PEACEWORKS

Religious Actors in Formal Peace Processes

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report presents a qualitative analysis of whether and how religious actors can influence formal peace processes. Originating from collaboration between the United States Institute of Peace, Inclusive Peace, and the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, it draws on Inclusive Peace's database, academic and policy research, and a series of regional consultations with religious actors involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding and other peace practitioners.

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Cover photo: Leymah Gbowee, center, reacts to winning the Nobel Peace Prize in Monrovia, Liberia, on October 9, 2011. Gbowee was honored for organizing Christian and Muslim women to bring peace to Liberia and women's participation in elections. (Photo by Abbas Dulleh/AP)

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Summary

Religious actors can make a significant contribution to formal peace and political transition processes. These actors have considerable influence not only within their own constituencies but also over public opinion generally. As seen in peace processes and political transitions over the past 30 years, this influence can both enhance and undermine peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts and formal negotiation processes. At present, however, this potential for peace is underutilized.

Religious actors can be involved in all phases of formal peace processes or political transition processes, participating in a wide array of modalities and performing a variety of functions. Religious actors are most likely to engage in formal peace activities when their own communities are affected by a conflict. They also can be involved externally, often as mediators.

Many cases in which religious actors are involved in formal peace and political transition processes are not conflicts directly over religious issues or differences but conflicts in which the parties are divided along ethnoreligious lines. In these contexts, religious actors have been highly trusted and respected by the parties involved, and religious values and ideas have proved important in political mobilization toward peace.

The inclusion of religious actors can generate greater buy-in and increase the likelihood of reaching a negotiated settlement, and in turn increase the chances of achieving sustainable positive peace. When opposed to a particular peace process, religious actors can mobilize themselves, their constituencies, and public opinion in opposition to it.

Factors that enhance the peacemaking and peacebuilding effectiveness of religious actors include their legitimacy, their status as representatives of powerful and often well-resourced societal organizations, and their relationship to the state. In light of these advantages and the influence religious actors can exert, peace process mediators, facilitators, support actors, and donors should systematically identify and engage key religious actors who are or can be mobilized for peace and support their efforts. At the same time, it is important to be aware of religious figures and groups who could be potential spoilers and to explore ways to mitigate that danger.

A mosque is pictured after Friday prayers in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Philippines, on September 22, 2017. Religious actors were included in the implementation of the Bangsamoro peace agreement in part because of their involvement and demonstrated expertise in peacebuilding and reconciliation work before the start of the official peace process. (Photo by Jes Aznar/New York Times)

Introduction

Despite the significant impact—both real and potential—that religious actors and communities can have on formal peace processes, there is little research on or analysis of their engagement as part of these processes. To help remedy this deficit, this report examines whether, when, how, and to what extent religious actors have been engaged in peace and political transition processes. It proposes a categorization of the types of roles religious actors have played across all phases (pre-negotiations, negotiations, and implementation) of peace and political transition processes, examining the level of influence they can exert and the kinds of effects they can produce.

To do this, the report draws on three main sources of information:

- A database of 43 in-depth qualitative case studies (listed in annex 1) of formal peace and political transition processes[1]

- A literature review of more than 200 sources of relevant academic and policy research, spanning 43 case studies (listed in the second part of annex 1), on the role of religious actors in formal peace and political transition processes over the past 30 years

- A series of regional consultations in 2020 with faith-based actors and peace practitioners around the world to examine whether the findings from the research resonate with local faith-based peace practitioners, to gather further experiences of past and present opportunities and challenges encountered

by religious actors in formal peace processes, and to establish how the results of this research can best inform efforts to engage and support religious actors in formal processes

Information gathered from these sources was used to develop an understanding of the roles that religious actors have played in peace and political transition processes. The categorization of different roles draws on previous analytical work by Inclusive Peace and is grounded in two analytical frameworks developed by Thania Paffenholz. One framework consists of seven "inclusion modalities."[2] The other identifies seven peacebuilding functions performed by civil society.[3] (See annex 2 for details of both frameworks.)

For the purposes of the present study, a "religious actor" is defined as an individual or an entity (an organization or an institution) that professes to ground its actions in religious beliefs, traditions, or practices. Religious actors include, but are not limited to, clergy, religious scholar-practitioners, and representatives of organizations with faith-based mandates, such as the charity wings of churches and other religious bodies.[4]

"Political transitions" can be defined as intervening periods between one regime and another, in which "there are insufficient structural or behavioral parameters to guide and predict the outcome."[5] Scholars of political transitions associated with the transitology school have taken a longer-term view, in which the negotiated transition is only one phase of a decades-long process of political change.[6] Peace processes aim to reach a negotiated settlement to armed conflict. They can involve some or all parties to an armed conflict (including unarmed parties). In the past, peace processes have been conceptualized in minimal terms, encompassing only the negotiation phase, but they are increasingly understood in broader terms that also encompass the implementation of peace agreements, as well as long-term peace.[7]

The scarcity of references to women religious actors in peacemaking processes in the database review and the literature review underlines both the barriers to faith-based women actors' involvement in formal peace processes and the lack of attention directed at faith-based women actors when documenting religious actors' engagement in peace processes. This point was corroborated by the consultations.

This report is divided into four main sections, the first three of which ask, in turn, *how* religious actors participate in formal peace processes, *why* they participate, and what makes their participation more effective or less so. The first section uses Paffenholz's two analytical frameworks to chart the range of roles that religious actors can play in formal peace processes. The second section explores the rationales that prompt such participation, looking in turn at what motivates religious actors to get involved in formal peacemaking and at what leads other actors—in particular, the conveners, mediators, facilitators, and supporters of formal peace processes—to engage them. The report then turns to the critical question of what factors enable or constrain religious actors' involvement and determine how effectively they play their different roles, and the extent to which they can influence formal peace processes. The conclusion calls attention to the fact that although religious actors have exerted significant influence over formal peace processes, their potential has been only partially tapped. Finally, the report suggests ways in which the unique strengths of religious actors can be harnessed to positively influence formal peace processes.

Modalities and Functions

The nature and variety of roles played by religious actors in formal peace processes—how they participate—can be charted, categorized, and analyzed through the prism of two analytical frameworks: the inclusion modalities framework and the civil society peacebuilding functions framework.

MODALITIES OF INCLUSION

The inclusion modalities framework identifies a typology of the various modalities through which actors beyond the main parties to an armed conflict can be included in peace negotiation processes and the implementation of peace agreements. The seven modalities are direct representation at the negotiation table, observer status, consultations, inclusive commissions, high-level problem-solving workshops, public decision-making, and mass action.

Applying this framework to Inclusive Peace's database of 43 case studies and to the 43 cases identified in the literature review reveals that religious actors were involved in all modalities across all of the phases of peace and political transition processes (from pre-negotiations to negotiations to implementation).[8] In the cases in the database, almost one-third of inclusion took place prior to negotiations, just over two-fifths occurred during negotiations, and just under two-fifths took place during implementation. The distribution of religious actors is relatively even across most of the modalities in the cases. Religious actors can bring a variety of strengths to each modality, depending on the context.

Direct Representation at the Negotiation Table

Direct representation most commonly occurs during the negotiation phase, although sometimes dialogue processes occur as part of the implementation of an earlier agreement. Religious actors, especially formal leaders of large institutions, often bring a unique ability to credibly represent their communities or to provide a voice of moral guidance at the negotiating table. During national dialogues, religious actors have often been a critical part of including the voices and interests of disparate communities.

Observer Status

This modality mostly occurs during the negotiation phase—often in peacemaking and constitution-making negotiations—and in the implementation phase. Observer status allows the possibility for included groups to maintain normative or political pressure on the conflict parties or to lobby for new issues to be added to the negotiation agenda. Religious actors have often been engaged as observers as a result of their long-standing involvement in peace efforts, their perceived neutrality, and their moral weight, and as a prelude to mediation. Religious actor observers are often expected to help ensure that negotiations are conducted ethically and that agreements reflect the moral values of society.

Consultations

Consultations may take place prior to, in parallel with, or after official negotiations. Religious actors have been effective as both participants in and conveners of peace process–related consultations, some of which have been public or open events and some of which have taken the form of advice behind closed doors.

Religious actors often possess both the legitimacy and the organizational capacity to effectively communicate and reach out to broad swathes of society, including groups who might not otherwise be willing to interact

with official actors. Religious actors also have used public consultations as a pressure tactic, seeking to build coalitions between civil society and noncombatants in order to have their views represented at the negotiating table or as a way to guide elite negotiators toward broadly acceptable peace settlements. However, when religious identities are highly polarized or when religious actors seek to monopolize consultative processes, they can distort the results and cause other actors to feel excluded.

Commissions

Commissions involving faith-based and other civil society actors are most commonly found in the post-agreement stage, but they can also be used to set up or run part of the negotiation process. In the implementation phase, commissions can either be temporary and mandated to carry out specific parts of the implementation process or given a permanent status and enshrined in a new constitution or act born out of the peace process.

Religious actors are often engaged in these commissions because they can lend moral, legal, or ethical weight. They may also be engaged in inclusive commissions because of their access to independent and trusted communications networks and deep societal reach. The role that religious actors play in setting moral standards means that they are often well placed to work on postconflict reconciliation efforts and on constitutional or legal reform, particularly in contexts where there is a strong tradition of religious law.

High-Level Problem-Solving Workshops

High-level problem-solving workshops (sometimes referred to as "track 1.5" processes) bring together representatives close to the conflict parties' leaders to discuss ideas for reaching an agreement or to make decisions regarding the implementation process. These workshops can hold meetings over a span of several years and are often organized and facilitated by international nongovernmental organizations or academic institutions (sometimes in cooperation with local partners).

Religious actors may be involved in this modality because of the trust that they can garner as intermediaries and their ability to represent the views of their constituents. Religious actors with close relationships with political leaders can serve as effective representatives of various stakeholders (ranging from the conflict parties to other societal actors) in semi-official explorations of solutions to conflict. Religious institutions may also have the resources and ability to organize capacity-building workshops at different stages of a peace process—for instance, for actors working on the implementation of a peace agreement.

Public Decision-Making

Public decision-making, in the form of referenda and elections, most commonly occurs to validate an agreement once it has been reached or to implement its provisions, including the ratification of a new constitution. In many cases, religious actors can exert significant influence on public opinion, and their support or opposition can make or break public support for peace agreements. Religious institutions have often been at the center of referendum campaigns, providing funds, human resources, and communications skills.

Mass Action

Religious actors can play a significant role in helping to mobilize large numbers of people to participate in public demonstrations and other forms of mass action. Such action frequently aims to create pressure to end violence, start negotiations, include issues and positions on a negotiating agenda, sign agreements, or effect regime change. Mass action can also be mobilized against negotiation processes or peace agreements.

Religious actors often provide material, institutional, and moral support, as well as political cover, to protesters. When religious actors have access to international solidarity networks and communication infrastructure, and they have broad legitimacy, they can amplify the message of mass action movements. Religious values and ideas can transcend other types of social divisions

Buddhist monks in Colombo, Sri Lanka, protest a UN report on war crimes during the country's civil war on May 3, 2011. The anti-war movement was initially composed primarily of Buddhists, but the role played by Buddhist actors in opposing Norwegian-led peace efforts underlines how early engagement or nonengagement of religious actors by secular-oriented peacemakers can have significant repercussions. (Photo by Eranga Jayawardena/AP)

and conflict lines to help build support for peace processes across society. When religious actors oppose a peace process, however, they can also use mass action to pressure political leaders to revise or abandon the peace agreement or negotiation process.

PEACEBUILDING FUNCTIONS

In the context of formal peace processes, religious actors can perform a number of roles, which can be classified using the peacebuilding functions performed by civil society actors, as defined by Paffenholz. This typology of peacebuilding functions identifies seven types of function: protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialization, social cohesion, mediation (originally termed "intermediation") and facilitation, and service delivery.

A qualitative analysis of the cases in the database and the literature review suggests that by far the most common function of religious actors is mediation and facilitation, whether performed as internal mediators, external mediators, or facilitators. Advocacy is the second-most commonly performed function. Protection, monitoring, socialization, social cohesion, and service delivery all occur with around the same frequency in the cases examined. Many of the religious actors examined in this study undertook multiple functions. Some actors, such as the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, engaged in all the functions identified here. Religious actors can bring a variety of strengths to each of the different functions.

Mediation and Facilitation

Religious actors are often some of the earliest to engage in mediation and dialogue efforts, including prior to the start of official peace negotiations. In many cases, religious actors have undertaken early mediation efforts to try to convince the conflict parties to begin discussions and to create and maintain communication channels between the conflict parties.

> **Perceived neutrality, legitimacy, and concern can allow [religious actors] to foster peace rather than a particular political agenda, and to convene and mediate or facilitate talks between government officials and opposition leaders who have previously been resistant to direct negotiation.**

Mediation by religious actors was most common during the spate of peace negotiations in the early 1990s and has decreased in frequency since then, although it remains common.[9] The shape that mediation takes can depend greatly on the structure of religious institutions. Christian mediation, for example, is usually carried out by church officials or nongovernmental institutions, whereas Muslim mediation has been carried out by intergovernmental organizations such as the Organization for Islamic Cooperation.[10]

Faith-based mediation has also been most common when religion is not a defining factor in differentiating the identities of the conflict parties.[11] Some societies have a long tradition of religious actors serving as mediators between opposing groups, even in sectarian conflicts, providing those actors are seen as neutral. Perceived neutrality, legitimacy, and concern can allow them to foster peace rather than a particular political agenda, and to convene and mediate or facilitate talks between government officials and opposition leaders who have previously been resistant to direct negotiation. Religious actors may also be given special status as negotiators or may customarily serve a conflict resolution role—for example, in local councils.

Advocacy

Advocacy can be divided into nonpublic, or informal, advocacy and public advocacy, which is sometimes called "public communication."[12] Religious actors undertake advocacy across all phases of a negotiation process, most often to promote peace and human rights. As advocates for peace, they may work to empower conflict-affected populations, encourage parties to negotiate (and to persist when negotiations seem to make little progress), restructure relationships—both between conflict parties and also among broader societal stakeholders—from a conflictual nature to a peaceful one, or encourage public awareness and acceptance of a peace agreement. Religious actors also may use advocacy to transform unjust social structures. They may speak out for those who are suffering because of conflict and ensure that their needs and rights are addressed.

In Muslim societies, religious institutions and religious leaders can play an important role—particularly through the *khutbah* preceding Friday prayers— in spreading messages of reconciliation and promoting development and collaboration. There are also examples of traditional *shuras* (councils) in collaboration with modern civil society organizations facilitating the production and dissemination of communication material, enabling local voices to reach new audiences.[13]

Protection

Protection of citizens and communities against violence is a precondition for religious actors, and civil society more broadly, to carry out other peacebuilding functions. Protective actions may be civil society–led (e.g., creating and maintaining sanctuary networks) or supportive of actions by the state or international community (e.g., persuading former militants to hand over their weapons as part of a disarmament process).[14] Faith-based civil society organizations may be actively involved in the protection of citizens, such as the protection of women against gender-based violence, and may issue statements condemning kidnappings, murders, and other forms of violence in communities.

Monitoring

Monitoring is a precondition for protection and advocacy, and it is central to democratization as a means for holding governments accountable. Religious actors can help monitor conflict situations, relay information to human rights and other advocacy groups about ongoing

developments in the conflict, and make recommendations for decision-makers. Religious actors may contribute to the legitimacy of a monitoring and verification process by endowing it with the credibility that stems from their nonpartisan or bipartisan status. They are particularly involved in monitoring human rights violations and the implementation of agreements.[15]

Socialization

Given religious actors' considerable influence across broad segments of society, they can play important roles in socializing communities in the values of peace and democracy. Two types of in-group socialization can be distinguished: activities intended to strengthen democratic attitudes and capacities to handle conflicts peacefully (e.g., conflict resolution training) and activities designed to build or strengthen in-group identity, in particular among oppressed or marginalized groups.[16] In-group socialization is particularly influential in societies where in-group social cohesion is robust.

In societies in which elders and religious leaders remain the most influential actors, socialization through traditional institutions is strong. Religious actors and institutions retain considerable influence on moral values, social practices, and political opinions. Such influence may support peacebuilding, but it may at other times undermine it. In a conflict with divisions drawn along ethnic, religious, or political lines, in-group socialization—unless explicitly seeking to promote peaceful attitudes toward the "other"—can increase rather than reduce differences.[17]

Social Cohesion

Religious actors can nurture intergroup social cohesion, bringing together representatives and members of groups in conflict to foster more positive attitudes toward one another, to go beyond building relationships and attempt to reach a larger peacebuilding objective, and to work together toward objectives other than peace (e.g., instituting community-based social development and welfare schemes). Bringing together religious groups to cultivate a stronger shared identity can, however, exacerbate tensions with groups that have a different identity, especially if they are seen as rivals.

Service Delivery

In many religious communities, religious actors have a long history of providing services such as health care and education.[18] Such service delivery by civil society—including religious actors—can serve a peacebuilding function by providing entry points for peacebuilding, particularly regarding protection, monitoring, and social cohesion.[19] In conflict-affected societies, religious actors often can provide services that the state cannot, such as channeling international aid to local communities and fostering development in rural and other underserved communities. Service delivery can also help religious institutions and religious actors to establish legitimacy and contacts with both governments and opposition movements that can support their involvement in formal peace processes.

Rationales for Involvement

Religious actors can play a wide variety of roles in formal, track 1 peace processes, but why do they participate? What are the rationales behind their involvement? This section of the report looks first at the reasons why religious actors themselves decide to engage in formal peace processes, and then at the reasons why other actors, especially those who orchestrate, facilitate, and support formal processes, seek to involve religious actors.

WHY DO RELIGIOUS ACTORS CHOOSE TO ENGAGE?

Religious actors' rationales for choosing to participate are both principled and pragmatic, arising from a conviction that fostering peace is an obligation and from a calculation that they can make a concrete difference to formal peace processes. Their rationales can be grouped into five categories: religious norms and convictions; a concern to alleviate hardship and suffering; an awareness of religion as a fault line and a delineation of identity; cost-benefit analyses; and a desire to shape the post-agreement political environment.

Religious Norms and Convictions

Religious convictions are one of the key drivers of religious groups' engagement in peace processes. Religious actors see their work in conciliation and mediation as "a natural and even an obligatory expression of their faith."[20] Across faiths, religious norms, values, and convictions proved to be an important rationale for engagement in several cases included in this study. For example, when interviewed, Afghan religious leaders stated that "the meaning of Islam is peace," and thus saw peacemaking as a "religious duty."[21]

Such beliefs are not new, of course, and have long inspired both religious actors' support for peace as a general principle and their efforts to bring about peace or foster dialogue between groups in conflict. Indeed, in many of the cases, deeply rooted traditions of peaceful negotiation or dialogue exist within these societies in conflict.

Concern to Alleviate Hardship and Suffering

Religious actors also seek to advance the cause of peace out of sympathy with disaffected and marginalized populations or solidarity with conflict-affected populations. This rationale for engagement was underlined by participants throughout the series of regional consultations.

In Northern Mali, during the 1990–96 peace negotiations intended to end the Tuareg rebellion, the suffering of the population caused by social unrest prompted traditional and religious actors from all ethnic groups to talk to government officials. Religious actors' role as community leaders in Liberia drove them to become engaged as the conflict there increasingly threatened the physical safety of their congregants.[22]

One of the most prominent examples of the inclination to support peace in the face of hardship is the emergence of liberation theology, a doctrinal development that originated in parts of the Catholic Church in Latin America following the 1968 Bishops' Conference in Medellín, Colombia. Liberation theology proposes a critique of capitalism and inequality based in Catholic tradition, Marxism, and dependency theory.[23] Liberation theology and the post-1969 land reforms led the Catholic Church and its ministers to be sympathetic to the agrarian and leftist rebellions in the region. In El Salvador, the church was involved in the peace process because it had played a long-standing role

A woman holds a portrait of slain archbishop of San Salvador Monsignor Óscar Romero y Galdamez during a procession on March 24, 2015, the 35th anniversary of his death. In El Salvador, the church was involved in the peace process because of its long-standing support of the people against what it saw as unjust government authority. (Photo by Salvador Melendez/AP)

in supporting the people against what it saw as unjust government authority. The liberation theology espoused by the archbishop of San Salvador, Monsignor Óscar Romero y Galdamez, harmonized with the ideology of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). Due to these links, the archdiocese and the Jesuits, in particular, were actively targeted during the armed conflict. The archbishop was killed while he was giving mass in 1980 by a rightist, government-sponsored paramilitary group due to his alleged support for the FMLN.

Religion as a Fault Line and a Delineation of Identity

Religious actors are often involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts when religion constitutes a key fault line in a conflict.[24] In some cases, religious actors engage in peace activism even when their own religious group is not directly involved in the conflict, as with the Quakers' mediation efforts in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970, the Sant'Egidio Community's mediation in Mozambique from 1990 to 1992, and Muslims in Rwanda during and after the 1994 genocide. Religious actors are more likely to conduct peace activities, however, if their own religious groups are involved in the conflict. One study concluded that the predicted likelihood that representatives of a religious group will conduct peace activities increases 64 percent when the religious identity of the group is involved.[25] Seeing coreligionists mobilize for the conflict can inspire others to work for peace because they feel a special responsibility to compensate for the actions of other members of their community.

Research from the literature review suggests religion plays an important role in delineating the identities of the parties in many recent and present conflicts.[26] However, religion itself is not necessarily the cause of conflicts; and even when there is a religious dimension to the conflict, it is interwoven with other important issues related to political power, economic conditions, societal cleavages, and personal ambition. Many conflicts that are sometimes characterized as religious are in fact political conflicts whose fault lines (notably, the divides among the conflict parties) can be identified along ethnic, religious, or ethnoreligious lines. A clear example is Northern Ireland, where despite the (continued) existence of a strong correlation between religious identity and national identity, the conflict was essentially political, centering on the question of Northern Ireland's constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom, or about ethnosocial discrimination, rather than religious discrimination per se. The conflicts in Nigeria and Liberia were not fought over differences in religious doctrine or theology, but religion served as a key marker of ethnic or political identity within an intrastate armed conflict.

Cost-Benefit Analyses

Like any actor, religious actors have to make many decisions based on the specific circumstances, opportunities, and pressures they face. Involvement with peace processes is no exception, and religious actors take careful account of the risks and opportunities that they face in conflict situations. State repression, competing religious traditions, and pressure from their peer networks can all present major risks for religious actors looking to be involved in peace activism. Involvement in peace processes can also present major opportunities, such as living up to the moral expectations of their constituents. Religious institutions also have to act in accordance with their missions and ideological commitments, such as winning converts or protecting religious values in the public sphere. If a peace process seems to promote these objectives, then engaging can be a significant opportunity, but if it seems to oppose or contradict these interests, then it can mobilize religious actors in opposition.

Desire to Shape the Post-agreement Political Environment

In certain cases, religious actors—especially those with strong political orientations—seek to be included in peace processes with a view to gaining a share of political power in the post-agreement settlement or shaping the post-agreement political environment.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood sought involvement in the 2011–13 political transition through its Freedom and Justice Party, formed in 2011, in order to reshape the political landscape in line with its principal aim of incorporating Islamic principles and values into the political and judicial spheres.

Religious actors can also seek to exclude themselves from peace processes to maintain their legitimacy and avoid co-optation. In Liberia, as a result of its role as an observer of the formal negotiations and its involvement in long-term consultations leading to the signing of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) was invited to join the interim government. The IRCL refused the offer in order to maintain its distance from government and its status as a neutral, nonpolitical actor so as to be able to better fulfill its watchdog role.[27] The IRCL was concerned about the potential co-optation of civil society actors with formal roles in the interim government, was aware that other civilian actors involved in the talks only attended in order to enhance their own status, and wished to distance itself from what it saw as a warlords' agreement.[28]

In a number of cases, religious actors' mobilization of other religious actors occurred through forming a new forum or organization—which in many cases was intercommunal. This lessened the chance for any one member to exploit its participation in the peace or political transition negotiations as a way of acquiring power in post-negotiation structures. This was the case with the

formation of interreligious councils in Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Iraq, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

WHY DO OTHER PARTIES SEEK TO INVOLVE RELIGIOUS ACTORS?

Conveners, mediators, facilitators, and supporters of formal peace processes seek to engage actors beyond the main conflict parties to enhance the chances of reaching a sustainable negotiated settlement to armed conflict. The rationales for engaging religious actors fall into four categories: early or long-standing involvement in peacemaking or peacebuilding; legitimacy; status as a powerful societal organization; and organizational capacity and resources.

Early or Long-Standing Involvement in Peacemaking or Peacebuilding

Religious actors are often included in negotiation processes due to their early—and often long-standing—involvement in peacemaking or peacebuilding. Such involvement is linked to both legitimacy and organizational capacity (discussed below). Religious actors often have a long history of service in community affairs, which indicates their commitment to their communities and adds to their credibility. This long-term involvement is facilitated by their financial and human resources. Many religious groups, especially local ones, also remain involved in processes in the post-agreement phase to help parties heal, build social institutions, and seek justice. They are thus often well-placed to offer long-term, continual support before, during, and after conflict. In the Philippines, the inclusion of religious actors in the implementation of the Bangsamoro peace agreement—signed in 2014—in Mindanao stemmed from their involvement in peacebuilding and reconciliation work before the start of the official peace process and their capacity and expertise gained and demonstrated during the pre-negotiation period.

Legitimacy

The inclusion of a broader range of actors beyond the conflict parties in peace and political transition processes lends greater legitimacy to the process and may also generate broader public support for the process and for any resulting agreement. This may be because unarmed actors in general, and religious actors in particular, are perceived by the general population as more legitimate advocates for the common good than are the representatives of armed groups. Moreover, unarmed actors may be more likely to address the underlying causes of the conflict.[29] Engaging civil society (including religious actors) in the various stages of the process can promote higher levels of accountability among the conflict parties, as well as a sense that the negotiations have greater legitimacy, which can in turn lead to a shift in public opinion about the process.[30]

In certain societies in which religious belief holds substantial weight, religious actors are likely to receive support from a large proportion of the population, including the conflict parties, both because of their perceived neutrality and because religion in general enjoys considerable respect. Thanks to the legitimacy and high status conferred on them by custom and religious tradition, religious leaders are often uniquely positioned to reach out to both the grass roots and elites. In Northern Ireland, Catholic Redemptorist priests from Clonard Monastery in Belfast took the lead in initiating and sustaining negotiations in the early 1990s. They were seen as legitimate and sincere peacemakers not only by Sinn Féin and the wider Catholic Republican community, but also by key individuals within the Protestant Unionist community.[31]

Religious actors' long-standing engagement in unofficial peacemaking efforts enhances the legitimacy of their inclusion in official peace processes. In Liberia, the IRCL was able to talk to the conflict parties because of its enduring commitment to peace activism and to talking to all parties to the conflict. That approach had earned the group the respect of the conflict parties, which in turn led to the IRCL's inclusion in the official negotiation process. An existing reputation for independence from

Kimbanguist women participate in a parade for International Women's Day in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on March 8, 2011. Religious actors were formally included as part of civil society in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. (Photo by Alain Wandimoyi/AP)

government coercion drawn from prewar resistance to government oppression gave legitimacy to religious actors intervening in the peace process.[32]

In Guatemala, the Catholic Church's prior peacemaking efforts and its criticism of all conflict parties for their failure to reach a peaceful resolution led to the church being perceived as a neutral actor, garnering legitimacy for its inclusion in official negotiations. The Guatemalan Episcopal Conference pushed for a national dialogue that would include all sectors of the society. Because the Catholic Church was actively involved in peace talks and the advancement of the peace process, the government-formed National Reconciliation Commission (CNR) convened a Grand National Dialogue in 1989. Archbishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, the representative of the Guatemalan Episcopal Diocese in the CNR, was chosen to preside over the dialogue because of his earlier involvement in the peace process, having mediated between the government and the various insurgency groups in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity.

Status as Powerful Societal Organizations

Religious actors are often included in formal peace processes because they form a large and influential portion of organized civil society and are often closely linked to both the political elite and the grassroots level. In contexts where organized civil society is discouraged or prohibited by the government for political reasons, religious actors take on a number of the roles and functions of organized civil society.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has a strong culture of associational life around Catholic, Protestant, and Kimbanguist churches, religious bodies perform various functions of secular civil society, especially monitoring human rights. The dividing line between civil society—understood as a sphere of secular engagement in non-electoral politics—and religious organizations is blurred here, exemplified in the role played by popular religious radio stations in the DRC, which have been particularly active in human rights monitoring. These religious actors were among

the civil society organizations (known as *forces vives*) that were formally included in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that officially started in 2001.

Organizational Capacity and Resources

The leverage and resources religious actors can bring to a formal peace process is an important reason why other parties seek to engage them.[33] These resources include rank (an elevated position in the hierarchy of an institution that is largely respected in society), spirituality and morality, financial and human resources, and time.

Religious actors often have strong institutional and financial resources that facilitate their long-term involvement in peacemaking efforts. Faith-based organizations such as the Quakers, the Sant'Egidio Community, the Vatican, and Islamic Relief Services have a broad base of committed individuals and well-established regional and global networks to which they can turn for institutional and financial support. Religious leaders and institutions have access to community members through mosques, churches, temples, community centers, and educational institutions such as Bible or Quranic schools. This base also endows them with the financial resources and organizational structures necessary to sustain their involvement with a peace process, which can often be lengthy, particularly the post-agreement phase. Religious groups with a broad membership are better able than smaller groups to mobilize the necessary resources for peace activities and to find members who are willing to conduct peace activities.[34]

Strong organizational structures also provide a broad reach that can facilitate religious actors' sustained involvement in peacemaking and peacebuilding, which is both a rationale for the engagement of religious actors in formal peace processes and a source of their influence in these processes. In Guatemala, the Christian churches were traditionally involved in supporting civil society organizations and were one of the few institutions (along with the military) with an established presence in the rural and more remote parts of the country. As a result, during the conflict and the peace process, the majority of information on the situation in the countryside came through the Christian churches.

Keys to Effective Participation

The inclusion of religious actors in peace and political transition processes helps them to exert influence over the process, but inclusion alone is not sufficient to determine how influential the participating actors will be. At least nine factors—several of which, unsurprisingly, also feature among the rationales for religious actors' inclusion—can enable or constrain the level of influence they exert: internal unity, coalition building, early involvement and long-standing engagement, legitimacy, influence as powerful societal organizations, resources and organizational capacity, process design features, relationship between religion and the state, and sociopolitical context.

INTERNAL UNITY

Internal unity among religious actors has a significant impact on their ability to influence peace and political transition processes. Participants in the series of regional consultations also underlined that unity is essential not only for political influence, but also for physical security, preventing one group or actor from being singled out and targeted through intimidation or violence.

In Sri Lanka, while the Catholic Church did manage to work with a greater degree of integrity and freedom than most civil society actors, its own polarization along ethnic lines prevented it from adopting a clear anti-war message. The anti-war movement was initially composed primarily of Buddhists with a degree of support from Christian Sinhalese, but this alliance eventually began to splinter as anti-Christian violence, perpetrated by Sinhala nationalists, began to increase throughout the negotiation period. The general exclusion of moderate Sinhala voices also helps to explain the extremist ideas that characterized the Sinhala nationalist movement.

The Catholic Church in Guatemala's engagement in peacemaking efforts shows the complexity of the effect of unity. Initially, the lack of a unanimous position within the Catholic Church concerning the future of the country meant that its activities to promote dialogue and negotiations (which began during the mid-1980s) were seen as more legitimate; in other words, a lack of unity increased the church's legitimacy. The Grand National Dialogue, inaugurated in March 1989, was also a turning point for Guatemala's religious organizations in the peace process. With the exception of some of the new fundamentalist evangelical groups, religious organizations found a common voice and became an integrated sector, which gave their perspectives greater weight. However, in a subsequent formal process, in January 1995, political divisions within the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference over the members' role in the peace process led the Catholic Church to withdraw Archbishop Quezada Toruño from the presidency of the Civil Society Assembly, lessening the church's influence on peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts.

COALITION BUILDING

Religious actors' ability to build coalitions among different religious actors and other stakeholders, particularly the primary negotiating parties, strongly contributes to their ability to influence peace and political transition processes. Coalitions can be built within modalities as well as between groups included in different modalities. Coalitions within modalities are particularly relevant for direct representation in formal negotiations. When broad participation at the negotiating table is achieved through expanding the delegations of the armed parties or political factions, such as through quotas for additional actors, these newly included actors may struggle to

influence decisions if they are not able to form coalitions across party lines. Such coalitions can help to create consensus between the negotiation parties (at least on certain issues), helping to bridge divides. They also enable included actors to have greater influence over the substance of negotiations. Religious actors can play an important role in this respect, because religion (like ethnicity and to a lesser extent clan) can be a uniting factor across conflict parties and within a third party (such as a group of churches) that is pushing for peace.

In Mindanao in the Philippines, civil society organizations (CSOs), religious actors, and even business actors have come together in a number of networks and collaborations, including large peacebuilding networks that bring together CSOs and networks from outside Mindanao. These networks influence the main actors in the implementation process and directly engage with political leaders.

Liberia's IRCL is another example of how coalition building among religious actors of different religious traditions can increase their influence on peacemaking efforts. The IRCL was formed in 1990 as a nonpolitical and non-factional entity by the coming together of the Liberian Muslim Council and Liberian Council of Churches, and it adopted a policy of rotating its leadership between Muslim and Christian leaders.

EARLY INVOLVEMENT AND LONG-STANDING ENGAGEMENT

Early involvement of religious actors in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts establishes a precedent for and bolsters the legitimacy of their (continued) involvement in formal peace processes. The research for this report suggests that involvement in the pre-negotiation phase often serves as a catalyst for involvement in a subsequent formal process for religious actors. In the case of the Beagle Channel dispute between Chile and Argentina, early papal mediation was successful in preventing parties from going to war. The mediation started in 1978, and the Vatican worked hard to find a solution before the conflict could turn violent.

As noted earlier, long-standing engagement in a peace or political transition process or preceding peacemaking or peacebuilding efforts can confer legitimacy on religious actors, which in turn can serve as a rationale for their inclusion. In Sierra Leone, the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) took an active role in encouraging and promoting the negotiations that resulted in the Lomé Agreement, which was recognized by giving the organization a predominant role in the Council of Elders and Religious Leaders, which was to be established to mediate disputes of interpretation of the accord.[35] By the time the talks concluded in July 1999, the IRCSL had earned the formal title of "Moral Guarantor."[36]

The role played by Buddhist actors in Sri Lanka in opposing Norwegian-led peace efforts between 2000 and 2008 underlines how early engagement or non-engagement of religious actors by secular-oriented peacemakers can have significant repercussions for the success of a peace process. Although Erik Solheim, the lead Norwegian mediator, did meet with Buddhist actors, it was a reactive rather than proactive step, taken only after significant opposition to the Norwegian mission had begun to appear.

LEGITIMACY

The legitimacy of religious actors is both a rationale for their inclusion in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts and a factor that can enhance their influence both within such efforts and in formal peace processes. Participating groups and individuals are better able to influence a negotiation or implementation process when they are perceived as more legitimate, especially by the conflict parties. A number of cases show that religious actors are often respected by opposition actors and nonstate armed groups. For example, in Mexico, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) offered to begin peace

negotiations to end the armed conflict with the government in 1994 on the condition that the talks were mediated by the San Cristóbal Diocese of the Catholic Church.

The legitimacy of religious leaders, institutions, and discourses is closely related to the identity of the disputants, the nature of the dispute, and the relationship between the parties and the mediator.[37] For example, in Sierra Leone and Nicaragua, mediation by insider religious actors with knowledge of the parties and the context, and with a vested interest in conflict resolution, had a high degree of credibility and legitimacy.[38]

Religious actor mediators have the potential to make significant contributions by bringing new dimensions of trust and legitimacy into a formal process, which might not be present among political parties, armed groups, and other parties to conflict.[39] Religious actors also have spiritual and moral authority and leverage that is unavailable to secular mediators.[40] Religious actors can tap into values, principles, norms, and rituals rooted in religious traditions to encourage parties to embrace a new reality, change their behavior, and form new relationships. A spiritual dimension can also create a sense of engagement and commitment to the process among all involved actors.[41]

Religious actors have a particularly pronounced level of moral and spiritual legitimacy—and, by extension, influence—with their own communities.[42] As demonstrated by the role of the Catholic Church in various cases in Latin America, the more deeply religious institutions are embedded within communities, the greater their legitimacy as mediators, especially when compared with political actors.

In both “insider-partial” and “outsider-neutral” models, the perceived motivation of the parties is key to their legitimacy.[43] Given their spiritual motivation, religious leaders are often perceived to be more evenhanded and trustworthy than secular leaders in many communities where religion plays an important social role.[44] Recognition of this spiritual motivation often adds to the effectiveness of mediation efforts; if parties believe the mediator has a sincere interest in reducing violence and resolving the conflict, they are more likely to accept and trust the mediator and the mediator is more likely to help the parties reach an agreement.

As discussed above, self-exclusion is a source of legitimacy in some cases, as demonstrated by the IRCL in Liberia, which distanced itself from involvement in the interim government to protect its legitimacy and neutrality as a watchdog. In Northern Ireland, the Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland (ECONI) played an important role in the peace process.[45] But while ECONI used its legitimacy as a coalition of evangelicals to appeal to the wider Protestant community, contributing to changes in identity and attitudes toward reconciliation, it actively avoided participating in the formal negotiations, fearing that aligning itself too closely with political power would compromise its ability to critique other Protestant actors’ religious nationalism.[46] The maintenance of legitimacy thus potentially constrained its ability to work in the official peace process, demonstrating the dilemmas and trade-offs facing religious actors.[47]

INFLUENCE AS POWERFUL SOCIETAL ORGANIZATIONS

The social influence wielded by religious actors is one of the sources of their legitimacy and significantly contributes to their ability to influence formal peace processes, not least by influencing public opinion. The deep integration of the Catholic Church into Argentine and Chilean societies meant that the church’s support for the referenda in both countries on the 1984 Treaty of Peace and Friendship was decisive, despite domestic opposition to the treaty in both countries.[48] The importance of the Church as an institution in both countries was also the basis of the Vatican’s long-standing relationship with both parties, which increased its legitimacy and effectiveness as a mediator.

Central African Republic minister for national reconciliation Christophe Gazam Betty, left, and Sant'Egidio Community president Marco Impagliazzo sign an agreement with representatives of the Central African Republic national transitional council and civil society representatives in Rome on September 9, 2013. Religious actors such as Sant'Egidio often have resources and organizational capacity that facilitate both their inclusion and their influence in formal peace processes. (Photo by Alessandra Tarantino/AP)

Religious actors often have the ability to reach, educate, inspire, and mobilize the public. As the most prevalent form of civil society in many contexts, they can draw on specific social-psychological emotions and perceptions to mobilize religious convictions, qualities, and behaviors in support of peacebuilding goals.[49]

RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Religious actors, particularly large, powerful social organizations such as churches, have important material, infrastructural, and political resources that facilitate both their inclusion and their influence in formal peace processes, particularly because these organizations can rely on their own resources rather than being dependent on other actors. Organizational capacity is both a rationale for the engagement of religious actors in formal peace processes (discussed above) and a factor that affects religious actors' influence on these processes.

In the mediation of the Beagle Channel dispute, the institutional capabilities of the Vatican allowed it to control information effectively, both by keeping secrets when necessary and by disseminating information and calling for action where appropriate.

In certain cases, religious actors' resources may put them in a position to fill resource gaps in a process. In Afghanistan, the staff hired for the 2003–4 Constitutional Loya Jirga was contrasted, unfavorably, with the qualified staff available for the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga. This lack of capacity led to an increased reliance on Afghan authorities as well as on other institutions, such as the *ulema* councils of religious scholars, in order to reach out

> **Because they have the necessary financial and human resources, many religious actors can invest in long-term involvement in mediation efforts not only among conflict parties but also within communities. Many religious groups remain involved in the post-agreement phase.**

to the general population. Obtaining support from the government helped to raise awareness of the process but increased the risks of co-optation. Some mujahideen leaders, claiming religious leadership, had taken a stance against transitional justice, which made more moderate clerics and mullahs fearful of supporting such an initiative.

Time is also a key resource—one that religious actors possess to a much greater degree than some other peacemaking actors, as religious actors are, for example, less beholden to short-term electoral cycles. The negotiators from the Sant'Egidio Community considered time to be a key resource in their work in the peace processes in Algeria (1994–96) and Mozambique (1990–92), especially for building trust with the parties.[50] During the Beagle Channel dispute, the Vatican, which did not feel vulnerable to political time constraints, was willing to engage in a mediation process for a prolonged period of time even without visible progress toward an agreement.[51]

Because they have the necessary financial and human resources, many religious actors can invest in long-term involvement in mediation efforts not only among conflict parties but also within communities. Many religious groups remain involved in the post-agreement phase and help parties heal, build social institutions, and seek justice. In Sierra Leone, the IRCSL was involved in reconciliation, relief, human rights training, democratization, and reintegration programs, especially of child combatants.

In addition to religious actors' internal resources, international and regional policies and technical assistance may both constrain and enable the level of their influence—for example, through the provision of funding. Cooperation with certain funders may also undermine the legitimacy of religious actors if funders have a political stake in a certain outcome of the process.

PROCESS DESIGN FEATURES

Several elements of the design of formal peace processes have a significant effect on the actors included and the influence they can exert. "Selection criteria" define who is eligible to be included in a peace or transition process, while "selection procedures" determine how eligible actors (i.e., actors qualified to participate on the basis of selection criteria) will then be chosen. "Decision-making procedures" determine how included actors reach decisions in the various components or bodies of a peace process. Selection criteria, selection procedures, and decision-making procedures are thus important determinants of outcomes across all phases of a peace process and are critical to making all phases of a peace process or political transition process effective and legitimate.

Formal political power-sharing provisions can be an important component of peace agreements, as seen, for instance, in Afghanistan, Burundi, Kenya, and Liberia. In Afghanistan, selection to the Interim Administration created by the Bonn Agreement in December 2001 was made "with due regard to the ethnic, geographic and religious composition of Afghanistan and to the importance of the participation of women."[52] But the influence of the included actors on the administration was minimized by elite deals among leaders of armed groups, as was also the case during the subsequent Constitutional Loya Jirga (2003–4), given the government's control over the constitution-drafting process.[53] Quotas for all major commissions—such as reform commissions, truth and reconciliation commissions, commissions of inquiry, human rights and gender commissions, peace commissions, and monitoring

commissions—created in the implementation phase of the peace processes in Kenya and Liberia were also predefined and entailed mainly religious, ethnic, gender, and geographic aspects, but also included sector and relevant expertise. Besides official quotas and power-sharing formulas specified in agreements, a range of unofficial sociodemographic criteria, including religion, ethnicity, class, gender, and kinship, come into play as well as political factors, such as political orientation and patronage networks.[54]

The cases also suggest that religious actors frequently engage in "self-selection," especially in terms of activities related to formal and informal mediation and facilitation, back-channel diplomacy, and advocacy efforts.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE STATE

The relationship between religion and the state is often complex, and in conflict contexts, religion is frequently entangled in the national and international power dynamics that contribute to a conflict and possibilities for its resolution.[55] Especially in contexts where political and military power are closely aligned with a dominant religion and its leading institutions, religion may influence the conflict pervasively.[56] For instance, in Myanmar, the tight, historical alignment between dominant Buddhist institutions and the political-military establishment presents challenges to the ongoing conflict resolution processes. These include trying to ensure that the constitutional protections for members of all minority religious groups are realized in practice and that reform-minded Buddhists who are contesting existing political and religious structures can have a meaningful influence.[57] Participants in the series of regional consultations conducted for this report also noted that, in some instances, government propaganda used the threat of religious discrimination as a justification for violence. In some—but not all—cases, religious actors and religious institutions were able to work together to counter misinformation in their communities.

The level of religious freedom in a country can provide an indicator for religious actors as to the probability of repression by the state.[58] For instance, lack of religious freedom, in contexts such as Indonesia or Pakistan presents the danger of religion becoming a tool for power politics utilized by elites.[59] This point was repeatedly underlined during regional consultations.

Proximity to political power can be a double-edged sword in terms of the influence and effectiveness of religious actors in formal peace processes. Proximity to political power and political elites can confer legitimacy on religious actors, increasing the likelihood of their involvement and the influence they can exert in a peace process. But this kind of legitimacy may also keep religious actors too closely aligned to the politicians and ethnic elites of the state or their communal group. This alignment can limit their involvement in the process, because they cannot risk going "too far" in articulating visions of peace, especially in contexts where religion has been part of the conflict.[60] Therefore, in certain contexts, "official" religious representatives—the very people whom governments and political parties might seek to include in peace and transition processes—might be too constrained to take the risks necessary for peace. In these contexts, representatives of religious minorities or "mavericks" on the margins of majority religions can have greater flexibility and scope to capitalize on the strengths of faith-based mediators.[61] For example, in Northern Ireland, religious peacebuilding was "individualized to lone peacemakers, independents, and mavericks."[62] As a result, no religious actors participated as official representatives of their religions in the formal negotiations that produced the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The sociopolitical context can significantly facilitate or hinder the involvement and effectiveness of religious actors in peacemaking and peacebuilding. Specific sociopolitical factors include the role and perception of religious actors in society in general, ideological divisions

within societies, and the homogeneity or heterogeneity of religious communities.

Participants in the regional consultations highlighted that in some contexts, rising secularism means the societal influence of religious actors is in decline, and by extension, their role in peace processes is sometimes questioned. In many instances, it was noted that religious actors are excluded from national secular communities of practice, while also being criticized and excluded from their own communities for their peacebuilding work.

During the consultations, one of the most commonly cited problems facing religious actors was the threat of politicization, and by extension co-optation. In one consultation, participants mentioned that "peacebuilding" is sometimes a dangerously political term, so certain religious actors with more visible platforms opt instead to say they are engaging in "humanitarian" work. It was frequently noted that religious actors' engagement in formal peacemaking processes is more effective when those actors can frame themselves in a neutral rather than a political manner, especially given the risk of political co-optation. Participants pointed out that politicians often seek access to communities to further their own agendas, making it imperative that religious actors working to advance peace are not swayed by the prospect of attaining political power themselves or for their supporters. Additionally, the question of neutrality is particularly fraught, as many conflicts are so polarized that if religious actors—particularly religious institutions—align with one side of the conflict, they risk losing credibility and influence. However, it was also emphasized that this does not mean religious actors should shy away from political engagement; after all, depending on the context, they cannot be protected, both physically and in terms of rights, unless they work with political actors. This reality is most visible in the case of minority groups, and participants working in various localities commented on their concern for the safety as well as opportunity for involvement of minority groups.

The risks of politicization are heightened for religious actors with less formal power or public visibility, when political authorities or circumstances change rapidly, or when talks are drawn out by conflict parties for purposes other than peace (e.g., to protect war economies or generate political gains). If religious actors fail to effectively navigate involvement in formal processes, they can be co-opted by other parties and used to support conflict narratives anchored in religious values and identities. The risk is especially great when conflict fault lines run along ethnoreligious differences, because much of religious actors' legitimacy is tied to an ability to speak credibly to both the conflict parties and to the public. If religious actors come to be perceived as associated with one side of the conflict or as unreliable intermediaries, then they risk losing much of their legitimacy, hampering future engagement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The inclusion of religious actors in formal peace and political transition processes appears to make a difference to the outcome of those processes. In the context of the research, "influence" is defined as the ability of an actor to push for its preferences before, during, and after the negotiation process.[63] A qualitative assessment of the database, literature review, and consultations suggests that religious actors can exert an influence on paving the way for and initiating formal peace processes and can contribute to reaching and implementing agreements once they have mobilized internally and externally to engage in support of peace.[64] The analysis also indicates that religious actors and religion more broadly can be powerful influences opposing peacemaking efforts.

In addition, the influence exerted by religious actors on peace or political transition processes appears to be greater when they push for their own involvement. A clear example is the political mobilization by churches in Latin America to work for peace both within the framework of formal peace processes and in the efforts that helped to initiate or support these processes.

Early involvement of religious actors is important if their engagement is to be long-lasting and effective. In many cases where religious actors were influential, these actors' first intervention in the conflict was an attempt to mediate between parties. This was the case for the IRCL in Liberia and for the Catholic Church in several Latin American contexts.

However, in several cases where religious actors initially played a leading role in peacemaking efforts, especially through mediation or facilitation of dialogue, their influence later decreased. This was notably the case with the Catholic Church in El Salvador.

In certain circumstances, religious actors can voluntarily reduce their influence in one facet of a peace process to ensure their continued influence in other facets. As noted earlier, in Liberia, the IRCL's long-standing involvement in facilitating dialogue with the various conflict groups helped to spur the formal peace process, but the IRCL later turned down the offer of a seat in the provisional government in order to maintain its role as an impartial observer. Proximity to political power can be helpful or harmful—strengthening influence or leading to co-optation and reduced legitimacy. One religious actor might even experience both outcomes. As a result, in certain contexts, minority or less prominent religious actors may have greater scope to actively engage in peacemaking than high-level religious officials have. In some contexts, factors such as internal unity that, generally speaking, can enhance religious actors' ability to influence formal peace processes may also have the opposite effect, as the example of the Catholic Church's involvement in the Guatemalan peace process illustrates.

While in some instances the ways in which religious actors contribute to formal peace processes are very similar to those of secular actors, in many respects their religious orientation shapes their contributions.[65] The nature and characteristics of religious actors can have potential impacts in a number of ways that support peacemaking efforts, including building trust and moving

Cyprus's president Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci shake hands as Greek Cypriot Orthodox archbishop Chrysostomos II, left, and Turkish Cypriot Mufti Talip Atalay look on after a meeting in the UN-controlled buffer zone in Nicosia, Cyprus, on September 10, 2015. The heads of Cyprus's Christian and Muslim communities are lending their support to ongoing reunification talks. (Photo by Petros Karadjias/AP)

parties toward an agreement through shared religious identities and values; facilitating communication; clarifying and removing misunderstandings to help parties overcome mistrust and suspicion through a variety of communicative, procedural, and directive strategies; enhancing shared identities and connecting parties through shared values and principles rooted in their religious traditions; and inspiring change in the attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of the parties.[66]

Religious actors are especially likely to engage in peace processes when their own communities are involved in the conflict. Yet a significant majority of the cases where religious actors were involved in formal peace processes were not conflicts directly over religious issues or differences but were conflicts where the parties were divided along ethnoreligious lines. In these conflicts particularly, religious values and texts were important in mobilizing communities toward political ends, and religious institutions and leaders were highly trusted and respected by the parties involved. Religious dimensions can be used for mobilization: political and ethnic leaders can manifest grievances through a religious lens as a means of generating support or stoking conflict and tensions. Religious symbolism, rhetoric, and legitimacy can be deployed either to support or to undermine formal peace processes. This phenomenon has become a hindrance to peace processes when religious leaders feel ignored but can serve as an asset if religious actors are constructively engaged.

Even when the root causes of conflict arise from faith-based divisions, religious actors may still bring important

benefits to formal peace processes. This is because religion can be a uniting factor across conflict parties or across the general public, which can push for peace. Even if religion is not a uniting factor among conflict parties or the population in general, pro-peace mobilization with an interreligious mandate can help to advance formal peacemaking efforts. Religious actors engage in all modalities of inclusion; are active across all phases of the official peace and political transition processes; and perform a wide variety of peacebuilding functions, with mediation and facilitation being the most common role, followed by advocacy. In several country contexts, individual religious actors performed multiple peacemaking and peacebuilding functions. The particular characteristics of religious actors that make them assets for formal peace processes include their inclination to support peace, their importance as powerful societal organizations, their legitimacy as actors and the additional legitimacy they can confer on the process, and their organizational capacity and resources.

Given that religious actors can exert considerable influence—particularly within their own constituencies and on public opinion more broadly—to both enhance and undermine formal peace processes, the limited engagement of religious actors in such processes represents a significant untapped potential for peace. The lack of religious actor engagement could also potentially prove detrimental to peace and political transition processes as it may even spur religious actors to become spoilers of these processes.

Conveners, mediators, facilitators, donors, and external supporters of formal peace processes usually engage religious actors in peace processes in an ad hoc or cursory manner that fails to leverage their full potential. Where they exist, strategies for engaging religious actors are inchoate. External peace process actors should instead systematically identify key religious actors that have already mobilized or can be mobilized for peace and look to support and leverage their efforts. External actors should also identify religious actors that could be potential spoilers and explore ways to mitigate that effect. It should be borne in mind that in certain contexts, minority or less prominent religious actors may have greater scope to actively engage in peacemaking than high-level religious officials.

Finally, it is important to not overlook women religious actors. Although some women religious actors and religious women's organizations participate in formal processes, many more do not, even though they may be highly active at the grassroots level. Mediators, facilitators, and donors should explore ways to ensure women religious actors can have a meaningful influence on formal peace processes.

Annexes

ANNEX 1: CASE STUDIES

Case Studies from the Inclusive Peace Database

1. Aceh, peace negotiations 1999–2003
2. Afghanistan, Emergency Loya Jirga 2002, Constitutional Loya Jirga 2003–2004
3. Benin, political transition 1990–2011
4. Burundi, peace negotiations and implementation 1996–2013
5. Colombia, peace negotiations 1998–2002
6. Cyprus, negotiations 1999–2004
7. Darfur, peace negotiations 2009–13
8. Democratic Republic of the Congo, Inter-Congolese Dialogue 1999–2003
9. Egypt, political transition 2011–13
10. El Salvador, peace negotiations and implementation 1990–94
11. Eritrea, constitution-making 1993–97
12. Fiji, political transition/constitution-making 2006–13
13. Georgia and Abkhazia, UN negotiations 1997–2007
14. Guatemala, peace process 1989–99
15. Israel and Palestine, Geneva Initiative 2003–13
16. Israel and Palestine, Oslo I 1991–95
17. Kenya, postelection violence 2008–13
18. Kyrgyzstan, political reforms 2013
19. Liberia, peace agreement and implementation 2003–11
20. Macedonia, Ohrid peace process 2001–13
21. Mali, political transition 1990–92
22. Northern Mali, peace negotiation 1990–96
23. Mexico, Chiapas uprising and peace process 1994–97
24. Moldova and Transnistria, negotiations 1992–2005
25. Nepal, peace agreement and constitution-making 2005–12
26. Northern Ireland, Belfast (Good Friday) and St. Andrews Agreements 1998–2006
27. Papua New Guinea Bougainville, peace negotiations 1997–2005
28. Philippines, Bangsamoro peace process 2010–16
29. Rwanda, Arusha Peace Accords 1992–1993
30. Solomon Islands, Townsville Peace Agreement and constitution-making 2000–2014
31. Somalia I, National Peace Conference 1992–94
32. Somalia II, Djibouti process 1999–2001
33. Somalia III, Kenya process (National Peace Conference) 2001–5
34. Somaliland, postindependence violence negotiations 1991–94
35. South Africa, political transition 1990–97
36. Sri Lanka, ceasefire, peace negotiations and elections 2000–2004
37. Tajikistan, peace negotiations and implementation 1993–2000
38. Togo, National Conference 1991
39. Togo, Inclusive Dialogue 2006
40. Tunisia, political transition and National Dialogue 2011–16
41. Turkey and Armenia, protocols 2008–11
42. Turkish and Kurdish, peace process 2009–14
43. Yemen, National Dialogue 2011–14

ANNEX 1: CASE STUDIES *(continued)*

Case Studies from the Literature Review

1. Algeria, peace process 1994–96 (Appeal for Peace October 1996)
2. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dayton peace process 1995
3. Burkina Faso, peace process 2017–2022
4. Burundi, peace process 2005
5. Cambodia, peace process 1991–93
6. Central African Republic, peace process 2013–present
7. Chile and Argentina, Beagle Channel mediation 1978–85
8. Colombia, peace negotiations 2012–16
9. Cyprus, peace process 2011–1974
10. Democratic Republic of the Congo, peace process 1996–present
11. East Timor, peace process 1975–2002
12. Egypt, mediation between Egyptian government and al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya 1993
13. El Salvador, peace process 1990–93
14. Ethiopia and Eritrea, peace process 2000–2018
15. Georgia, peace process 1989–present
16. Guatemala, peace process 1994–96
17. Indonesia, Molino II peace process 1999–2002, Aceh peace process 1999–2005
18. Iraq, peace process 2003–present
19. Israel and Palestine, Oslo Peace Process 1993–2000, Alexandria process 2002
20. Kenya, political transition 2007
21. Liberia, peace process 1990–96, 2003
22. Mexico, EZLN mediated peace negotiations 1994–96
23. Mozambique, mediated peace negotiations 1990–92
24. Myanmar, peace process 2011–2021
25. Nicaragua, political protests 2018–20
26. Nigeria, Quaker mediation 1967–70
27. Northern Ireland, peace process 1988–98
28. Philippines, Bangsamoro peace process 1997–2014
29. Poland, political transition 1989
30. Rwanda, peace negotiations 1992–93, political transition 1994–2010
31. Serbia and Kosovo, 1999–present
32. Sierra Leone, Lomé peace talks 1999
33. Somalia, peace process 1991–2018
34. South Africa, democratic transition 1990–2000
35. South Sudan, peace negotiations 2013–15, 2015–20
36. Sri Lanka, mediated peace negotiations 1999–2008
37. Sudan, National Peace Process 2003–2023
38. Syria, peace and political process 2011–present
39. Thailand, peace negotiations 2004–present
40. Trinidad and Tobago, hostage negotiations 1990
41. Uganda, Juba peace talks 2006–8
42. Yemen, peace process 2011–present
43. Zimbabwe, political transition 2017–present

ANNEX 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

Inclusion Modalities

The inclusion modalities framework consists of the following seven modalities, as described by Paffenholz et al.[67]

1. **Direct Representation at the Negotiation Table.** Included actors are directly represented alongside the main conflict parties. This takes place as part of so-called track one negotiations and can be achieved by including more actors in the main negotiation delegations, by enlarging the number of negotiation delegations at the table, or else by including almost all relevant constituencies within society through a broad-based format such as a National Dialogue.

2. **Observer Status.** Observers are permitted to be present in most or all sessions of a negotiation, or specific working groups, but they do not form part of official delegations, they are usually not allowed to speak formally and do not have any decision-making power.

3. **Consultations.** Consultations can be used in parallel to negotiations or implementation to gather opinion, to discover facts, or to create consensus among a larger set of constituents. They can be elite-centred or broad-based, public and officially endorsed, or less formal and consultative.

4. **Inclusive Commissions.** Commissions involving civil society and other players enjoy formal standing. Three types of inclusive commissions can be distinguished: post-agreement commissions; commissions preparing or conducting the peace process; and permanent bodies.

5. **High-level Problem-solving Workshops.** Sometimes referred to as track 1.5, these workshops are unofficial and generally not publicized. They bring together representatives close to the leaders of the main conflict parties as well as other actors, and offer a space for discussion in parallel to official negotiations, without the pressure to reach an agreement.

6. **Public Decision-making.** Peace agreements and constitutions can be submitted to ratification through popular referenda and other electoral mechanisms. They seek to provide democratic legitimacy to the process, ensuring public support and the sustainability of the agreement.

7. **Mass Action.** Mass campaigns, protests, or strikes are another modality by which actors can include themselves in a process, by making their voices heard, raising grievances or preferences related to a conflict or political transition and putting pressure on the negotiating parties. Mass Action can occur before, during, or after violent conflict or a political crisis.

ANNEX 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS *(continued)*

Civil Society Peacebuilding Functions

This framework consists of the following seven functions as described by Paffenholz.[68]

1. **Protection** of citizens and communities against violence. This may apply to a despotic state or any armed actor, ranging from the national army to local groups. Protection is a precondition for civil society to act and perform other functions, and may be civil society-led (e.g. protection/sanctuary networks) or supportive of state/international actions (such as security arrangements, disarmament).

2. **Monitoring** of human rights violations or the implementation of agreements. CSOs monitor conflict situations, give recommendations to decision makers, and provide information to human rights and other advocacy groups. Monitoring is a precondition to protection and advocacy, and central to democratization as a means for holding governments accountable.

3. **Advocacy** for peace and human rights. Divided into two types: a) Non-public or informal advocacy, where civil society actors communicate with the political apparatus in private, bringing issues to the negotiation agenda in peace talks through informal channels; and b) Public communication or public advocacy, when claims and demands are made in public via demonstrations, press releases, petitions, or other statements in support of a specific demand.

4. **Socialization** in the values of peace and democracy. Two types of in-group socialization can be distinguished: a) The culture of peace, encompassing socialization activities enhancing democratic attitudes and capacities to handle conflicts peacefully (e.g. conflict resolution training or capacity-building); and b) Socialization towards building or strengthening in-group identity, in particular oppressed or marginalized groups.

5. **Social cohesion.** There are three types of inter-group social cohesion: a) Relationship-oriented cohesion for peace, bringing together representatives and/or members of (former) conflicting groups to foster attitude change toward the "other." b) Outcome-oriented cohesion for peace, bringing together key representatives of (former) conflicting groups to go beyond building relationships, attempting to reach a larger peacebuilding objective. c) Outcome-oriented cohesion for business or development work, bringing together the conflicting groups for objectives other than peace, for example business, service user or educational system initiatives that consist of two or more conflicting groups.

6. **Intermediation and facilitation of dialogue.** Civil society can play the role as intermediator/facilitator between citizens and the state. In the peacebuilding context, facilitation can also be an important function that takes place between or among groups (not only between state and citizens) and at different levels of society.

7. **Service delivery.** Service delivery or aid projects such as education, health, or relief work can create entry points for peacebuilding. The relevant service delivery initiatives in this regard are limited to those that are specifically designed and implemented with these peacebuilding objectives in mind.

Notes

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1. The database was developed and compiled under the Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation research project that ran from 2011 until 2017 and was led by Thania Paffenholz at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. The research component of the project was conducted in cooperation with Bilkent University in Ankara under the lead of Esra Çuhadar. The case study research additionally benefited from cooperation with Tufts University in Boston in 2013 and 2014 under the lead of Eileen Babbitt. The multiyear comparative project examined how and under which conditions various actors participated in and influenced peace and political transition processes. The project's dataset comprises more than 40 mainly qualitative case studies of negotiation and implementation processes that took place from 1989 to 2014.
2. The inclusion modalities framework was developed by Paffenholz et al. during the course of the Broadening Participation project. See Thania Paffenholz, "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Beyond the Inclusion–Exclusion Dichotomy," *Negotiation Journal* 30, no. 1 (2014): 69–76.
3. The peacebuilding functions framework was developed as part of the Civil Society and Peacebuilding research project, which ran from 2006 to 2010 at the Graduate Institute, Geneva. The framework employs a broad conceptualization of civil society, which is understood as a wide range of actors, including professional associations, clubs, unions, and faith-based and nongovernmental organizations, as well as clan groups. The media, political parties, and businesses—with the exception of their professional associations—were excluded in the definition of civil society used in this project. Most of the faith-based actors identified in the present study can be grouped under civil society. For more details, see Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk, "A Comprehensive Analytical Framework," in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 69.
4. Although many international actors identify themselves as secular, it is important to note that the line between a purely secular or a purely religious actor is often not clear-cut. Ostensibly secular actors are often perceived by others as acting with religious motivations, purposes, or methods; and secular ideologies share much common intellectual heritage with religious ideologies. For example, Western secularism draws many ideas about the individual and their relationship to broader society from Protestant Christian ideas about an individual's relationship with God. As a result, considering the term "secular" in opposition to religious ways of understanding or thinking, or as a neutral position in comparison with competing religious positions, is problematic. Instead, the term is embedded in the intellectual and historical lineage on which it draws.
5. Michael Bratton, "Civil Society and Political Transition," Institute for Development Research, *IDR Reports* 11, no. 6 (1994): 10.
6. Notable transitology works include Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986); Wolfgang Merkel, *Zivile Konflikttransformation. Gutachten Im Auftrag Der Evangelischen Akademie Loccum* (Rehberg-Loccum, 1995); and Wolfgang Merkel, *Systemtransformation. Eine Einführung in Die Theorie Und Empirie Der Transformationsforschung* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1999).
7. For peace processes conceptualized in minimal terms, see for example, Wendy Pearlman, "Spoiling Inside and Out: Internal Political Contestation and the Middle East Peace Process," *International Security*, no. 3 (2008). For peace processes conceptualized in broader terms, see Charles T. Call, *Why Peace Fails: The Causes and Prevention of Civil War Recurrence* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

8. The Broadening Participation project considered pre-negotiation to begin when one or more parties considers negotiation as an option and communicates this intention to other parties. The project defined pre-negotiation as ending when the parties agree to formal negotiation or when one party abandons the consideration of negotiation as an option. The negotiation phase encompasses the formal negotiations addressing issues of substance and ends with the signing of the major agreement or the breakdown of negotiations. The implementation phase begins with the signing of the major agreement studied in the case and ends after the agreement is fully implemented, or after no further implementation is observed over a period of five years, meaning the agreement has either been partially implemented or not implemented.
9. It is important to note that the number of overall peace processes was especially high in the early 1990s, so the subsequent decrease in the number of processes in which religious actors were involved does not necessarily represent a decline in religious actor engagement.
10. Naomi Johnstone and Isak Svensson, "Belligerents and Believers: Exploring Faith-based Mediation in Internal Armed Conflict Politics," *Religion and Ideology* 14, no. 4 (2013): 559.
11. Johnstone and Svensson, "Belligerents and Believers," 563.
12. Paffenholz and Spurk, "A Comprehensive Analytical Framework," 69.
13. Kaja Borchgrevink and Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Afghanistan: Civil Society between Modernity and Tradition," in Paffenholz, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding*, 235–258.
14. Paffenholz and Spurk, "A Comprehensive Analytical Framework," 67.
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16. Paffenholz and Spurk, "A Comprehensive Analytical Framework," 72.
17. Borchgrevink and Berg Harpviken, "Afghanistan: Civil Society Between Modernity and Tradition."
18. Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, *Muslim Peacebuilding Actors in Africa and the Balkans* (Washington, DC: Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, 2005).
19. Thania Paffenholz, "What Civil Society Can Contribute to Peacebuilding," in Paffenholz, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding*, 401.
20. R. Scott Appleby, "Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peace-building," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 835.
21. Palwasha Kakar, "Afghanistan's Imams Helped Achieve Surprise Truce," United States Institute of Peace, June 14, 2018, www.usip .org/publications/2018/06/afghanistans-imams-helped-achieve-surprise-truce.
22. Babatunde Tolu Afolabi, *The Politics of Peacemaking in Africa: Non-State Actors' Role in the Liberian Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
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24. Jeffrey R. Seul, "Inclusion of Religious Actors in Peace and National Dialogue Processes," *Journal of Interreligious Studies* (2019): 27.
25. See Johannes Vüllers, "Mobilization for Peace: Analysing Religious Peace Activism," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34, no. 3 (2019): 217–239.
26. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Religion and Mediation: Strange Bedfellows or Natural Allies?," in *The Handbook of Mediation*, ed. Alexia Georgakopoulos (New York: Routledge, 2016), 372; Vladimir Kmec and Gladys Ganiel, "The Strengths and Limitations of the Inclusion of Religious Actors in Peace Processes in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina," *International Negotiation* 24 (2019): 136–163; and Johnstone and Svensson, "Belligerents and Believers."
27. Debey Sayndee, "The Role of Civil Society in Post-Conflict Peace-Building in Liberia: A Policy Approach," in *War to Peace Transition: Conflict Intervention and Peace Building in Liberia*, ed. Kenneth Omeje (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009).
28. John-Peter Pham, *Liberia: Portrait of a Failed State* (New York: Reed Press, 2004).
29. Harold H. Saunders, *A Public Peace Process* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Catherine Barnes, "Weaving the Web: Civil -Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace," in *People Building Peace II, Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. Paul van Tongeren et al. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 7–24.
30. Anthony Wanis-St. John, "Peace Processes, Secret Negotiations, and Civil Society," *International Negotiation* 13 (2008): 1–9; David Lanz, "Who Gets a Seat at the Table? A Framework for Understanding the Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Peace Negotiations," *International Negotiation* 16, no. 2 (2011): 275–295; Cynthia J. Chataway, "Track II Diplomacy: From a Track I Perspective," *Negotiation Journal* 14, no. 3 (1998): 269–287; Paffenholz, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding*, 65–76; and Paffenholz, "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations."

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43. Insider-partial mediation is mediation by an actor who is already involved in the conflict (i.e., an “insider”) and, at least to some extent, aligned with one side or the other (hence, “partial”). The “outsider-neutral” conceptualization of mediation suggests that the mediator should come from outside the conflict situation and have no commitment or connection to either side. See John Paul Lederach, “Of Nets, Nails, and Problems: The Folk Language of Conflict Resolution in a Central American Setting,” in *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Kevin Avruch, Peter W. Black, and Joseph A. Scimecca (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 165–186; and Christopher A. Leeds, “Managing Conflict across Cultures: Challenges to Practitioners,” in *International Journal of Peace Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997).
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46. For contributing to changes in identity and attitudes toward reconciliation, see Claire Mitchell and Gladys Ganiel, *Evangelical Journeys: Choice and Change in a Northern Irish Religious Subculture* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2011).
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48. James Garrett, “Beagle Channel Dispute: Confrontation and Negotiation in the Southern Cone,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no. 3 (1985): 100–101.
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54. Alexander Bramble and Thania Paffenholz, “Implementing Peace Agreements: From Inclusive Processes to Inclusive Outcomes?,” United Nations Development Programme and Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2020, 45.
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57. Seul, “Inclusion of Religious Actors in Peace and National Dialogue Processes,” 17.

58. Vüllers, “Mobilization for Peace,” 2.
59. Vüllers, “Mobilization for Peace,” 2.
60. Kmec and Ganiel, “The Strengths and Limitations of the Inclusion of Religious Actors.”
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62. John D. Brewer, Gareth I. Higgins, and Francis Teeney, “Religion and Peacemaking: A Conceptualization,” *Sociology* (2010): 44.
63. The Broadening Participation project determined that preferences can relate to substantive contributions to the setup of the negotiation process; bringing issues onto the negotiation and implementation agenda; putting issues into the substance of the agreement; taking part in the implementation of an agreement; and pushing for negotiations to begin, for negotiations to resume, or for an agreement to be signed. Preferences can also relate to increasing the perceived legitimacy of a negotiation process or an agreement and mobilizing public opinion for or against a negotiation process or an agreement. Preferences can be both negative as well as positive, where negative preferences encompass opposition to negotiations and opposition to an agreement or its implementation. The level of actors’ effectiveness was defined as the extent to which religious actors were able to exert influence on a peace process or political transition process.
64. A simple statistical analysis of cases suggests that a higher proportion of faith-based actor inclusion arises in cases where an agreement has been reached and there has been at least some degree of implementation. But the relatively low number of cases and their distribution over diverse modalities and functions means that any findings cannot be considered statistically valid.
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68. Bramble and Paffenholz, “Implementing Peace Agreements,” 13–14.

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Religious actors have considerable influence within their own constituencies and over public opinion generally. As seen over the past 30 years, this influence can both enhance and undermine peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts and formal negotiation processes. At present, however, this potential for peace is underutilized. To help remedy this deficit, this report examines whether, when, how, and to what extent religious actors have been engaged in peace and political transition processes. It proposes a categorization of the types of roles religious actors have played across all phases of peace and political transition processes, examining the level of influence they can exert and the kinds of effects they can produce. Finally, the report suggests ways in which the unique strengths of religious actors can be harnessed to positively influence formal peace processes.

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