive. As observed by Rev. Mandell Creighton: "No people do so much harm as those who go about doing good."⁵ These concerns are relevant worldwide, but particularly salient in Southeast Asia, where multiple faiths play a vibrant role in public life. Ethno-political conflict is widespread and, where there are strong demographic correlations between ethnic identity and religious affiliation,⁶ religion is often drawn into the fray.⁷ As a result, everyday religious activities can inflame inter-group tensions. With this challenge in mind, we report on the field-testing of an approach called "conflict sensitivity" among churches, mosques and religious service agencies in Mindanao, the southernmost region of the Philippines.

Session Summary

This presentation was drawn from a paper of the same name originally published in the *Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace* (spring 2011). Introducing themselves as 'Christian partners in the journey', Garred and Castro set out a multi-faith approach to peacebuilding that has had success in Mindanao and that has the potential to be useful in other contexts. Conflict sensitivity is "an organisational planning approach originally developed to help humanitarian and development assistance practitioners understand the complex interaction between aid and conflict", in recognition of the fact that not all intervention in conflict zones is positive, and that humanitarian actors need to be aware of the problematic consequences of their involvement. The approach incorporates a cluster of different tools designed to minimise

⁴ Luigi Curini, "On the Externalities of Social Capital: Between Myth and Reality," in *Civil Societies and Social Movements: Potentials and Problems*, Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science, edited by Derrick Purdue (Milton Park: Routledge, 2007).

⁵ Louise Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), 501.

⁶ Sree Kumar and Sharon Siddique, *Southeast Asia: The Diversity Dilemma: How Intra-Regional Contradictions and External Forces Are Shaping Southeast Asia Today* (Singapore: Select, 2008).

⁷ Linell E. Cady and Sheldon W. Simon, "Introduction: Reflections on the Nexus of Religion and Violence," in *Religion and Conflict in Southeast Asia: Disrupting Violence*, edited by Linell E. Cady and Sheldon W. Simon (New York: Routledge, 2007), 16.

negative impact, with the principle of 'do no harm' (DNH) being most widely discussed in Mindanao. Garred explains that the prominence of this particular strategy in Mindanao is due to its efficacy on a local level, clarifying that it is not the only tool in the conflict sensitivity toolbox. Castro then introduced the work of Davao Ministerial Interfaith (DMI), the group that has put DNH into practice there.

DMI is comprised of approximately fifty religious leaders from the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim communities who work together in voluntary community-based social action. "Its approach is interfaith, respecting each other's beliefs, traditions, and recognising our differences, our different faith expressions, but also recognising that we have to work together for the wellbeing of our community, the wellbeing of children." DMI was born in a volatile region that has been scarred by civil war and shaped by "multiple waves of colonisation and migration, all of which have had something to do with religious conversion". This has had ramifications for the relationships between members of different faith communities in Mindanao, whose inclusion in the Christian-majority Philippines has always been a hotly debated issue. Its Muslim-majority population was transformed by the arrival of Christian settlers. While "most people agree that the root causes of the conflict are political and economic in nature... religion has been drawn into the fray". In the past six months there has been significant progress in peacebuilding, but "you still have inter-group relationships that are characterised by a lot of separation, exclusion, discrimination, and disrespect, and those are words that come up a lot in the research itself, describing what people feel and how they try to relate to each other". The DNH tool, originally designed for use in humanitarian aid, has been employed amongst religious leaders in Mindanao for the past ten years in an effort to transform these community relationships.

Positive results have been seen in three areas. Firstly, the DNH tool changes people's perceptions of one another, with participating religious leaders describing the change as 'a shift in mindset'. This shift has impelled them to 'take initiative and even to take risk' in forming relationships with people whom they might not otherwise have approached. Secondly, this has resulted in change on an organisational level. Castro related a story from her work as a hospital chaplain to illustrate this. As a Catholic religious sister, she used to support exclusively Catholic patients, but after taking part in DNH training she realised that "because of the prejudices and biases and distrust caused by the history of conflict in Mindanao, my Ministry, instead of helping people, added to the tension... and that rather than being exclusive with the members of my community, my church, I'd rather serve all the patients regardless of their religion". Through DMI, she identified a Sheikh to whom she could refer Muslim patients who needed him, thereby establishing a collaborative partnership. She also expanded her own Ministry to include Protestant patients. For her, practising DNH "simply means becoming more of a connector, a means of peace". DNH training has consequently opened up questions about religious conversion and the threat that many community members felt with regard to 'rival' faith groups, with religious leaders participating in the DNH training feeling that their visible cooperation has helped to alleviate

such tensions. Community members have now started to see interfaith contact as a means of benefiting the community as a whole rather than as a potential threat to their own way of life.

The third change is evident in how religious leaders understand and manage their own roles, with greater awareness of their own impact on a community. “Previously, as religious leaders, their focus was always on their perception of divine calling. ‘What do I perceive that God/Allah is asking me to do?’ – which is an excellent question, but without awareness of social impact. So they have added that awareness of social impact to that sense of divine calling.” This has led to an increased focus on biblical and Qur’anic resources that promote peace and community relationships, which are now emphasised heavily in religious education and community development programs; and has encouraged the leaders to see themselves as role models. “It is unusual in Mindanao to see a sheikh and a pastor and a nun leading a seminar, and they have become quite aware of the positive impact of that as well.”

These changes in attitude and approach have been unfolding for approximately ten years, since DNH was introduced in Mindanao, and in conclusion Castro and Garred provided practical examples of how they manifest currently, followed by a description of some of the challenges that DMI workers face now. The DNH principle is now embedded in DMI’s work at every level, and DMI has greatly increased the number of trainers providing workshops on the tool to its partner organisations. They have also begun to cultivate relationships with the local government, based on the need to protect children affected by conflict, a central shared interest. The approach “has potential because it’s a very elicitive approach, and it has the potential to encourage people to analyse locally and look for their own local solutions”. However, “it takes time and effort to get past a pattern that DMI itself has termed ‘washing my hands of social impact’. Simply, ‘if I’m serving Allah, I’m serving God, I am not going to make mistakes, and if I do, he will take care of it’. There is a recognition that Allah is merciful and he will help, but we still need to take responsibility for the impact of our own actions; and that takes time to develop. It’s also important that when people analyse their own context, they go to deep. It’s very easy to stay at the surface level and not get at the systemic injustice underneath, so we need to push on that point, and we need to make sure that the individual transformation that tends to happen relative[ely] easily with Do No Harm is translated into collective actions. These are the things that we are continuing to work on.”

Discussion

An audience member asked for practical examples of what DNH looks like in practical terms. Castro responded that it is ‘first and foremost an analytical process or way of thinking that encourages people to look at the context of intergroup relationships in their place, and to think about what connects the key groups, and what divides them... Secondly it encourages people to think about their own actions in that contexts. Traditionally, since the tool was devised by aid agencies, it was about aid interventions, but increasingly the tool is used by religious leaders to think about issues like ‘where do we pray’ and ‘where do we distribute items to people who need them’.” She explained that even such simple questions can be

deeply divisive in conflict zones, and that DNH encourages a more sensitive and reflective response to people's needs and feelings, in order 'to promote as much unity as possible' and to minimise unintentional harm.

Additional materials and information

Michelle Garred and Joan Castro were presenting their paper "Conflict-Sensitive Expressions of Faith in Mindanao: A Case Study" which was published in the *Journal of Religion Conflict and Peace*, Volume 4. Issue 2, Spring 2011. The full text is available on the Journal website:

<http://www.religionconflictpeace.org/volume-4-issue-2-spring-2011/conflict-sensitive-expressions-faith-mindanao-case-study>

The powerpoint presentation for this session is available on the Islamic Relief website:

http://www.islamic-relief.com/uploads/Policy/I&CT_Conference_GarredCastro.ppt