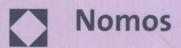Roland Czada | Thomas Held | Markus Weingardt
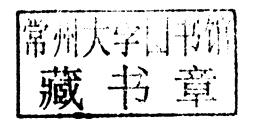
Religions and World Peace

Religious Capacities for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Nomos

In memoriam

Prof. Dr. Volker Rittberger
(1941 – 2011)

Die Schriftenreihe trägt der zunehmenden Beachtung des Themen-komplexes von Religion, Konflikt und Frieden Rechnung. Sowohl in der Wissenschaft als auch in Politik, Friedensarbeit, Medien oder Bildungseinrichtungen wird man mehr und mehr gewahr, welche Bedeutung religiösen Überzeugungen nicht nur für die Entwicklung von Konflikten zukommen kann, sondern auch für die Vermeidung oder Beilegung derselben. Entsprechend breit, interdisziplinär und methodisch vielfältig ist das Spektrum der publizierten Arbeiten. Durch theoretische, empirische oder deskriptiv angelegte Unter-suchungen richtet sich die Reihe ebenso an das wissenschaftliche Fachpublikum wie an (friedens-)politische Akteure und die an Frie-den und Religion interessierte Öffentlichkeit.

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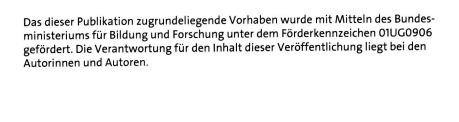wird herausgegeben von

Dr. Markus Weingardt, Tübingen

Band 5

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Preface

> "Values are not there to serve philosophers or theologians,
> but to help people live their lives and organize their societies.
> So, at international level, we need mechanisms of cooperation
> strong enough to insist on universal values,
> but flexible enough to help people realise those values
> in ways that they can actually apply in their specific circumstances."
> *Kofi Annan*[1]

In his lecture on Global Ethics delivered at Tübingen University, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, raised the question of the existence of "universal values" that can jointly endeavour to meet the enormous challenges faced by mankind in the age of globalisation. This referred primarily to religions. Whilst respecting cultural differences, their basic value systems, characterised by tolerance, openness to dialogue and their quest for peace and justice, should contribute towards finding and realising mutually acceptable solutions for coexistence in security and peace.

Following the terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001, the involvement of religions in inciting and justifying violence has become the focus of public and scientific debate. With recourse to Samuel Huntington, religions were deemed to be the driving forces leading to a "Clash of Civilizations" and threatening the international community with numerous violent conflicts. In contrast, an increasing number of events and initiatives have been held across the world that aim to foster interreligious dialogue and to dismantle foe images, stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings. Nonetheless, the ambivalence of religions which, in addition to having the potential for violence, also have a great potential for peacebuilding and peace promotion, still remains a marginal research topic. The same applies to the question of how religious communities can develop resilience to their political exploitation.

The *German Foundation for Peace Research*, the *Research Network Religion and Conflict* and the *Academic Council of the Osnabrück Peace Forum* collaboratively developed the idea of holding an international conference to address this major scientific and political desideratum. After all, the challenges faced by mankind at the start of the 21st century – namely future energy supplies, the production and distribution of sufficient quantities of food for an ever-growing world population, the increasing shortage of fresh water and the social and economic consequences of climate change

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1 Kofi Annan, lecture on Global Ethics delivered on 12 December 2003 at Tübingen University. Download: http://www.weltethos.org/1-pdf/20-aktivitaeten/eng/we-reden-eng/speech_Annan_eng.pdf (here p. 6).

– can only be met if, in line with the points made in Kofi Annan's lecture, consensus can be achieved on universal values and on an understanding of justice and security based on reciprocity. With their potential for promoting peace, religions can make a major contribution to this consensus.

The questions raised by Kofi Annan in his lecture on Global Ethics offered central points of reference for the international conference on "Religions and World Peace: Religious Communities and their Potential for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution", held in Osnabrück – the City of Westphalian Peace – between 20th and 23th October 2010. It consciously and explicitly dealt with the peace-promoting and peacebuilding potential of religions, with the aim of enabling them to take a more active role in academic and public discourse. It was for this reason that the event was directed at academia, interested parties, politicians and the general public alike. The huge response demonstrated that an important new impetus had emanated from the conference: not only for the examination of domestic affairs such as social integration, violence prevention and cross-cultural understanding, but also for questions of international significance, such as crisis and violence prevention, conflict resolution and sustainable peace consolidation on a global scale. We are therefore especially grateful to the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research for generously sponsoring the conference. We also appreciate the cooperation of the associations of protestant and catholic academies in Germany, the German section of Religions for Peace, the United Nations Association of Germany, the German Commission for UNESCO, the University of Osnabrück and the City of Peace Osnabrück. Further thanks go to the initiators of the conference, Hans-Jürgen Fip, former lord mayor of Osnabrück, and the late Professor Volker Rittberger, who most unfortunately passed away in November 2011 and to whom this volume is dedicated. We owe special gratitude to Janina Sentner and Lena Förster for managing the conference and getting this book published.

Osnabrück/Tübingen, April 2012

Roland Czada   *Thomas Held*   *Markus Weingardt*

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I. Introduction

Roland Czada, Thomas Held and Markus Weingardt

The "comeback" or "renaissance" of religion has become a controversial topic under intense public debate. Whether this means an overall decline of secularism and, thus, constitutes a real return of religion to the political arena, or whether it is more a matter of public perception and media coverage, today religion has (once again) advanced to become a relevant and highly regarded factor in international politics. Public perception and debate centre primarily on fundamentalism and violence in the name of religion. There have been, and continue to be, justifications for such a perspective. These range from the establishment of a totalitarian "theocracy" in Iran and the wars waged between Roman Catholic Croats, orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosnians in the disintegrating state of Yugoslavia to the tyranny of the Taliban in Afghanistan, from the terrorist assaults on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in September 2001 and numerous subsequent attacks across the globe by the radical Islamic Al Qaida network to, right up to current religiously charged conflicts in Africa, the Near and Middle East and in Southeast Asia.

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that the attention of the media and academia is focused on the *acts of violence* perpetrated by religious fanatics, causing religions to be seen primarily as politically dangerous, destructive and likely to exacerbate conflict. Although "religion seems to be a cause of conflict, as well as of conflict resolution, the effects of religion in both exhorting men to peace and of justifying violence in defense of the "sacred" has been widely noted" (Kratochwil 2005:114). However, research into this ambivalence is still in its infancy, and academic exchange on this topic appears to be underdeveloped (cf. Appleby 2000; Basedau 2009; De Juan/ Hasenclever 2009; Philpott 2007). We know little about the conditions under which conflict constellations develop, and what triggers religious beliefs and religious actions to orientate in a particular direction. Furthermore, even less is known about how the potential for peacebuilding and the resilience to violence within religious communities can be awakened and strengthened.

The question of the significance and effectiveness of religion with regard to the *delegitimisation* and *prevention* of violence springs to mind precisely because at present "religion is perceived as being particularly effective at legitimising violence" (Grieser 2005:182). And yet the media and academia mainly continue to sidestep this issue, or ignore and marginalise it. If religions and religious communities can exert *constructive* influence on political conflicts – not only those of a violent nature – then it would present itself as further developing this potential and harnessing it more effectively for the benefit of peace processes.

The ambivalent and highly complex relationship between the orientations of religious actors and political patterns of conflict is now widely recognised (cf. Weingardt 2010; Kadayifci-Orellana 2009; Brocker/Hildebrandt 2008; Harpviken/Røislien 2008; Appleby 2000) – and with it, at the same time, the realisation that communities of faith and other religiously oriented actors can contribute to constructive conflict management and have, indeed, done so. In spite of these findings, which are by no means new, for a long time religions played virtually no role in peace and conflict research. It was Samuel Huntington's hypothesis of the "Clash of Civilizations" (Huntington 1993/1996) in particular that drew new attention to the role of "religion". Even if his hypotheses were soon "weighed by academia and found to be too light," (Hasenclever 2003:289; see also Müller 2001), they nonetheless led to greater attention being paid to religion in the academic world. Despite the criticism, however, conflict research adopted Huntington's narrow outlook on the conflict potential of religions. The *constructive* exertion of political influence by religious actors was not intended, let alone theoretically grounded, in this perspective. With regard to the role played by religions, Volker Rittberger and Andreas Hasenclever (2000) approached the problem by differentiating between three schools of thought in the theories of International Relations: *primordialists* (e.g. Huntington 1996, Tibi 1995, Kepel 1991) accord religion, as a central element of culture, a genuinely conflict-creating, or at least conflict-exacerbating, role. *Instrumentalists* (e.g. Senghaas 1998, Meyer 1997, Fuller 1995), on the other hand, do not perceive religion as a source of conflict, and yet stress the risk that can be posed by the radicalisation and instrumentalisation of religion. Finally, *constructivists* (e.g. Hopf 1998, Tishkov 1997, Snider 1996) endeavour to achieve an intermediary role: according to this school of thought, the threat posed by religions does not lie in causing conflicts, nor are they merely a victim of political exploitation. Instead, constructivists view religion as an "inter-subjective structure" (Rittberger/Hasenclever 2000:39) that shapes not only the perception, but also the actions of believers. It follows from this, however, that religious convictions can principally have both a conflict-exacerbating and a conflict-defusing effect, making them *ambivalent* (cf. Appleby 2000).

There is no doubt that, under certain conditions, religions can be called upon to mobilise a considerable potential for conflict and violence. As with secular ideologies, they have a substantial potential to inflate existing interests in a manipulative manner and to literally demonise opponents to gain maximum allegiance and willingness for sacrifice from their followers. And yet such misuse is not a specific feature of religions alone; in the past, secular ideologies have also acted too often as ammunition for the spread of hatred and violence. However, the hitherto neglected empirical observation that religions also have an equally unquestionable strong *potential for peace* is of major

interest. Nevertheless, the constructive aspects of religion as contributors to peace continue to form a vacuum in theories of International Relations. It is also the case here that religions are no less suited than secular ideologies to give precedence to working towards *just peace* over the (violent) assertion of their own interests, to view their political opponents as humans despite the differences, and to develop "maximum hope" and enormous constructive powers through faith or spirituality.

This potential has already been apparent on many occasions in various successful peace work activities: in violence prevention and reconciliation work, in nonviolent resistance and in helping to bring about system change, in development policy work in conflict areas or corresponding lobbying in indirectly affected countries, in the constructive management of local conflicts and in brokering international peace treaties. Here, the peace activities of religious actors in all conflict phases should be taken into account. Such activities include the prevention of violence and the avoidance of escalation processes, the de-escalation of conflicts that have already turned violent, and stabilisation and consolidation in post-conflict developments. Commitment is not limited to conflict management in the narrow sense alone, but often also directly connects related aspects of socio-economic conditions and law (legislation, case law and law enforcement).

Numerous case studies on religious peace work demonstrate the enormous diversity of conflicts, actors and approaches (cf. Weingardt 2010). The cultural, religious and political context, type, object, reach, parties and (violent) waging strategies of the investigated *conflicts* vary just as widely as their intensity, duration and evolution. The faith-based *actors* of conflict management belong to various religions and denominations; they act as individuals, groups or (interreligious) institutions, as charismatic leaders or "nameless" activists; they practise various forms of religiousness or spirituality and are also decidedly divergent with regard to their institutional constitution, prominence, political influence or profile and relationship to the conflict. The same applies to their approach, action level, type and method, as well as the measures and mode of action of conflict management, in particular for the importance of religious elements and the degree of escalation or conflict ripeness at the time of *intervention*. These differences between conflict, actor and intervention features make it difficult to define overarching categories. With regard to the significance of religions in terms of peace policy – as opposed to secular or political pacifist forces – the type of *actors* and their approach is of particular interest here.

Some of the contributions to this volume convey a lively impression of the specific peace work undertaken by religious actors. In many other conflict situations, on the other hand, *no* religious potential for peace was, or is, in evidence. The reasons for this are still widely unexplored (cf. Weingardt/Brenner 2010). Peace and conflict research is only gradually turning towards the religious *potential for peacebuilding*, sounding out its possibilities and limitations. Politicians and the media must first follow this

change in perspective to be able to make practical use of the lessons to be learned from it. For a long time, they have paid only passing attention to the work and successes of religious peace initiatives, and have failed to take them seriously as relevant political forces. Within the religions themselves, too, there is still a lack of consciousness of their own *responsibility* for peace and peace *competence*. Virtually none of the religious communities' actual commitment to peace, nonviolence and justice complies with the high theological value and claim – emphasised in *all* religions. This is deplorable and should be called for. At the same time, however, it gives rise to the hope that by intensifying dialogue and cooperation between religions, as well as between religions and politicians and, last but not least, academia, new potential for peacebuilding can be tapped and exploited in the future.

The "Religions and World Peace" symposium

The present volume is a compilation of key contributions to the international symposium "Religions and World Peace: Religious Communities and their Potential for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution" held in Osnabrück, 20–23 Oct. 2010. Promoting dialogue was a most prominent goal of this conference organized by the German Foundation for Peace Research and financed by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. Mobilising religion and faith against rather than in favour of violence appears to be a formidable task, facing not only every believer, but also theologians, religious authorities and political actors. If establishing and preserving domestic national and international peace constitutes the ultimate goal and primary objective for politicians, it would seem fitting – in accordance with the spirit of Kofi Annan's lecture on Global Ethics mentioned in the preface to this volume – to involve religions and religious communities in this task.

For this reason, the main concern of the symposium was to facilitate exchange within academia, and between academics, politicians and religions. In line with this, the contributors represented various academic disciplines, positions and methodological approaches, as well as different religions. The keynote and specialist lectures were complemented by practice-oriented workshops and discussions.

The book's first part is devoted to the general issue of the role of religions as peacemakers. In his essay "A Joint Vision for World Peace? Religions as Driving Forces for a Culture of Peace", the eminent theologian *Hans Küng* elaborates on various historical dimensions to shed light upon the ambivalence of peace and violence in world religions. When pointing out the strength of religious communities in fostering peace, he offers a whole range of methods and recommendations to further advance this potential in the future.

In his chapter, *David Little* tackles the discussion of the peacebuilding potential of religions from a political perspective and contextualises the issue within the broader framework of ethno-religious conflicts and nationalist impulses. Religious tolerance and democratic governance are identified as key factors for establishing peace.

As a counterweight to theoretical explanations of religions' potential for peace and conflict, *Jeffrey Haynes* illustrates the actual integration of religious approaches in current peacebuilding practices in the developing world. He thereby focuses on the unique characteristics of faith-based conflict resolution in case studies from Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia.

In the following chapter, *Claus Leggewie* develops a post-Westphalian perspective on the relationship between state, society and religion. Recent national issues of religious pluralism and religious governance are also considered and highlight the need for cooperative solutions for the future.

The second part focuses on theological and religious studies using perspectives from Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. An overarching explanation of Buddhist understanding and teaching in terms of conflict and peace is provided by *Peter Harvey*. His analysis includes the Buddhist rationale for the causes of conflict as well as solutions to conflict rooted in the Buddhist tradition. Special emphasis is further placed on current Buddhist activist groups such as Sarvodaya Shramadana and Thich Nhat Hanh who have made remarkable strides in advancing peace in Sri Lanka, Vietnam and beyond.

The understanding of peace as a central tenet of the Islamic religion is based on five pillars as interpreted by *Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana*. Also the concept of Jihad, widely known on a superficial basis, is further elaborated on and put into perspective by emphasising the clearly formulated rules of warfare and the humanitarian principles of the Scripture.

Scott Appleby, widely known for his statements on the ambivalence of the sacred, discusses this in his essay on the phenomenon of Christian nonviolence, and how internal resources, contemporary experiences and education all shape Christianity per se and its role in peacebuilding in particular. This includes the question of how Christian reality and peacebuilding activities exercise mutual influence and possess the ability to transform each other.

Joseph Prabhu elaborates on questions of peace and violence in Hinduism with reference to Mahatma Gandhi. As a prominent figure who modernised Hindu traditions, his views and beliefs serve as a basis for Hindu ethics in the 21st century. In contrast to the claims of absolute truth in the monotheistic religions, which are often said to contribute to interreligious conflicts, Prabhu emphasises Gandhi's notion of relative, subjective truth.

Finally, in the third part contributions from a primarily political science-oriented perspective describe the ambivalent relationship between religion and peace from se-

lected topics. *Gerhard Robbers* regards religion in its constitutional context and illustrates how the right to religious liberty contributes to peace and how, vice versa, societal developments in terms of religious coexistence will influence this type of legislative enactment in the future. Secular France despite her laicistic tradition serves as an example of a peace-promoting cooperation between religious communities and the state.

Matthias Basedau, Georg Strüver and Johannes Vüllers point out that, despite the religious diversity in sub-Saharan Africa, and the religious overtones in a number of African conflicts, social science research has only inadequately addressed the question of how and to what extent religion generally influences conflict in Africa. They present an innovative data inventory on religion and violent conflict in all sub-Saharan countries for the period 1990–2008. The data underscore the fact that religion plays a major role in African conflicts. In particular, they demonstrate the ambivalence of religion towards conflict and provide evidence that religion is not infrequently related to peace through numerous interreligious networks and religious peace initiatives.

Preventing the instrumentalisation of religion requires a thorough consideration of how elites and entrepreneurs of violence seek to utilise religious traditions, according to *Andreas Hasenclever*. As a major factor in these processes he identifies the extreme reduction of complexity of religious traditions when war and violence are legitimized. Thus, a solid religious education and public religious debates on these issues could prove as promising means to counter instrumentalisation.

The complexity of the inherent value of human rights and its position within religion on the one side and historic human rights violations in the name of religion on the other is discussed by *Javaid Rehman* with a particular focus on Islam. In the second step, this complexity is distilled to the dynamic of powers, societal relations and issues of governance as determinants of harmful religious ideologies.

In the final paper, *Daniel Philpott* emphasises the valuable contribution of religious communities and religiously motivated forgiveness in transitional societies. In the contemporary age of peacebuilding, faith-based actors have managed to introduce the concept of reconciliation into politics both on an ideological and on a practical level. Religious actors, so he argues, have been enriching the western concept of the "liberal peace".

The contributions compiled here provide an insight into the current state of the art of research into religions' potential for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. At the same time, they highlight the fact that there is still considerable need for systematic research. Although the complexity of the topic places great demands on scientific analysis, there is no shortage of cases of conflict relevant to research in which religious factors and actors have played a constructive peacebuilding role. The religious potential for peace has by no means yet been adequately explored – and is far from having been exhausted in practice.

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