

RELIGION AND MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to recognize the importance of religion to matters state and personal security. It acknowledges, thereby, the important role of religious actors engaged in multi-track diplomacy toward the ends of regional stability and peace, social reconciliation and communal health.

INTRODUCTION

Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace, according to a recent Pew Forum poll. According to the poll, majorities or pluralities of every major religious tradition believe that diplomacy, and not military strength, is the best way to ensure peace. (PF: 2008) Efforts by international and national councils of churches and by regional councils of bishops, by religious non-governmental agencies, and by associations such as that of Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals issuing, *A Common Word Between Us and You*, (2007) can have significant implications at reducing civil strife and enhancing prospects for regional stability and peace.

1. RELIGION AND SECURITY

Religion can stabilize or de-stabilize. It can make for security or deepen anxiety. Regardless of tradition, creed or theology these polarities can be found in all of our histories. Religion is so important to the question of security in our time that it has become a topic of political interest after its eclipse among policy makers in the twentieth century. Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and Ambassador to the United Nations, in *The Mighty and the Almighty* (2006) reports that religion is playing a fundamental role in ordering the world of the 21st century. It is shaping policy in the U.S. It is caught up in the deepening divisions of the Middle East. Christianity and Islam are in a “race for souls” across Africa and Central Asia. What to do with religion has become a question of such significance that in the U.S. it is the focus of work for numerous think-tanks and institutions, including the prestigious Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and its Post-Conflict Reconciliation (PCR) Project. (Danan: 2007) It is a subject of interest in other policy circles and a growing concern of recent National Security Strategy studies of the United States. (ERPCS: 2006) The report growing out of this project concludes that: “Religion is a multivalent force: it ... has been mobilized to sanction violence, drawn on to resolve conflicts, and invoked to provide humanitarian and development aid. In all of these capacities, religious leaders, organizations, institutions and communities are especially important in shaping the direction of conflict-prevention or reconstruction efforts in fragile states.” (CSIS 2007)

The value of religion is lodged precisely in its role in shaping how we put the world together for purposes of personal

and social identity. It “frames” meaning and provides a narrative framework for life. The nature of religion for personal and social identity was noted by Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the last century, although he rejected its function in favor of the emerging sciences as he knew them. In a defining publication, “The Question of a *Weltanschauung*,” (Strachey: 1965, 195-196) he described a *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, as “an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us finds its fixed place.” Accordingly, the sciences overtake other competitors to defining “worldview” such as philosophy, art, and religion. According to Freud, it is from the scientific worldview alone that we gain access to knowledge about: a) origins; b) ultimate happiness; and c) direction in life.

The scientific worldview of Freud, some have called it “scientism,” in this sense replaces anything that might be offered by theology, or the “science” of God in matters of origins, protection, and direction. One way of reading the works of the popular British essayist and lay theologian C. S. Lewis, is to see Lewis’ entire literary effort as a way to counter Freudian scientism – in literary and other essays, children’s stories, and other monographs. In this sense, Lewis might be understood as one of the first “post-modern” writers of the twentieth century. Of course, in retrospect he represents a larger sea change of interest in religion that begins with humane inquiry and effort and can end in radical politics: “Islam is the Answer” runs a popular political slogan – with the Hindutva, a Mahavamsa Mindset, “Iron Wall” Zionism, and apocalyptic Christian Fundamentalism in close pursuit. (Ali: 2002)

Western governments have had to adopt a new understanding and appreciation of religion. Indications of impending changes in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century. (In fact, note should be made of the recognition of the Bosniacs as a distinct people based upon their religion (Islam) by Josip Broz Tito in 1969, significant for the autonomy granted Kosovo in 1974.) But interest in religion’s role in shaping public policy has become an increasing reality since the Iranian Revolution of November 4, 1979. Madeleine Albright referred to this revolution as “a true political earthquake, like the revolutions of France or Russia,” and American foreign policy has yet to

deal fully with this. The spiritual identity of the West, and of its churches, was also raised to new self-consciousness with the outbreak of this Revolution. The significance of religion, and what we mean by it, has become only a more pointed reality in evolving geo-politics since 9/11. The Iranian Revolution grounded politics in the debate over identity, set the stage for the end of the Cold War, and drew us rapidly to events now identified as the “War on Terror.” (Wilfred: 2005) Politics since 1979 has become identity politics – since then often a religious contest. Theology has become public theology in a new way.

2. CIVIC GOALS AND MORAL VISION

Public theology in secular democratic societies means promoting the common good. (de Gruchy: 2007: 26-41) It has to do with crafting a moral vision so as to engage a wide and often diverse public. In seeking to craft such a vision, Duncan Forrester argues out of his Christian tradition that public theology is, first, an effort to engage the secular world in terms of its issues while digging deeply into one’s own religious tradition for the resources to do so. (Forrester: 2004, 431-8) Secondly, doing theology in this way offers a constructive contribution to public debate and to human flourishing. It has the potential and aim to make a positive contribution to the world in which we live, a theology that “heals, reconciles, helps, challenges.” (Forrester: 2004, 436) Thirdly, public theology is ecclesial theology, i.e., it is embodied in the life of a community of people who are seeking to give witness to God’s reign over all of life. Fourthly, public theology is utopian in the sense that it keeps hope alive for a better world. It is open to the creative process that enables solutions to be found to urgent civic problems.

In crafting a moral vision to meet civic goals, public theology has to take into account different localities and different publics. John De Gruchy writes of such different localities by noting that: “there is no universal ‘public theology’, but only theologies that seek to engage the political realm within particular localities. There are, however, commonalities, both confessional and ecumenical, in approach and substance between theologies that do this. (de Gruchy: 2004: 45-62) David Tracy reminds us of the different “publics” with which a moral vision is concerned: academy, church and society. In the context of a pluralist society there may be many more publics as well, but this delineation is helpful in that it reminds us that different modes of discourse are applicable in different settings. Tracy observes that every “theologian must face squarely the claims to meaning and truth of all three publics” and address each accordingly. (Tracy: 1981, 29) For all theology, whether it be fundamental, systematic or practical (to use Tracy’s categories) is “determined by a relentless drive to genuine publicness to and for all three publics.” (Tracy: 1981, 31)

In terms of the ways by which public theology seeks to promote human flourishing, embody a community’s hope in the future and foster a better world, three of Forrester’s four points, such reflection is frequently engaged in issues of justice and peace, terms frequently combined as “justpeace” with particular resonance in specific locations and for specific publics. (Stassen: 1992; Lederach: 2004; Pranis: 2003; Porter,

2006) In reflecting on violence, often borne out of conflict, psychiatrist James Gilligan writes that, “All violence is an effort to do justice or to undo injustice.” (Gilligan: 1996) The implication of this perspective is to deepen our understanding of the social psychological dynamics inherent in violence in civil society and the necessity of a rule of law in specific local and international affairs. Work toward such ends is especially suitable for religious actors and NGOs who are frequently close to a people and work in a specific locale. The method for this work is through that form of diplomacy referred to as “multi-track” diplomacy.

Gilligan’s observation opens up for us an important perspective on the nature of violence, its relation to justice and the role of religious actors and others seeking social justice in society. Gilligan calls us to a view of justice that is “restorative,” or restorative justice, and toward the creation of societies characterized by “justpeace.” The term “restorative justice,” originating in indigenous communities and among sociologists and legal scholars, implies that attention be given to the effects of judicial procedures upon victims, offenders, and the community; i.e., that victims’ needs are met, that offenders learn responsibility and that communities find safety through just relationships. (Zehr: 1995, 181) Our moral vision shapes how we deal with conflict toward the ends of civil society.

3. MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY

Changing global conditions have revealed more clearly that much of the conflict we are experiencing is around issues of ethnicity or race and communal identity, groups mobilized around shared language and culture, often exacerbated by religion. Where there is a perceived imbalance in the distribution of economic, political and environmental or social resources (social injustice) that coincides with identity-group boundaries, there is potential for violence and for protracted conflict that will further devastate the communities involved. Given its role in framing the authenticity of different world views, religion can either contribute to regional peace or be used as an argument to justify conflict in the context of perceived injustices as happened in regional conflicts in recent years as well as in the “so-called” War on Terrorism.

Conflict theory outlines several approaches which often devolve into either conflict management or conflict resolution. Whereas the former implies taking action to keep a conflict from escalating further, the latter seeks to resolve incompatibilities and such actions often lead to outcomes described as zero-sum, positive-sum or negative-sum. (Mantha: 2001) Both approaches may necessitate the intervention of a third party. Such mediation may be necessary because of the breakdown of communication, an outbreak of violence or the intractability of parties in negotiation. Such intervention may be inter-personal or it may happen at the group level. It may represent efforts to mediate among elites, middle-range leaders or grassroots actors, and be appropriate to the level of interaction. (Schirich: 2004, 71)

We frequently think of third party intervention in regional conflicts as coming from nations-states. This

is the work of political or military leaders through official visits, policy statements, “coercive measures like sanctions, arbitration, power mediation” or “non-coercive measures like facilitation, negotiation, mediation, fact-finding missions and ‘good offices.’” (Reimann: 2004) This is Track I intervention or diplomacy. It involves particular resources, positive as well as negative incentives, and can carry all of the coercive potentiality that a state or international organization can bring to bear upon a conflict.

Track II diplomacy has developed over the past quarter century, as a part of the growing NGO movement and often in response to the unique regional conflict that have broken open since the end of the Cold War (1989). American diplomat and public policy scholar Joseph Montville coined the term “track two diplomacy” in *Foreign Policy Magazine* (Winter, 1981-82). (Davidson, Montville: 1981; Montville: 1990; Montville: 2001) The term was first used in an analysis of the field in a book by John W. McDonald, *Conflict Resolution: Track Two Diplomacy* (1987). (MacDonald, Bendahmane: 1987) Pioneered in concept even earlier among scholars like Herbert Kelman, Edward Azar, John Burton, John Galtung, it has grown considerably as a concept and a recognized form of diplomacy in building an atmosphere conducive to the work of reconciliation. Authors Davies and Kaufman argue that Track II diplomacy: “promotes an expansion of social capital as needed to move from the logic of mutual hostility and imposed solutions (zero- or negative-sum outcomes) to the integrative logic of peace building as a process of collectively addressing human needs, leading zero- or positive-sum outcomes that encourage buy-in by all parties and development of a self-sustaining democratic culture. (Davies, Kaufman: 2003, 3)

Track II diplomacy can complement “first track” or official diplomacy in that it can initiate new opportunities for communication where little or none exists, foster cross-cultural understanding and pursue joint efforts at dialogue or action when official dialogue is blocked or absent. It can begin, build and enlarge upon official Track I diplomacy. Public policy and conflict mediators John Davies and Edward Kaufman write about the assets that such “citizens’ diplomacy” can bring to conflict in the following way: “Second track, or “citizens” diplomacy may be broadly defined as the bringing together of professionals, opinion leaders or other currently or potentially influential individuals from communities in conflict, without official representative status, to work together to understand better the dynamics underlying the conflict and how its transformation for sustainable development might be promoted. (Davies, Kaufman: 2003, 2)

Track II diplomacy has been wisely used, often with success, in numerous areas around the world. Policy analyst and mediator John W. MacDonald cites examples with respect to the former Soviet Union, the PLO in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland. (MacDonald: 2002: 52-54) It has made possible a constructive civil society in South Africa after the end of Apartheid. Many cases are documented by Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall in their study, *A Force More Powerful* (2000). (Ackerman, DuVall: 2000) An enlarged understanding of the

role of religion in today’s world is playing into a growing awareness of the importance of religion in matters of diplomacy, specifically Track II diplomacy, not only in the U. S. but also within the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. (van Tongeren, Berenk, Helema, Verhoeven: 2005) The CSIS Report, “Engaging with Religion in Conflict-Prone Settings,” finds room for just such additional activity and emerging partnerships in a number of cases cited in the report.

4. THE EVOLUTION OF MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY

The need for fostering greater social capital around dealing with issues of violence has not only stimulated the development of Track II diplomacy, but also Multi-Track diplomacy. Since Montville coined the term “Track II Diplomacy” to describe the work done by non-elite actors representing non-governmental organizations, further distinction has been made to identify other avenues of diplomacy which, although always unofficial, endeavor to create a climate of receptivity for Track I activity. Search for Common Ground, a non-governmental organization working to resolve conflict internationally, defines Track III diplomacy as essentially “people to people” diplomacy undertaken by individuals or private groups. This type of activity may involve organizing meetings and conferences, generating media exposure and political and legal advocacy. Over the last quarter century, John W. MacDonald and Louise Diamond have developed an additional approach to defining the levels of diplomatic intervention, expanding out from Track I to Multi-Track diplomacy.

In 1992 McDonald and Diamond co-founded the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD). They defined nine tracks for research and development: government, professional conflict resolution, business, private citizens, training and education, activism, religious, funding, and public opinion/communication. (MacDonald: 2003) Beyond Tracks I and II lies many opportunities for ordinary citizens to play significant roles in peace-building. Nation-states and armies may be able to establish the truce, but only people can build an enduring peace.

Track II and Multi-Track diplomacy has been made increasingly possible through the evolution of additional factors that have played into the development of the field. These include: (Fisher: 2003, 61-77)

- The development of methodologies around Interactive Conflict Resolution workshops; (Rothman: 1992)
- The expansion of Non-Governmental Organizations over the past half century; (Hoksbergen, Ewert: 2002; Falk: 2001)
- The development of insight in the field of Social Psychology and related disciplines; (Kriesberg: 1998)
- An expanded sphere of international law and the importance of the rule of law in a world characterized by migration and globalization; (Tamanaha: 2004; Mitri: 1995)

- A growing recognition of the importance of restorative justice, particularly in formerly colonial regions; (Zehr: 1990; de Gruchy: 2002; Ross: 1996)
- A growing recognition of the importance of spiritual perceptivity in the work of peace building, certainly beginning with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (1914) in the last century but finding roots deepened in the contemporary efforts. (Clapsis: 2007; Wink: 2000; Friesen: 2000, 124-128; Boulding: 2000, 129-134)

5. MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Religious communities can be valuable actors in our contemporary political climate where so much violent conflict is related issues of identity. (Helmick, Petersen: 2001; Little: 2007) Indeed such is increasingly the case not only at grassroots and middle-levels of social leadership, but even in the international arena. Recent years have seen the formation of the UN Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, on the Alliance of Civilizations, on the acceptance of numerous religious NGO's into the UN system and the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief to name only a few areas of development. (An-Na'im: 2002, 55-73)

Religious communities are communities of memory and identity. The struggle with the past and with the nature of forgiveness, the problems of "re-membering" after periods of destruction, intermingle with the problem of memory and faithfulness to the past and with forgiving and the problem of guilt and reconciliation with the past. (Ricoeur: 2004) With political as well as issues of deep humanity involved in the very tragedy of violence, theologian Paul Ricoeur writes that, "at the heart of selfhood and at the core of imputability, the paradox of forgiveness is laid bare, sharpened by the dialectic of repentance in the great Abrahamic tradition. What is at issue here is nothing less than the power of the spirit of forgiveness to unbind the agent from his act. (Ricoeur: 2004, 459) Writing autobiographically, theologian Miroslav Volf asks: "So from the start, the central question for me was not whether to remember. I most assuredly would remember and most incontestably should remember. Instead, the central question was how to remember rightly. And given my Christian sensibilities, my question from the start was, how should I remember abuse as a person committed to loving the wrongdoer and overcoming evil with good?" (Wolf: 2007)

Author and theologian Flora Keshgegian re-scripts Christian narrative in a way reminiscent of Desmond Tutu's *No Future Without Forgiveness* (2000), by musing on the nature of time and narrative in relation to the dynamics of forgiveness by writing: As we engage in intentional practices, cultivate new habits, and relearn the contours of hope, what will be the effect on how we tell time? How will time's tale change? . . . Our narratives of time may well change to be less linear and ends-driven, not so relentlessly comedic and more multi-dimensional. We may become better schooled in living with complexity and multiplicity, ambiguity and indeterminacy." (Keshgegian: 2006)

What makes the work of religious actors so powerful is that they can address the deepest needs of a shared public narrative or world view and offer the possibility or the re-storying of a person or people's experience. Cycles of revenge or anger can be lifted up through forgiveness and repentance into a new narrative that re-humanizes the offender, deepens meaning for victims and lays out meaningful steps toward enhanced community safety and historical meaning.

6. A CLOSING CONSIDERATION: THE AMBIGUOUS SOCIAL CHARACTER OF RELIGION

Thus far we have argued for the self-conscious role of religious actors in Multi-Track diplomacy. Three points, each of which draws us back to Freud's observations about religion and a world view, should be raised from a cautionary perspective:

First, religion will always be an unstable partner to official (Track I) diplomacy. Religion finds its limitations for public policy from the fact that it locates itself in a larger moral order than that of the state. This is the prophetic role of religion as documented classically for its social function by theorists such as Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch. In the Judeo-Christian tradition this is seen in the text which finds the anointing of a king over Israel (Saul) accompanied by the establishment of the office of prophet (I Samuel 8-10). Among Christians, the New Testament bears a certain ambiguity toward the state as illustrated in contradictory visions raised up in Romans 13 (authority as established by God) and Revelation 13 (the state as a destructive beast). (Wink: 2006) When Georges Sorel introduced the term "redemptive violence" at the beginning of the twentieth century to cover the use of violence for social change, he probably never would have countenanced the extent of violence encountered through the twentieth century. (Sorel: 1908)

Second, Freud reminds us of the priestly role of religion when he writes of religion's function to comfort and provide for our ultimate happiness. Often in tension with the prophetic role of religion, sociologist Peter Berger reminds us of the way in which religion may be employed to legitimate "social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by *locating* them within a sacred and cosmic frame reference." Religion has been employed to create taken-for-granted worldviews that often allow "the institutional order [to] be so interpreted as to hide, as much as possible, its *constructed* character." (Berger: 1969, 33) We are well aware of the fact by now that many of the conflicts that employ religion or draw upon religious imagery do so in order to "mask" other political, economic or socio-ethnic grievances. (Appleby: 1999; Helmick: 2001, 81-96)

Third, beyond the prophetic and priestly functions of religion, there is an additional factor which relates to the complexity of Multi-Track diplomacy in contemporary political affairs, the question of what indeed religion represents. Political theorist Jayne Docherty from the Conflict Resolution Program of Eastern Mennonite University writes of the complexity today in strategic negotiations with the active political participation of Non-Governmental Organizations. (Docherty: 2005) Such

organizations, which can build social capital by building and enlarging upon official Track I diplomacy also bring their own agendas which may be different in greater or lesser ways from official statecraft. In the end, however, this is a reason to keep religion at the table, working and bargaining with others in good faith.

RESOURCES

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