
Faith-based forms of violent conflict prevention: turning conventional wisdom on its head?

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Faith-based responses to conflict

- Faith-based peacebuilding underexplored
 1. Select on the dependent variable (study peace through conflict)
 2. A largely secular academy
- Faith-based conflict prevention even less explored
- Newer and more niche
- Virtually no academic literature

Conflict prevention

- From generic aspiration to global social norm and field of practice.
- In essence, preventing tomorrow's violence today.
- Operational and structural.

But persistence of warning-response gap. Why? Ineffective response.

1. Ideological association with liberal peace (constraining)
2. Overreliance on ICTs (technology eclipses human engineering)

Ultimately, fails to influence political decision-making.

Identifying conflict prevention: two issues

1. Term is overused (interchangeable with peacebuilding)...
 2. ...and underused (particularly by faith-based actors and those working on long-term structural forms of prevention)
- So, consider prevention activities that are preventative *in effect*, rather than *by design*.

Methodology

Two projects:

1. Faith-based conflict prevention and early warning scoping project
2. From early warning to response in preventing violence:
transforming conflict through citizen engagement

Case studies:

- Nigeria (Jos and Kaduna), Solomon Islands, Zanzibar.
- Insights from Uganda, S. Africa, Pakistan, DRC, Kenya, S. Sudan.

Preventative activities in Nigeria

Operational:

- local tensions monitoring/analysis
- election violence mapping
- early response services (mediation)
- counting costs of conflict with villages

Structural:

- Interfaith work with youth, faith leaders, women and prisoners
- Youth livelihoods programmes (farming and crafts)
- Basic services



Prevention activities in Solomon Islands



a new BEGINNING for Solomons
GUN Free

Operational:

- Negotiation with rebel groups
- Sleeping on front lines
- Safe passage and sanctuary
- Security for supplies

Structural:

- Collecting weapons (supported by UN)
- Reconciliation work
- Truth and reconciliation commission
- Basic services

Prevention activities in Zanzibar

Operational:

- Joint committee of religious leaders

Structural:

- Interfaith work with youth
- Sensitisation workshops
- Development of peacebuilding tools

Indicators of potential violence

- Political turmoil (chieftain dispute, elections)
 - Illicit activity (lorries on the road at night)
 - Violence in neighbouring areas
 - Unexpected strangers
 - Rumours by SMS
 - Motorcycle drivers (drive-by attacks) and ban (protests)
 - Hausas relocating/moving cattle
 - Leaflets in the market
 - Christians evangelising during Eid
- Longer term:
- Migration (against custom)
 - Ethnic segregation
 - Unaddressed grievances
 - Rapid cultural change/Westernisation

CP underpinnings in the liberal peace

- Assumes liberalisation, human rights and democracy advance peace
- Exposed to critiques of liberal peace theory (Eurocentrism, Empire, technocentrism, narrow view of violence, imposition of 'peace').
- Critics stress the 'everyday' and 'local turn'. CP, horizontal approaches.
- Already literature on liberal peace within faith-based peace studies.
- My evidence demonstrates constraints of liberal peace (lack of trust in or respect for international orgs and processes; violence as human security threats).

Overreliance on ICTs

- ICT4CP has has high-profile successes (Ushahidi, Una Hakika).
- Functions: data collection, communication, networking, mobilisation.
- Where violence arises from lack of these, tools to improve can them can theoretically help prevent violence (Martin-Shields, 2013).
- But criticism of supply-driven technical fixes/unfamiliar technology.
- Pushing technological solutions onto political problems.
- Trust is crucial to decision-making in disasters (Steelman et al, 2015).
- Where trust is low, ICTs may not be able to bridge gap.
- Evidence from case studies supports this: thoughtful use of technology.

Conclusions...

- Expanding our view of CP can add value.
 - Consider prevention in effect, not by design.
 - Include initiatives that don't self-describe as CP, exclude some that do.
- Alternative forms of CP (such as faith-based) provide a valuable counter-point. Help us think through warning-response gap.
 - Questions liberal peace logic of CP. Faith-based approaches are useful to think through 'local turn' in CP and everyday peace indicators.
 - Demonstrate importance of relationship and trust building, occasional hubris of technology-heavy approaches, and role of ICTs in peace formation.
 - Offer ways to avoid reproduction of CP failures.