## Presentation Outline: Religion and Peacebuilding

### I. Introduction: The Visibility and Ambivalence of the Sacred

#### A. The Enduring Public Role of Religion

* Contrary to past predictions, religion has not become privatized; it remains central to politics, warfare, economic development, and education.
* The rise of "public religion" includes phenomena like the Christian Right in the U.S., Sikh extremism, Hindu nationalism, and conflicts in Sri Lanka, the Holy Land, and Northern Ireland.

#### B. The Central Paradox: The Ambivalence of the Sacred

* Religion often gains a "bad odor" due to conflict. However, the same **zeal for holiness** that powers holy wars also fuels religiously inspired social welfare and peacemaking activism.
* The "ambivalence of the sacred" means religion can promote **militancy against the other** (intolerance and hatred) as well as **militancy on behalf of the other** (tolerance and respect for difference).
* Scholars and educators have an obligation to discriminate between the zeal that leads true believers to violate rights and the zeal that compels them to **defend those rights at any cost**.

#### C. Defining Religious Peacebuilding

* **Religious peacebuilding** describes the full range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions.
* The purpose is **resolving and transforming deadly conflict**, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of nonviolence.
* Recent events, such as the 1996 signing of a bill favoring public religious image, the Catholic Church’s apology for historical sins, and the 2000 Millennium Summit of World Religious Leaders, highlight the world community's recognition of religious peacebuilding as a viable option.

### II. Obstacles and Challenges for Religious Peacemakers

#### A. Internal Resistance to Peace

* Religious leaders, particularly those tasked with protecting a tradition or institution, may be **unwilling and psychologically unprepared** for the personal conversion necessary to embrace genuine dialogue, healing, and reconciliation.
* **Formidable obstacles** can be found even within sacred texts and living traditions. Examples include:
  + **Hinduism:** Promotion of religious nationalism, caste conflict, and revenge motifs (e.g., in the Mahabharata).
  + **Islam:** Focus on peacebuilding principally within intra-Muslim relations, rather than toward non-Muslims.
  + **Orthodox Judaism:** Tendency to focus on rituals and laws buttressing cultural and physical survival rather than retrieving warrants for peacebuilding within halakhic texts.

#### B. The Threat of Extremism

* **Religious extremism** is defined as a hostile and often violent reaction to pluralism.
* Under duress, extremists legitimate violence as a **religious obligation or sacred duty**.
* Extremists expand targets to include not only outsiders but also **"lukewarm, compromising, or liberal co-religionists"**.
* Extremists often hold the **"psychological edge"** in communities that have suffered oppression or injury, making it difficult for peacemakers to evoke forgiveness or tolerance.

### III. The Three Core Roles of Religious Actors in Conflict Transformation

Religious peacebuilding involves integrated, multilayered approaches to peace, structured around three phases of conflict transformation (Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution, and Structural Reform).

#### A. Conflict Management (Prevention, Enforcement, Peacekeeping)

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| **Role** | **Definition/Activity** | **Source Examples/Details** |
| **Heralds** | Focus on diagnosis and conflict prevention; nurturing a prophetic dimension that senses subtle injustice; acting as an early warning system. | Religious leaders in the Philippines provided early warning of tensions between Muslims and Christians following the arrival of the Tablighi Jamaat and the formation of the Abu Sayyaf. |
| **Advocates** | Combining the roles of herald and advocate to promote nonviolent social change and dissent. | The moderate wing of the Islamist movement (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt. The Buddhist liberationist Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand, who criticized military leaders and championed pro-democracy movements. |
| **Observers & Peacekeepers** | Providing a **physical and moral presence** to discourage violence, corruption, and human rights violations. | Civilian peacekeeping teams monitor and verify elections or accompany individuals/groups believed to be in danger (e.g., Witness for Peace). Religious actors are often underutilized in enforcement and peacekeeping roles. |

#### B. Conflict Resolution (Peacemaking)

* This phase involves **mediation, negotiation, and advocacy** to remove inequalities between disputants.
* "Unofficial" religious communities and individuals have been consistently successful in bringing disputants together and mediating negotiations, often more so than official bodies.
* **Characteristics of Successful Religious Mediators** (Bartoli’s framework):
  1. Exhibit **intimate knowledge** of the language and culture of the peoples in conflict.
  2. Enjoy access to **firsthand information** about the conflict.
  3. Possess or draw upon **political expertise**.
  4. Help to develop and embrace a **long-term vision of peace**.
* **Key Requirement:** Mediators must build trustworthy relationships and be willing to **suspend judgment or maintain a principled neutrality**.
* **Notable Examples:**
  1. **Community of Sant’Egidio (Catholic lay movement):** Successfully mediated the end of the civil war in Mozambique and hosted talks in Algeria.
  2. **Individual Peacemakers (Northern Ireland):** Friar Alec Reid (Catholic) and Reverend Roy Magee (Presbyterian) maintained relationships with extremists (IRA and Ulster Volunteer Force, respectively) despite church bans, earning trust that allowed them to act as go-betweens.
  3. **World Council of Churches (WCC):** Mediated the peace talks during the Sudanese civil war in 1972.

#### C. Structural Reform (Institution Building, Civic Leadership)

* This post-conflict phase aims to address the **root causes of conflict** by building institutions conducive to nonviolent relations and cultivating leadership.

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| **Role** | **Definition/Activity** | **Source Examples/Details** |
| **Social Critics/Advocates** | Analyzing and exposing injustice, economic exploitation, and political oppression. | Latin American churches in the 1970s sponsored human rights commissions to expose atrocities and advance political structure reform. |
| **Institution Builders** | Creating new civic or political institutions, sometimes as an act of repentance for prior cooperation with oppression. | The **South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SATRC)** was partly a means for the South African church to express contrition for its own extensive culpability under apartheid. |
| **Educators** | Laying the groundwork for transformation through long-term service in classrooms and seminars, imparting skills in conflict resolution and nonviolence training. | The Gandhi Peace Foundation in India; NGOs providing nonviolence training in South Africa, Bosnia, and Sri Lanka. |

### IV. Conclusion: Requirements for Lasting Peace

#### A. The Spiritual and Political Demands on Leaders

* Effective peacemakers must demonstrate empathy, political insight, and extraordinary quantities of **"grace"** (forbearance, patience, dedication).
* They must be able to speak a second-order language that transcends religious and ethnic boundaries.
* **Discernment**—a spiritual discipline as well as a political skill—is crucial for tactical decisions regarding when and how to seek repentance or bring together victims and perpetrators.

#### B. Global Trend Toward Accommodation

* Data from Ted Robert Gurr’s research (on minorities at risk) indicates a **global shift from ethnic warfare to the politics of accommodation**.
* The primary strategy in the late 1990s was political participation, and armed conflicts have declined.
* A major factor contributing to this decline is the implementation of **international human rights standards**, which reduce cultural and political discrimination.

#### C. The Goal: Integrated Institutions

* The implication derived from the challenges in places like Northern Ireland is that **unified, tolerant religious institutions** are a significant part of building unified, tolerant, civic, and political institutions.