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## How Religion Influences Peacemaking

### Abstract

Although a large amount of scholarly and popular attention has been devoted to understanding the relationship between religion and violence, comparatively less attention has been paid to the relationship between religion and peace. Yet, there are many reasons to believe that religion can be a powerful force for peacemaking. Qualitative research indicates that religious leaders and religious people are often credible peace brokers who are respected in their communities, have ready access to cultural peace-promoting concepts like reconciliation and forgiveness, and may be motivated by non-partisan factors like fulfilling religious obligations or furthering God's will. Despite this promising research, little large-scale quantitative data has yet been collected from individuals engaged in peacemaking. In this study, the relationship between religion and peacemaking is explored using survey data collected from 171 international peacemakers, the majority of whom are Christian and white. The results indicate that religion influences peacemaking in at least two non-mutually exclusive ways: through motivating religious individuals to participate in peacemaking and through the use of religious tactics by those engaged in peacemaking. Through both means, religion influences commitment to continuing peacemaking, subjective evaluations of success by peacemakers, and hope for success in the future.

**Keywords:** *religion, peacemaking, peace, survey research*

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## **How Religion Influences Peacemaking**

**Rebecca A. Glazier**

Much has been said in both popular and scholarly circles about those who engage in violence in the name of religion. And with good reason: an increasing number of global conflicts have a significant religious component, and those conflicts that do are likely to be longer and more difficult to solve (Toft, 2009; Toft, Philpott, & Shah, 2011). When at least one side of a conflict makes explicit religious demands, the conflict is less likely to be settled through peace agreements (Svensson, 2013). Scholars, policymakers, and the public want to understand how religion can lead to the terrible atrocities they see in terrorism, civil war, and interstate conflict.

But religion does not just motivate conflict; it can also lead to peace (Appleby, 2000; Boulding, 1986). We know from cases like Mozambique, Cambodia, and Nigeria that efforts by religious organizations to broker peace can sometimes be effective (Harpviken & Røislien, 2008; Haynes, 2009; Smock, 2004). But we know much less about individual religious peacemakers (one notable exception is Little, 2007). And, as is the case with studies of institutional religious peacemaking, the information we do have is almost entirely qualitative. How do those people who consider themselves engaged in peacemaking work see the role of religion in their work?

To better understand how on-the-ground peacemakers view religion and peacemaking, both religious and non-religious global peacemaking organizations were contacted and asked to distribute a research survey to the peacemakers in their networks. Peacemaking is defined broadly in this research as the process of bringing about peace, especially by reconciling adversaries through peaceful means (Autesserre, 2011, p. 1). The peacemaker respondents are thus trying to bring about peace in a particular conflict. The respondents are considered peacemakers first through their affiliation with a peacemaking organization that holds the goal of bringing about peace, and second through their self-identification as a peacemaker on an early survey question. The rest of the survey contains both open-ended and forced-choice questions about peacemaking, religion, and the conflict on which the peacemaker is working. These data provide a first statistical look at how on-the-ground peacemakers see religion impacting their peace work.

## **The Importance of Religious Peacemaking**

Given the increasing prevalence of religious conflict, and what Appleby (2000) has termed the “ambivalence of the sacred,” religious peacemaking appears to be a fitting solution for religious violence (Appleby, 2001). In recent years, scholars, governments, and non-profits have all gained a greater appreciation for the peacemaking power of religion. From the Religion and Peacemaking program at the United States Institute for Peace, to NGOs like the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, more organizations are recognizing the potential value of religious peace work.

There are a number of reasons to expect religious peacemaking to matter for conflict resolution. First, religion is, in many ways, naturally predisposed to resolve conflict. Religious traditions are often built on foundations of healing and reconciliation. Religion often uses ritual and tradition to teach the lessons of forgiveness and moving forward. These elements set religious peacemaking apart and can be invaluable when it comes to resolving complex and long-standing grievances (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009). As Gopin (2000) argues, “world religions have a reservoir of pro-social values of profound subtlety and effectiveness that, if utilized well, could form the basis of an alternative to violence in coping with conflict or coping with devastating injury” (p. 10). Working both within and across religious traditions, religious peacemakers can appeal to “shared religious values and the sense of a higher calling based on the desire for peace and reconciliation which is manifest in religious texts and traditions” (Marsden, 2012b, p. 5).

One example is the work of religious leaders on the Good Friday Agreement, which brought an end to open conflict in the decades-long “Troubles” of Northern Ireland in 1998. Father Alex Reid, a Catholic, was able to convince John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein to meet secretly together and begin on the road to a negotiated peace (Jafari, 2007; Little, 2007). Similarly, Protestant Reverend Roy Magee was able to convince his community, including influential loyalists he ministered to and visited in prison, to adopt a ceasefire in 1994 (Jafari, 2007).

Additionally, many of the conflicts that peacemakers mediate take place in unstable countries with ineffective governments. And, “where social institutions are weak or government is viewed as illegitimate, faith-based institutions and local religious leaders often play a critical role in meeting the needs of their communities” (Jafari, 2007, p. 115). Thus, religious actors may

benefit from the trust of local people due to their long-term positive engagement with entire communities—beyond their own co-religionists (Rubin, 1995; Sampson, 2007). The benefits of a stable, legitimate social force that religion can provide is magnified during conflict, when government and other institutions are likely failing (Harpviken & Røislien, 2008; Jafari, 2007). This trust may enable them to work with individuals and groups that are not accessible to even the most powerful of foreign diplomats or elected leaders. In short, “their daily contact with the masses, long record of charitable service, and reputation for integrity in most settings have earned religious leaders and institutions a privileged status and an unparalleled legitimacy” (Appleby 2001, p. 827).

Third, religious peacemakers are likely to benefit from greater negotiating credibility than non-religious peacemakers. “Peace brokering founded on a sincere normative commitment may increase both the capacity and the credibility of the broker in relation to the conflicting parties” (Harpviken & Røislien, 2008, p. 362). Conflicts are often in need of credible mediators (Khadiagala, 2005) and, with a reputation as an apolitical actor, a religious peacemaker may be both more credible and better able to mobilize fellow believers (Johnston, 2003).

Religion’s negotiating credibility can have very real effects on peace negotiations. In 1992, the Catholic Community of Sant’ Egidio, led by founder and peace activist Andrea Riccardi, successfully negotiated an end to civil war in Mozambique (Haynes, 2009). Scholars have identified the Community’s religious motivation—namely, the sincere desire to do the will of God—as one reason why its peace efforts were successful (Barbato, de Franco, & Le Normand, 2012). With no apparent ulterior motive, Sant’ Egidio was a peace broker with whom combatants were willing to work. Riccardi himself stressed the importance of religion to his role in the peace process, citing specifically a reliance on divine guidance through prayer (Riccardi, Durand, & Ladous, 1999).

Of course, not all religious people are similarly non-partisan. If religious peace actors strongly identify—or are identified—with the religious tradition of the combatants on one side of the conflict, they may actually have less negotiating credibility than non-religious peace actors (Bercovitch & Elgström, 2001; Inman, Kishi, Wilkenfeld, Gelfand, & Salmon, 2014). Research indicates that combatants of different religions are less likely to reach a peaceful solution (Leng & Regan, 2003), although a shared religious tradition is by no means a guarantee of successful negotiations or lasting peace (Gurses & Rost, 2017).

The fourth reason we should expect religion to matter for peacemaking is the intensity of sincere religious motivations to engage in peacemaking. Thomas (2005) notes that the motivation of religious peacemakers can be a great asset in their peacemaking efforts. Gopin's (2012) qualitative analysis of peacemaker interviews concludes that one of the factors common to successful peacemakers is that they "tend to see their work as having some larger cosmic significance" (p. 183). If the peacemakers believe that they are doing God's work, they will be willing to take many risks and bear many costs in their attempts to bring peace. These individuals are motivated by faith, deeply committed to peace (Thomas 2005), and likely more hopeful about its prospects.

Research in psychology and political science on the consequences of such "intrinsic" or "providential" motivations indicate that they can make a significant difference. Intrinsic religious motivation is associated with high in-group identification (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010) and endorsement of the ideological components of one's nation (Burris, Branscombe, & Jackson, 2000), which may help or harm religious peacemaking efforts. Providential religious believers believe that God has a plan that they can help carry out (Glazier, 2017). Research shows that providential believers take their religion very seriously; their religious views outweigh even deeply held political views, when the two are in conflict (Glazier, 2013). For both providentially-motivated peacemakers and providentially-motivated combatants, religion is likely to matter deeply when it comes to conflict resolution.

For these four reasons, religious peacemaking can be a source of hope for violence reduction not only in cases of religious conflict, but in all conflicts. Approximately 84 percent of all people in the world identify with a religious group (Hackett et al., 2012). Research indicates that religious peacemakers can be effective in resolving both religious and non-religious conflicts (Meredith III, 2009). Those who are motivated by religion, and who know how to appropriately apply religious values and concepts, are likely to be able to reach religious populations (Gopin 2002; Bock, 2001), whether or not the conflict they are a part of is imbued with religious significance.

### **What Do We Know About Peacemakers?**

Efforts to study peacemaking, including religious peacemaking, have generally focused on institutions and organizations. Peacemaking interventions by the United Nations, NATO, the EU, and other major international organizations have been the emphasis of most of the scholarly

work (e.g., Belloni & Deane, 2005; Nathan, 2010; Doyle & Sambanis, 2006). One of the most famous cases of successful, institutional religious peacemaking is the work of the Catholic Community of Sant' Egidio to bring peace to Mozambique (Bartoli, 2005; Haynes, 2009). Similarly, the World Council of Churches was a helpful peace broker in the first Sudanese civil war (Assefa, 1990).

Comparatively, we know little about what peacemaking looks like from the perspective of individual, on-the-ground peacemakers. The success of a few prominent individual peacemakers like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, and Thich Nhat Hanh has contributed to the visibility of religious peacemaking (Hanh, 2003; Lama & Chan, 2005; Tutu & Abrams, 2004). Additionally, sometimes the efforts of unknown religious peacemakers are so successful that they are elevated to international fame. For instance, Leymah Gbowee, who brought Christian and Muslim women together to help end Liberia's brutal civil war, was one of three Liberian women awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 (Hayward, 2014; Marshall, Hayward, Zambra, Breger, & Jackson, 2011; Ouellet, 2013).

But these prominent peacemakers represent only a small portion of individual-level peacemaking efforts. Local and international peacemakers working on the ground, particularly religious peacemakers, have simply not been systematically studied at an individual level. Advocates and NGOs have collected some qualitative case study evidence to demonstrate that individual peacemaking works (e.g., Little, 2007; Kolb, 1997). But we know too little about these peacemakers and the conflicts they help resolve to be able to draw generalizable conclusions. These questions arise: What is the relationship between religion and peacemaking? How is religion both used and experienced by individuals engaged in peace work?

### **Religion's Influence on Peacemaking**

Theoretically, there are two main ways that religion influences peacemaking: (1) through the individual religious motivation of the peacemaker, and (2) through the use of religious peacemaking tools and tactics. These two paths of influence sometimes work together and are sometimes independent. The four potential combinations of these paths of influence are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Religion's Theoretical Paths of Influence on Peacemaking*

	<b>Religious Peacemaking Tactics</b>	<b>Non-religious Peacemaking Tactics</b>
<b>Religious Motivation</b>	Pervasive Religion (Example: Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye in Nigeria)	Personal Religion (Example: Vaiba Kebeh Flomo in Liberia)
<b>No Religious Motivation</b>	Instrumental Religion (Example: Mariamma Mathew in India)	No Religion (Example: Zeinab Blandia in Sudan)

A great example of religious peacemakers who are both motivated by religion and use religious peacemaking tactics are Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye of Nigeria. In Nigeria, the Muslim population (living mostly in the north) and the Christian population (living mostly in the south) have been in conflict for years. Ashafa and Wuye both actually began as combatants in the religious conflict. As both experienced and witnessed great suffering as a result of the conflict, and inspired by their religious convictions, they independently chose to move away from fighting and towards peace (Little, 2007). In 1995, the two came together to found the Interfaith Mediation Centre and have since helped diffuse ongoing religious tensions in Nigeria (Jafari, 2007). Thus, motivated by their varying religious beliefs and similar personal experiences, these two men came together to formalize an interfaith method of using religion to facilitate peace. For these men, religion is pervasive; religion influenced their peacemaking through both paths: personal motivation and religious tactics.

Other peacemakers identify as religious, but adapt their approach and tactics to the people they serve. Religion motivates these peacemakers on a personal level, but they do not always use religious tactics. For example, Vaiba Kebeh Flomo has spent decades working with the victims of civil war in Liberia. In an interview with the Women PeaceMakers Program at the University of San Diego, she talked about how she approached the practice of trauma healing differently



with religious and non-religious women: “In my work I don’t identify a way for my client. What I do is to help them in the process, in identifying their own way to cope with their trauma” (Koenders, 2010).

For still other peacemakers, religious tactics can be seen as more of a means to an end. These peacemakers aren’t so much motivated by personal religious beliefs, but see in practical terms the good that religion can do to address community problems. These peacemakers would fall in the cell labeled instrumental religion. For instance, Mariamma Mathew, a peacemaker with United Religions Initiative, saw “interfaith bridge building” as particularly needed in India because there is a tendency to “manipulate religions for conflict.” She argued that through interfaith religious peace work people can “be educated so that they do not fall prey in the hands of politicians and seasoned manipulators” (United Religions Initiative, 2004).

Of course, the final cell in Table 1 contains those peacemakers who are neither motivated by religion nor use religious peacemaking tactics. These are peacemakers like Zeinab Blandia from the Nubu Mountains in Sudan, who spoke of being motivated by her grandmother and by her experiences as a child sharing food with other displaced persons (Freeman, 2009). Blandia’s peacemaking work connects women across conflicts through sharing meals and dialogue.

### **The Need for More and Better Data**

Information from interviews and case studies can shed light onto how religion is used in particular conflicts—the brief case studies in the previous section demonstrate the value of this method. But scholars, policymakers, and practitioners need to know more about the relationships between religion and peacemaking. Indeed, with so much religious conflict in the world, the need to study religious peacemaking is an urgent one. Advocates and NGOs have collected qualitative case study data about religious peacemakers (e.g., Little, 2007), but what more might we learn from asking many peacemakers, first-hand, about their experiences with religion? How might a sincere internal religious motivation influence their peace work? How do they see religion’s role in the conflicts they are working to help resolve? How does using religious peace tactics influence their hope for future success? In order to answer these questions, we need the right data.

One of the greatest deterrents to research on peacemakers is access to them. Peacemakers work all over the world, nearly always in dangerous situations. Identifying and reaching peacemakers working in sometimes remote conflict zones around the world is no easy task.

However, such data collection is increasingly possible because of advances in technology. Many peacemakers have access to the Internet and surveys distributed online can facilitate data collection, making it possible to collect information from remote peacemakers who were previously accessible mainly through resource-intensive travel. Distance has historically limited the number of peacemakers it is possible to study, leading many researchers, understandably, to use qualitative case study methods to research a single conflict or peacemaker at a time. The electronic survey method employed here makes it possible to trade off depth for breadth and to collect data from a much larger group of peacemakers.

### **Data Collection**

Survey data collection began on June 25, 2015. Peacemaking networks and organizations were asked to distribute the survey to the peacemakers that they work with and all recipients were asked to forward the survey link to peacemakers in their own networks. The complete list of both religious and non-religious peacemaking organizations contacted is available in the Appendix. Each organization and contact provided information on other peacemaking points of contact, thus broadening the survey's reach. Of course, this sampling method does not produce a random sample and the final sample is limited because so many of the respondents are white, Christian peacemakers.

This method is suited for studying a difficult-to-reach population of peacemakers for two reasons: first, it allows the survey request to be made by an organizational leader or personal contact, usually someone whom the peacemaker trusts, increasing the response rate. Second, a form of "snowball sampling"—the method of asking peacemakers to share the survey link with other peacemakers—makes it possible to reach many more respondents (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Goodman, 1961; Atkinson & Flint, 2001). One drawback of snowball sampling is that organizations and peacemakers tend to pass the survey on to those like them—both including and excluding—expanding the sample but further exacerbating the lack-of-diversity problem in the sample (Browne, 2005).

Despite these limitations, the sample does include many respondents who live in, and are part of, the communities in conflict. Survey questions about ethnicity, religious identification, country of origin, country of current residence, and the conflict the peacemaker is working to help resolve make it possible to parse the sometimes complicated relationships of peacemakers and the communities in which they work. The open-ended survey responses include a Muslim

working in Morocco bringing Muslim and Jewish children together to play, a Catholic sister working in South Sudan doing workshops with members of the priesthood and local media, and a Muslim working in Iraq bringing religious leaders from different sects together to sit down for peace.

By the end of 2016, 197 peacemakers from around the world had responded to the survey. I combined these data with a survey I conducted in 2008 of seven Tanenbaum Religious Peacemaker Award recipients for a total pooled sample of 204 respondents. The data presented below come from questions common to both surveys. Because the sampling procedure cast a wide net for recruiting respondents, the first question of the survey is a forced-choice question about which category most closely matches their role in peacemaking: peacemaker, academic, employee of a non-profit organization, or employee of a government organization. Only those who self-identify as a peacemaker were retained for analysis here, leaving a total  $n$  of 171. The survey is still open and is available in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic. The more peacemakers hear about the project, through their own networks and through scholarly research, the more the pool of respondents will grow.

As with many surveys, the data collected for this project contained some missing values. Multiple imputation, which generates more than one estimate for each missing value and is the best available technique for dealing with missing data (Horton & Lipsitz, 2001; Penn, 2007), was used to handle the missing data problem. Dropping all missing data cases would have left a much smaller dataset (the exact number depending on the model specifications), but multiple imputation allows for the retention of these cases and for greater confidence in the resulting estimates (King, Honaker, Joseph, & Scheve, 2001). I used the “ice” package, created by Patrick Royston (2005a, 2005b, 2009), in the Stata 11 data analysis software to generate 10 imputed datasets and conduct regression analyses. Stata 13 now provides an in-house *mi* command for multiple imputations.

### **Survey Questions**

Survey respondents were asked both forced-choice questions and open-ended questions, which were later coded for content. Some quotes from the open-ended responses are presented in the results section that follows; some of these quotes are attributed, if the respondent waived confidentiality after informed consent. Survey data is necessarily less detailed than qualitative case study data, and so connecting individual, often anonymous, survey data to a reduction in

violence in a particular conflict is very difficult. Thus, the survey focused instead on questions that measure peacemaker self-reports. In this regard, there are three main dependent variables of interest: commitment to peacemaking, perception of current success, and hope for future success.

*Commitment to Peacemaking:* Those who participate in peace work often suffer significant emotional and mental stress (Naifeh, 2007; Britt & Adler, 2003). Better understanding the circumstances under which peacemakers remain committed to their work, as opposed to burning out or becoming discouraged, can help peacemaking organizations allocate resources and training.

*Perceptions of Current Success:* Asking peacemakers how successful peacemaking efforts have been thus far in the conflict they are working to resolve provides an informed opinion on the efficacy of the peacemaking. Success is certainly a subjective measure, but using the same measure consistently across all peacemakers may reveal previously hidden insights.

*Expectations of Future Success:* Asking about how successful the respondent believes their peacemaking will be in the future makes it possible to identify the conditions under which peacemakers are likely to anticipate future success or, alternatively, lose hope. Because peacemaking is often a long-term endeavor, peacemakers may view future success differently than they view current success.

These three dependent variables—commitment, current success, and future success—may each be influenced by religion. Religion is operationalized through six different variables in the surveys and in the models that follow, in order to capture various measurements of religious motivation and religious peacemaking tactics. First, and serving as a religion control, is a question about religious affiliation (Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Other). As Christian is the largest response category, a binary control for Christian religious identification is included in the models that follow.

The second religious variable comes from the open-ended question: “what motivates you to participate in peacemaking?” Each open-ended response received a binary code to indicate whether the response included a reference to religion or not. The research team developed a list of religious words that would indicate religious content in the response. For instance, responses to the motivation question that mentioned God, faith, the divine, or a particular religious tradition, received a code for the presence of religious motivation. Specific examples from the responses are discussed in the following section.

Third, the survey contained several questions about religious beliefs specifically intended to measure providential religious beliefs, or the belief that God has a plan that people can help bring about (Glazier, 2013, 2017). Four providential questions (agreement with each of three statements: God has a plan for humanity, God has a plan for my life, and I have a role to play in God's plan; as well as question about how much guidance religion plays in the respondent's day-to-day life) make up a single measure of providentiality in the analyses that follow.

Fourth, the survey also asked if the respondent believes in clear guidelines about what is good and evil, or whether it depends on the circumstances at the time. Understanding a piece of the moral worldview of a respondent can shed light on other beliefs and behaviors (Shermer & McFarland, 2004). A Manichean (black/white) world view may impact the motivation to engage in peace work and/or the way a peacemaker views success (Juergensmeyer, 2017). When the world is clearly divided into good and evil, reconciliation may be more difficult. On the other hand, identifying who is good and who is evil may be an important part of identity reconstruction in the wake of conflict (Doja, 2000).

The survey also included a series of open-ended questions about peacemaking tactics and success ("what has been your greatest peacemaking success to date?"; "what is the most effective peacemaking technique you have used?"; and "why do you think that technique was so effective?"). Similar to the motivation question discussed previously, respondents who mention religion in response to any of these three open-ended questions receive a binary code for the presence of religious peacemaking tactics, the fifth religious variable in the models. Because these three questions are asking about the specific techniques and successes of peacemakers, the presence of religion in the responses indicates that they use religion in their peacemaking. For instance, one peacemaker mentioned a "collaboration between international and local religious leaders of Iraq" as the greatest success of his work and another wrote that "education from an Islamic perspective" was the most effective technique she had used in her peace work in Afghanistan.

Finally, a question of whether the respondents see religion as more of a source or a potential solution for the conflict (or both or neither) make up the final religious variable. In the analysis, this measure is an indicator of how useful the respondent thinks religion is for peacemaking. The variable is coded "0" for those who say religion is neither a source nor a

solution, “1” for those who say it is a source of the conflict only, “2” for those who say it is both a source and solution, and “3” for those who say it is a solution to the conflict only.

The models also include four control variables to account for gender (male=1), ethnicity (non-white=1), length in peacemaking (1=less than 1 year, 2=1-5 years, 3=6-10 years, 4=more than 10 years), and whether the peacemaker is local to the conflict (1=neither country of residence nor country of origin match the location of peacemaking, 2=country of residence and country of peacemaking match, but country of origin doesn’t match country of peacemaking, 3=country of origin and country of peacemaking match). Local peacemakers are likely to benefit from contextual knowledge of the conflict and the various parties’ grievances (Meredith III, 2009), better understanding the complexities of the conflict and the needs, demands, and injuries of conflict participants.

One final interaction term combining local peacemakers and those who use religious tactics is also included. Local religious peacemakers are often trusted by their communities, and thus have leverage that other leaders likely do not (Marsden, 2012a). This trust means that they might be able to get to the table—and get others to the table as well—when no one else can, making them potentially powerful grassroots actors who can “stand up effectively to ethnoreligious aggression” (Bock, 2001, p. 139). The interaction term captures when a peacemaker is both local and uses religious tactics. Descriptive statistics of all model variables are available in the Appendix in Table A1.

Because so little is known about the relationship between religion and peacemaking on an individual level, specific hypotheses are not presented here. Based on the preceding theoretical discussion, I expect that some—if not all—of the six religion variables will significantly impact the three peacemaking variables, but the exact nature of that influence is a question for the exploratory research findings that follow.

## **Findings**

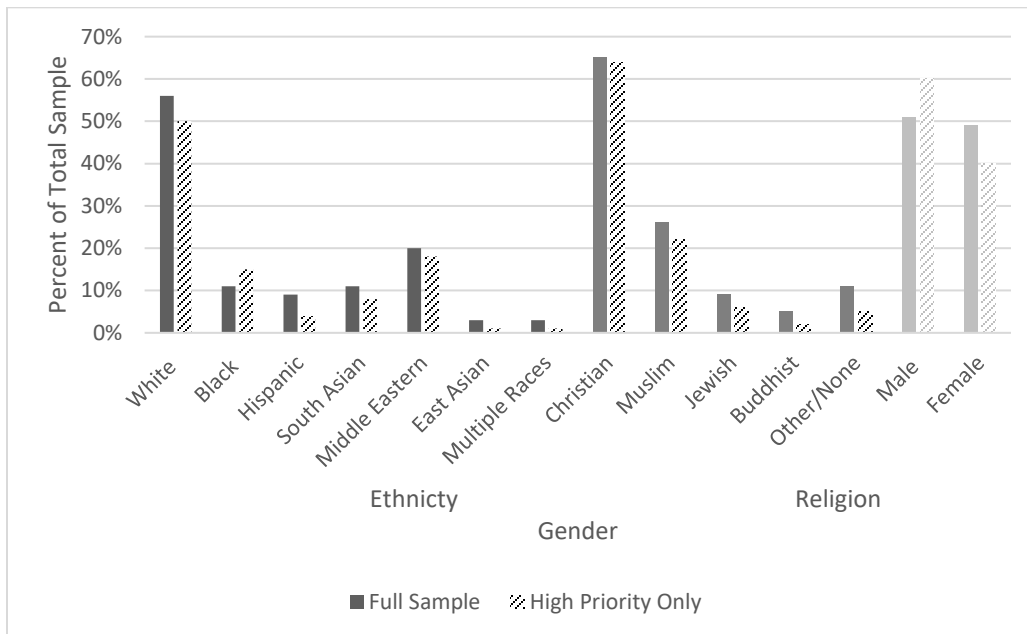
### **Descriptive Statistics**

A total of 171 self-identified peacemakers completed the survey. The demographic profile of these peacemakers is displayed graphically in Figure 1. Of these peacemakers, 51 percent are male and 49 percent are female. The average age of a surveyed peacemaker is 51 and the average time in the peacemaking field is between 6 and 10 years, indicating that peacemaking may be a second career for many of our respondents. In terms of religion, 65

percent of the sample is Christian, 17 percent are Muslim, 6 percent are Jewish, 3 percent are Buddhist, and 7.5 percent identify as “other” or not religious. In terms of race, 50 percent of the sample is white/Caucasian, 12 percent are black/African, 7 percent are Hispanic, 7 percent are South Asian, 12.5 percent are Middle Eastern, and 5 percent or less are East Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or identify as multiple races.

As there is no authoritative database of peacemakers, we don’t know the extent to which this sample is or is not representative. What we do know is that the majority of the sample is Christian, and that half identify as white/Caucasian. Both of these variables are controlled for in the statistical analysis that follows, which reveals some ways that ethnic and religious identity impact peacemaking. Certainly, having more participants from non-Christian faiths and a more diverse set of ethnicities would likely have yielded different responses. Given the limited sample and the large number of white and Christian respondents, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Differences exist across religious and ethnic lines, as the control variables in the statistical analysis indicate.

*Figure 1. Demographics of the Full Sample of Peacemakers and the High-priority Peacemakers Only.*



The respondents engage in peacemaking in diverse ways; the survey includes an open-ended question about the nature of the respondent's peacemaking work, which ranges from more abstract efforts like fighting racism to more concrete efforts like facilitating negotiations for a specific conflict. Some peacemakers describe their work as consistently on the ground in conflict areas, whereas others travel to conflict zones periodically, and still others provide support from afar. Based on these three categories, peacemakers were coded in terms of priority for the research questions here. In the analysis that follows, only peacemakers who were coded either one or two for priority—that is, lived in the conflict zone or traveled there periodically—are included.

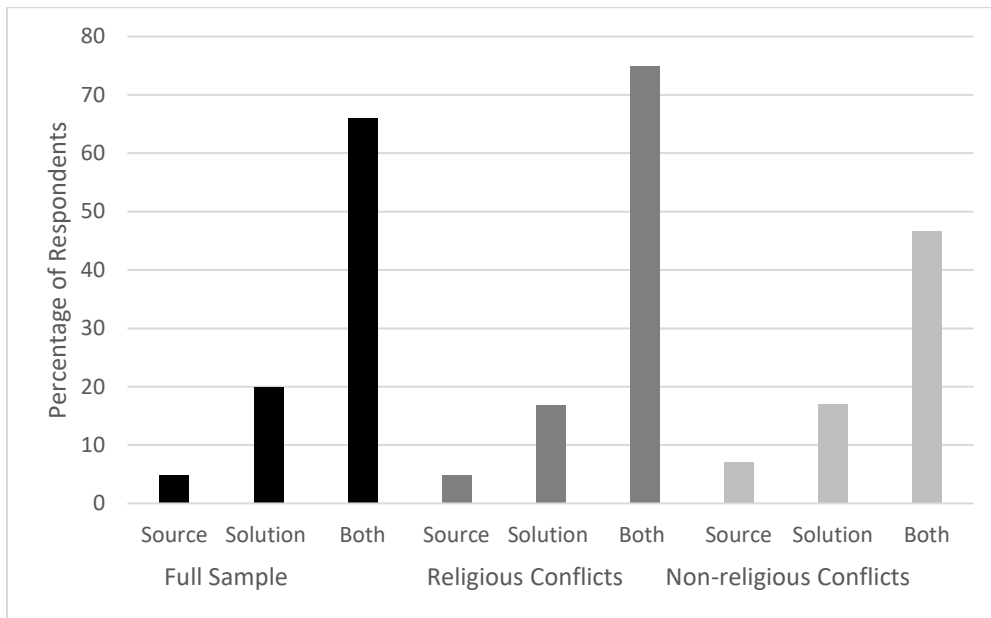
These high-priority peacemakers make up about 63 percent of the total sample ( $n=100$ ) and are the primary group analyzed here. Men are significantly more likely to be high-priority peacemakers, making up 60 percent of the high-priority sample. High-priority peacemakers are about the same age and experience as the full sample, but the high-priority sample is slightly, but not significantly, more diverse in terms of both race and religion, as displayed in Figure 1. The sample for analysis is thus down to 100 peacemakers. Of those, 50 percent are white and 60 percent are Christian, presenting a significant limitation of the data. However, with 100 data points to examine, regression analysis is possible and both race and religious tradition are included as control variables. This makes it possible to identify whether and in what ways white peacemakers differ from non-white peacemakers and Christian peacemakers differ from non-Christian peacemakers.

When it comes to religion, 46 percent of high-priority peacemaker respondents report that religion is very important to the conflict that they are working to help resolve. Of these peacemakers who are working on conflicts with a strong and visible religious component—individuals who could be understandably dismissive of religion—only about 5 percent report seeing religion as only a source of the conflict. Instead, about 17 percent view religion as only a potential solution to the conflict and fully 75 percent of peacemakers in religious conflicts view religion as *both* a source and a solution. Comparisons across those working in religious conflicts (as measured by the self-report that religion is very important to the conflict), those working in non-religious conflicts (as measured by the self-report that religion is not at all important to the conflict), and the full sample are presented in Figure 2. Importantly, even some peacemakers



who say religion is not part of the conflicts they are working on see religion as a solution; about 47 percent provide that response.

*Figure 2. High-Priority Peacemakers’ Views of Religion’s Role in the Conflict they are Working to Help Resolve.*



How common are religious peacemaking tactics and motivations among this sample? Recall that the use of religious peacemaking tactics is a binary code derived from open-ended responses to three questions about peacemaking success and effectiveness. About 35 percent of the high-priority peacemakers mentioned something about religion in discussing their peacemaking successes. For instance, a peacemaker working in Sri Lanka wrote about targeting religious leaders because they are powerful shapers of social attitudes. Another peacemaker working in Afghanistan wrote about partnering with a gender-sensitive Imam to engage with gender issues in conflict from an Islamic perspective. The presence of religious modifiers (e.g., “religious leaders”), religious nouns (e.g., “Imam”), and other religious language trigger the religious peacemaking tactics code.

On the other hand, 28 percent mentioned something about religion when discussing their motivation to participate in peacemaking. Recall that this binary variable is coded positive for the presence of religious motivation when religious language is used in response to the question

“what motivates you to engage in peacemaking?” For instance, one peacemaker responded, “My faith and love for God, self, and neighbor.” Another wrote, “This is who God calls us to be in our life on earth. This is what life is all about.” Words like faith and God indicate the presence of religious motivation. Interestingly, Muslims and Christians were the only religious traditions to volunteer religion as a motivation for peacemaking.

The fact that 34 percent of the peacemakers mentioned religion in terms of peacemaking success while 28 percent mentioned religion as a personal motivation indicates that religious motivation and religious peacemaking tactics are not always found in the same peacemaker. In fact, the two variables are not correlated at all (-0.05). Similarly, those peacemakers who reported seeing religion as only a solution to the conflict are not any more or less likely to be motivated by religion than those who reported seeing religion as only a source of the conflict. These findings providing initial support for the idea that there are at least two distinct ways in which religion influences individual peacemaking—through personal motivation and through the use of religious peacemaking tactics—and these two means of influence are not always present simultaneously.

### **Regression Models**

Regression models shed further light on the potentially complex relationships across these variables. In the models presented in Table 2, there are three dependent variables of interest: commitment to continuing peacemaking work, a self-assessment of the current success of one’s peacemaking efforts, and a self-assessment of the likelihood of future success.

The model in the first column of Table 2 is of peacemaker commitment. Generally speaking, the peacemakers expressed a very high level of commitment to their peace work (the average commitment score was 9.21 out of 10). What role, if any, does religion play in peacemaker commitment? In terms of religious variables, Christians, providential believers, and those who use religious peacemaking tactics are all less likely to be committed. Locals who use religious peacemaking tactics, however, are more likely to be committed, as are those who are motivated by religion, those who see religion as helpful for resolving the conflict, and those who see morality as clearly good and evil.

Table 2

*OLS Regression Model of Peacemaker Commitment, Current Success, and Future Success*

	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Current Success</b>	<b>Future Success</b>
Independent Variables			
Commitment	-	0.178 (0.038)**	-0.133 (0.036)**
Current Success	0.250 (0.054)**	-	0.756 (0.024)**
Future Success	-0.221 (0.059)**	0.894 (0.029)**	-
Christian	-0.853 (0.124)**	0.451 (0.107)**	-0.459 (0.098)**
Religious Motive	0.988 (0.122)**	-0.063 (0.110)	0.205 (0.101)*
Providential	-0.026 (0.013)*	-0.027 (0.010)*	0.022 (0.010)*
Clear Good and Evil	0.321 (0.115)**	-0.342 (0.096)**	0.481 (0.087)**
Uses Religious Tactics	-2.29 (0.515)**	1.582 (0.438)**	-2.756 (0.387)*
Religion Helpful	0.015 (0.053)	-0.299 (0.043)**	0.268 (0.039)**
Local*Religious Tactics	0.564 (0.188)**	-0.645 (0.157)**	1.024 (0.139)**
Male	-0.417 (0.103)**	0.076 (0.088)	0.152 (0.081)
Non-white	0.721 (0.140)**	-0.883 (0.115)**	1.066 (0.100)**
Length in Peacemaking	0.133 (0.067)*	0.110 (0.057)*	-0.028 (0.052)**
Local	-0.091 (0.086)	0.062 (0.073)	0.111 (0.067)**
Constant	9.646 (0.436)**	-0.825 (0.530)	2.602 (0.473)**
N	464	464	464
Adjusted r <sup>2</sup>	0.328	0.708	0.767

*Note:* Standard errors are in parentheses

\*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

The large number of religion variables make it possible to parse religion's influence on commitment. Religion as a personal motivator seems particularly important when it comes to commitment—it is the second strongest predictor in the model. The strongest predictor of commitment to peacemaking is the negative influence of using religious tactics. This finding indicates that those who use religious tactics are less committed. However, the positive direction and significance of the interaction term, which measures insider status plus use of religious tactics, indicates that only outsiders using religion are less committed.

In terms of non-religious variables that influence peacemaker commitment, current evaluations of success have a significant positive effect, whereas future expectations of success have a significant negative effect. This last finding is a bit puzzling. Perhaps peacemakers who expect a resolution to the conflict are less committed because they do not believe their specific contributions are needed, but the data aren't detailed enough for a firm conclusion. Men are less likely to be committed, but non-white peacemakers are more likely to be committed, as are those who have more peacemaking experience.

What about when peacemakers are asked to rate how successful their efforts are? The second model in Table 2 reveals the results of a regression that takes the internal evaluation of success as its dependent variable. As far as non-religious independent variables go, both commitment to peacemaking work and belief in future success contribute to more positive evaluations of current success. Men, white respondents, and those who have been doing peace work longer are also more likely to believe they are successful.

In terms of religious variables, Christians are more likely to believe they are successful, as are those who use religious tactics. The interaction term between local and using religious tactics, however, is actually negative, indicating that locals who use religion in peacemaking are less likely to believe they are having success presently. In fact, many of the remaining religion variables have a negative effect on evaluations of current success. Providential believers, those who see the world in good vs. evil, those who believe religion is helpful to resolving the conflict on which they are working are all less likely to believe they are having success now.

Do the same factors that predict a peacemaker's evaluation of their current success predict their evaluation of future success? Despina Namwembe, a peacemaker working in Uganda, writes of religion providing hope for future resolution: "I have encountered quite a

number of genuine reconciliation moments that have endured over time; I have also seen would-be religious adversaries deciding to work together for the good of their communities.” The third model in Table 2 displays the results of the mode that takes future success as its dependent variable.

Just as belief in future success predicted a peacemaker’s current evaluation of success, current success is also a significant and positive contributor to future success (the two are correlated at .65). Commitment and length in peacemaking are both negative predictors of future success—ironically, those who are more committed and have more experience are less likely to believe they will have success in the future. Perhaps peacemakers are unique in their ability to persist in working on intractable conflicts even when hope is in short supply. Those who are local to the conflict and non-white respondents are both more likely to believe in future success.

Some of the most interesting results come in a close look at the religion variables in Table 2. It is particularly noted that the sign of every religion variable flipped between the model of current success and the model of future success. Christians and those who use religion tactics are less likely to believe in future success, whereas locals who use religious tactics, those who are motivated by religion, providential believers, those who believe in clear good and evil, and those who see religion as helpful to resolving the conflict—all have greater hope for future success.

This finding clearly indicates that religion influences peacemakers’ evaluations of current success and future success very differently. Perhaps because those who believe they are helping to bring about God’s will often take a long view of their efforts. Religious people may have longer time-horizons. Research on the political implications of different religious socio-tropic time horizons, foremost the nearness of Biblically-foretold “end times,” indicates that religious people (particularly Christians) are more likely to hold such beliefs and to behave differently than those who don’t (Barker & Bearce, 2013).

The long-term commitment of local religious organizations may also contribute to religion’s positive effect on future success. As Alimamy Koroma, a peacemaker in Sierra Leone, puts it:

The United Nations and other organizations disappoint people: they do not deliver. But religious leaders, churches, and mosques did not flee in Sierra Leone during the war.

They remained behind to inspire us that all was not lost. And today we still work with people to say that all is not lost.

Indeed, it appears that the local element Koroma implies is very important to religious peacemaking. Locals who use religious peacemaking tools are significantly more likely to be committed to the work and to believe in future success. The different directions of influence between the variable for using religious tactics and the interaction term for locals using religious tactics indicates that religious peacemaking might best be done by those native to the conflict area. Although those local peacemakers who use religious tactics are not more likely to believe they are successful now, they are more likely to believe in future peace—perhaps because of a hope that religious reconciliation is a viable long-term strategy for peace.

### **Conclusion**

There is still much to learn about the complex relationship between religion and peacemaking. The results presented here indicate that religion influences peacemaking in at least two ways: through motivating religious believers to engage in peacemaking and through providing peacemaking tactics that individuals can use to facilitate peace. The results suggest that the four categories presented in Table 1 all exist in the population of surveyed peacemakers. Some peacemakers are motivated by religion and some peacemakers use religion in their work, but these two things do not always occur together.

Indeed, the regression models provide a unique statistical look at how religion influences peacemaking through these two mechanisms. Those who are motivated by religion to engage in peacemaking are more likely to be committed and more likely to expect future success. The use of religious peacemaking tactics is more complex, resulting in different effects when utilized by locals. Locals who use religion in their peacemaking are more likely to believe that their efforts will be successful in the future and are more likely to be committed to peacemaking now. These findings can help peacemaking organizations identify the best peacemakers for a given conflict situation and train them in the most appropriate way.

The findings also indicate that there is a major difference in how religion influences peacemaker evaluations of current vs. future success. As Table 2 reveals, the sign on each of the six religious variables and the interaction term measuring local use of religious peacemaking tactics flips between the models of current success and future success. It is possible that religious

humility is playing a role here, with those peacemakers who are motivated by religion and seeking to do God's will less willing to claim credit for current success while still hopeful for future, perhaps divinely-provided, peacemaking success. More research is needed to better understand this relationship.

Although these data and results are preliminary, drawn from a limited sample, and reflect the particular experiences of the sampled peacemakers, the findings can inform policymakers, practitioners, and academics. Religious conflicts continue to grow around the globe and religious peacemaking is an approach that increasing numbers of organizations and governments are turning to in order to confront the violence head-on. From the Religion and Peacemaking program at the United States Institute for Peace, to NGOs like the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, more organizations are recognizing the potential value of religious peace work. One somewhat surprising result to emerge from the survey data is that peacemakers believe religion can be helpful in resolving conflicts even if the crux of the dispute is not centered on religion. Asking peacemakers about religion reveals that they believe religion has powerful peacemaking potential.

No conflict is solely about religion, but religion is undoubtedly important in many conflicts around the world. Better understanding religion and the roles it may play in peacemaking can inform many peacemaking efforts (Harpviken & Røislien, 2008). Although there may not be one "universally reliable formula for translating religious conviction and ethos into functional parts of a peacemaking process" (Appleby, 2001, p. 835), religion may still have a regular role to play in peacemaking (Goldberg & Blancke, 2011). If so, individual religious peacemakers working on the ground may just be the key to bringing it there.

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## Appendix

### List A1. Peacemaking Organizations Contacted for Survey Distribution

Alliance for Peacebuilding Berghof Foundation Buddhist Peace Fellowship Center on Dispute Resolution Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University Christian Peacemaker Teams Community of Sant' Egidio Fellowship of Reconciliation Friends Peace Teams Interfaith Mediation Centre Interfaith Peace Builders Jewish Peace Fellowship Local Capacities for Peace International Mediation Support Program Mediators Beyond Borders	Mennonite Central Committee Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers Nonviolent Peace Force Notre Dame Kroc Institute People's Empowerment Foundation Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Religions for Peace Salam Institute Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation Tanenbaum Foundation United Religions Initiative University of San Diego Women PeaceMakers Project US Institute for Peace
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**Table A1. Model Variable Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i><b>Dependent Variables</b></i>				
Commitment	9.21	1.44	0	10
Current Success	6.31	1.88	0	10
Future Success	7.25	1.82	0	10
<i><b>Control Variables</b></i>				
Male	0.60	0.488	0	1
Non-white	0.53	0.49	0	1
Local	2.37	0.84	1	3
Length in Peacemaking	3.13	0.96	1	4
<i><b>Religion Variables</b></i>				
Christian	0.59	0.49	0	1
Religious Motivation	0.28	0.45	0	1
Providential	14.32	4.51	4	20
Clear Good and Evil	0.35	0.47	0	1
Uses Religious Tactics	0.34	0.47	0	1
Religion is a Solution	2.17	1.08	0	4
Local*Religious Tactics	0.98	1.32	0	3