The Role of Religion in International Conflicts and their Mediation – Finnish Peace Mediators’ Conceptions
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**Kimmo Kiljunen** is Special Representative for Mediation of the Foreign Minister of Finland. His activities aim at enhancing Finland’s contribution to international peace-mediation and conflict prevention. Mr. Kiljunen is an expert on international politics and development and has been Member of Finland’s Parliament from 1995 to 2011. He has thirty years of experience in Finnish and European politics, international organizations (UN, OSCE, World Bank) and Academia. He has published several books on political science, development economics and current affairs both in Finland and internationally.

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**Mahdi Abdile** works as a Peace Adviser in Finn Church Aid and as a researcher at the University of Helsinki and London. During his career he has contributed to several peace projects, especially aiming at strengthening the conflict resolution capacities of religious and traditional leaders in the Horn of Africa and working with development projects in countries like Somalia, Sudan and Sierra Leone. In 2009 he was awarded an annual peace prize by the Finnish Christian Peace Movement (Suomen Kristillinen Rauhanliike). Mr. Abdile is originally from Somalia.

**Meeri-Maria Jaarva** works as Head of Black Sea and Central Asia in Crisis Management Initiative. Her tasks include managing the Black Sea and Central Asia portfolio of projects of CMI and participating in the overall strategic leadership of the organization. Ms. Jaarva joined CMI in 2000 and has held different positions in the organization, including Project Manager and Adviser in the Aceh peace negotiations, Adviser to the Personal Envoy of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for Central Asia, and Director of the Conflict Resolution Programme, among others. Ms Jaarva is currently serving as a member of the Steering Committees of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and the Civil Society Conflict Prevention Network (KATU).

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**Pekka Haavisto** is a Finnish Member of the Parliament and serves as a Special Representative of the Foreign Minister of Finland in African crises, specializing in Sudan and Somalia. He has vast experience in peace mediation and conflict resolution. Among other things, Mr. Haavisto has been a UN advisor in various peace processes and has led the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for the post-conflict environmental assessments and projects in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Middle East, Liberia and Sudan. In 2005-2007 Mr. Haavisto was acting as the European Union’s Special Representative for Sudan and had a role as the EU’s special representative in the Darfur peace talks. Recently he has been engaged in the Somali peace process.
DEFINITION OF TERMS

This study deals with highly complex and controversial concepts such as conflict, religion and mediation. Since all of them can be defined in endless ways, it is important to briefly present how they are understood in this thesis.

Conflict. The term conflict may be defined in various ways, for example, by intensity (low or high) or death toll. Distinctions can also be made between disputes and conflicts. However, in this research the term conflict is loosely defined and refers to international conflict, which includes both inter and intrastate conflicts (Bercovitch & Jacson 2009, 4).

Peace Mediation. While mediation can be practiced to settle all kinds of conflicts ranging from disputes between families to conflicts between and within states, in this research I will focus on mediation as a means of conflict resolution and therefore refer to it as peace mediation. Peace mediation, as defined here, is understood as a form on voluntary and impartial third-party involvement done by individuals, states or organizations and practiced on both formal and informal ways, at all levels of the society and at various conflict stages from conflict prevention to reconciliation. The concept shall be further discussed in chapter 3.

Peacebuilding/Peace processes. These terms are used interchangeably in this research as umbrella terms encompassing the various methods of conflict resolution.

Religion. The approach to religion in this study does not rely on a specific definition of the concept. The focus is not on what religion is but on what it does and how it affects and influences human behavior and society as a whole. The focus is therefore on “lived religion”, meaning on religion as it is experienced in everyday life, where texts and traditions are transformed and blend with politics, history, personal identity and other concrete realities of daily life. This view enables to encompass religion in all its forms, complexities and inconsistencies. (McGuire 2008; Appleby 2000, 56; Appleby 2003, 240.)

Religious Actors. Various religious leaders (e.g. priests, imams, rabbis, the Pope), religious institutions and movements and faith-based organizations are in this research referred to as religious actors. The term is commonly used in publications and literature concerning religious peacebuilding (see e.g. Appleby 2000, 9; Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 176.)
1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on how Finnish peace mediation experts perceive the role of religion in contemporary international conflicts and their resolution. The focus is on peace mediation, which is today one of the most widely used methods of third-party intervention in the attempt to resolve international conflicts. The topic is timely for at least three important reasons: 1) Finland wants to strengthen its role as a global actor in peace mediation, 2) most of the world’s conflicts today include religious dimensions, 3) exploring new ways of cooperation in a continuously more populated and interconnected world is important for peaceful coexistence.

In 2010 Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb stated that Finland aims to become a great power in peace mediation (“rauhanvälityksen suurvalta”). This desire was backed up with two main arguments: one related to reinforcing Finland’s foreign policy profile, and the other to increasing Finland’s input in the resolution of international conflicts based on experiences in e.g. peacekeeping and development cooperation. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2010.) Since former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari received a Nobel peace prize in 2008 as a recognition for his decades long conflict resolution efforts, Finland has taken steps to strengthen its role in international peace mediation. As an example of this, in 2011, Finland together with Turkey, contributed to the drawing of the first United Nations resolution on mediation. However, despite many initiatives and advancements, Finland is currently still in the process of developing its mediation strategy and defining its role in peace mediation.

An increasing number of conflict resolution experts argue that peace mediation cannot be effective if it doesn’t take into account the underlying conditions that cause conflicts. Today, these conditions are often intertwined with religious and cultural factors. Scott Appleby (2000, 17) claims that approximately two-thirds of contemporary wars are related to issues of religious, ethnic, or national identity. Attempts to resolve these conflicts require new approaches and actors. Moreover, better concepts, theories and assumptions to interpret the impact of culture and religion on international affairs are needed (Scott 2005, 11-12). Sociology of Religion, as a discipline focused on studying the
various roles that religion plays in society and politics, has good prerequisites for this.

The importance of research is emphasized as one of the necessities for strengthening and developing Finnish capacities in peace mediation (see e.g. Action Plan for Mediation 2011, 22; Kerkkänen 2012). I believe that a linkage between academic research and practice-oriented studies would contribute to enhancing Finnish mediation capacities. Kerkkänen (2012, 120) argues that the first task for a research consortium would be a needs and means assessment of the Finnish national mediation capacity development. Even though this thesis is not a needs and means evaluation, it functions as an exploratory study regarding the topic at hand. The results can serve as a basis for further studies and contribute to the discussion regarding where and how Finland should focus its peace mediation efforts in the future.

Empirical evidence has shown that sustainable peace can only be achieved by cooperation between official and unofficial actors (such as non-governmental and regional organizations), through addressing the root causes of conflicts and by engaging in long-term peacebuilding. Therefore also peace mediation has become a field where more flexible methods and diverse actors are needed. Consequently, different approaches such as multi-track diplomacy, comprehensive crisis management initiatives and peace mediation aim to address the political, social and economic problems underlying many present day conflicts. Moreover, since many conflicts include religious dimensions, the inclusion of different religious actors in peace mediation has become a topic worthy of serious consideration. Several prominent scholars of conflict resolution (e.g. Appleby 2000; Bercovitch & Jackson 2009; Johnston 2003; Gopin 2000) argue that in order to achieve peace, culturally sensitive peacebuilding mechanisms are urgently needed.

Finland has also started to emphasize a comprehensive approach to peace mediation. For example, Finland is paying special attention to the inclusion of women in mediation and wants to strengthen local peace initiatives by taking on the role of a facilitator between various stakeholders. Yet, despite the comprehensive approach there has not been much public talk or research about the inclusion of religious leaders in peace processes. A notable exception is Finn Church Aid (FCA), one of the biggest non-governmental
organizations in Finland that within one of its strategic themes “Right to Peace”, places special emphasis on supporting religious and traditional leaders in conflict prevention and peace mediation. Through the organization’s work in Somalia and elsewhere, FCA has brought attention to the role of religious leaders in peace mediation both in Finland and at the United Nations (Muurinen 2013).

My personal motivation to research this topic stems from my study background and interest in sociology of religion, intercultural communication and international relations. In fall 2012, I had the opportunity to complete an internship at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The experience enabled me to observe the inner workings of this organization, established for maintaining international peace and security. During my stay, I was able to observe Security Council sessions and attend meetings related to peace mediation, such as the recent launch of the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation in September 2012. These experiences increased my curiosity towards further studying conflict and peace as well as increasing my understanding of this highly complex, challenging but ever so vital field. Moreover, the bureaucratic and often limited working mechanisms and possibilities of the United Nations made me realize the importance of combining its efforts with various NGOs and local grass roots peace initiatives.

The primary data of this research consists of nine semi-structured interviews conducted among prominent Finnish actors from the field of conflict resolution and peace mediation. As the interviewees’ expertise ranges from high-level peace mediation to facilitating national dialogue projects, they all view peace mediation through slightly different lenses. This heterogeneity contributes to my aim, which is to bring out different conceptions that exist around the following research questions:

1) How do Finnish peace mediators and peace mediation experts perceive religion’s role in contemporary international conflicts and in peace mediation? What kind of role do religious actors have in a peace (mediation) process? How should they be addressed and why/why not?
2) How do Finnish peace mediators and peace mediation experts see Finland’s overall role in international peace mediation? What kind of peace mediation endeavours is Finland seeking and how do the participants define mediation?

I will start with mapping the research field and providing a short overview of previous studies. Since the topic at hand is new, there are only studies that touch upon some aspects of it. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the contexts and background and serves as a basis for understanding the historical and socio-political developments that have led to the current need to (re)consider the role of religion in conflict resolution and international relations. Chapter 3 presents the concepts of conflict resolution and peace mediation, which I have chosen as the theoretical framework guiding and aiding the thereafter following analysis of the interviews. The first part of my analysis is presented in chapter 5, where I discuss Finland’s role in peace mediation and conflict resolution. In the second part of my analysis, which is covered in chapter 6, I focus on religion’s role in both conflict and peace. Finally, the last part is dedicated to general discussion on the findings and suggestions for further research.

1.2 Previous Research

The present study is multidisciplinary, leaning to previous research and theories from the fields of Conflict Resolution, International Relations as well as the Sociology of Religion – all of them also per se interdisciplinary. These disciplines may be placed under the umbrella term of social sciences. Alasuutari (1995, 25) argues that various social sciences disciplines are typically formed around a problematic, a phenomenon thought to be worthy of serious consideration. I share his view, further arguing that their overreaching task is to make sense of what is going on, and ultimately find new ways of seeing and doing things. In a way, this is also the humble aim of my study. Next, I will briefly present the above-mentioned disciplines, simultaneously familiarizing the reader with relevant previous research.

Conflict resolution refers to both an academic field of study as well as concrete methods used to resolve and manage conflicts. As a distinct academic field Conflict Resolution
started to emerge in the 1950s – when confrontation between the superpowers threatened the very existence of human kind – and is now a broad and fast growing discipline. Broadly speaking it is about ideas, theories and methods that can improve our understanding of conflict and how to best resolve or manage them. Therefore it is only natural that theory and practice are closely tied to each other. Being one of the most interdisciplinary fields in the academic world, conflict resolution builds on theories and research from the study of political and social sciences, history, law, psychology, philosophy, the study of religions etc. The discipline was developed in North America, from there it first expanded to Europe and then to the rest of the world. (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009, 1-3; Bercovitch et al. 2009, 1-3.) In Finland, Conflict Resolution is still a relatively new field of study and until recently mainly undertaken by the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI)\(^1\). In 2011, the first Master’s Programme in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research was launched by Åbo Akademi University and the University of Tampere. This reflects Finland’s overall desire to become a more significant actor in the attempt of resolving international conflicts.

For the purpose of this research, I have studied various conflict resolution theories and handbooks. I have found articles and books by Jacob Bercovitch especially useful. Jacob Bercovitch has been for more than 25 years one of the leading scholars in Conflict Resolution and his theoretical and empirical works are regarded as seminal in the study of mediation. When it comes to Finland’s peace mediation capacities, a recently published book called “Global Networks of Mediation: Prospects and Avenues for Finland as a Peacemaker” (2012), has given me valuable insights about Finland’s mediation history and future goals. One of the main implications of the book is that Finland should embrace a comprehensive approach to mediation, emphasizing the utilization of mediation as a method throughout the conflict cycle, including conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Despite being an independent discipline, Conflict Resolution can also be regarded as a specialized field within the study of International Relations (Scott 2005, 179). Scott (2005) argues that the main paradigms that have influenced the study of international relations

\(^1\) Research related to conflict resolution and peace processes is also conducted by the Crisis Management Initiative, Crisis Management Center Finland and the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.
are theories (such as realism, liberalism and neorealism) related to positivism and materialism. Those theories have long marginalized or neglected the role of culture and religion in international affairs. Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009, 177) state that one reason for the belated interest in religion is that religious issues involved in conflicts could not be addressed from an empirical or positivist perspective as conflict resolution scholars viewed religion either as an instigator of conflict or ignored it altogether. Nevertheless, the proliferation of ethno-religious conflicts in the aftermath of the cold war has made research and analysis on the relationship between religions and conflict resolution inevitable (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 177). Especially after 9/11, scholars have come to pay increasing attention to the ways in which theories and practices of conflict resolution must be adapted to different cultural milieus (Funk & Woolner 2011, 360). A book such as “The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations” by Scott Thomas (2005) is one among many, indicating that religion is slowly taking its place also in International Relations. With this in mind, one of the tasks in of this research is to examine whether Finnish experts working in the field of international relations perceive religion as worthy of serious consideration when engaging in conflict resolution.

Indeed, the revival of religiously motivated violent conflicts as well as the increasing involvement of different religious actors in resolving these, have resulted in a notable amount of literature emphasizing the importance of understanding the ambivalent power of religion towards war and peace (e.g. Appleby 2000, Gopin 2000, Johnston & Sampson 1994, Kadayifci-Orellana 2009) Broadly speaking these books discuss the possibilities of religious peacebuilding – conflict resolution done by religiously motivated actors. In the recent decades, religious peacebuilding, also referred to as faith-based diplomacy, has become a new and vital, even though challenged and contested, sub-field in the realm of peace and conflict studies (Funk & Woolner 2011, 349).

In Finland, academic research regarding the role of religion in peacebuilding is new, which is why very little publications exist on the issue. Therefore I have been inspired by the work of Katri Kyllönen, from the realm of Sociology of Religion, who was among the first to bring attention to the topic with her master’s and doctoral theses. Her doctoral thesis (2012) “The Role of Religion in the Mediation of Immigrants’ Conflicts. Mediators’,
Immigrants’, and the Church’s Immigrant Workers’ Perspective”, focuses on religion’s role in the resolution of immigrant’s conflicts in Finland. The findings show that also in Finland religion and religious actors have significance in conflict mediation if religion plays a central role in the parties’ social lives and in the definition of their identities. The same is proven to be true in the mediation of international conflicts (see e.g. Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). I claim that Sociology of Religion can play an important part in further identifying religion’s contribution to both peace and conflict. Namely, the discipline is interested in researching the prevailing interdependence between various societal structures and religion and in analyzing how society influences religion and vice versa (Pentikäinen 1986).

This thesis presents a new angle of studying religions contribution to conflict resolution in the fields of Sociology of Religion and Conflict Resolution. In contrary to the above-mentioned previous studies, this research does not consider a specific conflict case nor peacebuilding or mediation effort conducted by religious actors. Instead, I turn the focus to Finland, where these kinds of questions are rather new in the academic world. I will examin Finnish mediators’ conceptions and experiences on the issue of involving religious actors in peace mediation. Until now, mostly Finn Church Aid, a faith-based organization with experience in cooperating with religious and traditional leaders, has brought attention to this topic in Finland. However, the thesis at hand is the first research tackling the question from the point of view of larger spectrum of conflict resolution experts, not only faith-based actors. Therefore this thesis can best be described as an exploratory study. The results may serve as a basis for further research and discussion.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This chapter provides an overview of the broader context of my thesis. On one hand, my purpose is to introduce some of the historical and socio-political issues that have contributed to the increasing attention given to peace mediation in Finland. On the other hand, the aim is to provide some background to the question of why and how religious
traditions play a part in both conflict and peace. I will start by discussing the evolution of Finnish peace mediation and introduce how Finnish actors are currently involved in it. Thereafter I turn the focus to a more global scale and shortly present how the nature of conflicts has changed, especially during the last few decades. The shift in the nature of conflicts is one of the main reasons why new approaches to conflict resolution are needed. The last two chapters concentrate more specifically on the role of religion in conflict resolution as well as discuss the phenomena of secularization and revival of religious belief. Both phenomena are simultaneously occurring around the world and thus creating contestation and tension over religion’s role in politics, society and the international relations in general.

2.1 Finnish Peace Mediation: From Necessity to Building International Reputation?

According to Finland’s Action Plan for Mediation (2011), Finland aims to take a more active and innovative role in international peace operations, strengthen national mediation expertise as well as further develop international peace mediation and civilian crisis management structures together with other actors such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Why is it so and what has lead to this? To understand Finland’s current stands and efforts in peace mediation and conflict resolution it is necessary to take a look at some of the main historical developments.

Finland’s geopolitical position between East and West has significantly shaped the country’s foreign policy as well as mediation efforts. During the cold war Finland constructed an identity of neutrality, acting as a mediator and bridge builder between the two conflicting ideologies. (Calistri 2010; Piipparien & Aaltola 2012.) Since Finland joined the UN in 1955, its work related to peace has been closely linked to the mission, values and aims of the organization. Through the UN Finland was able to build on its neutrality by supporting various peacekeeping operations\(^2\) and actively contributing to different

\(^2\) During the period of 1956-1997 Finland belonged to the group of most active participants in peacekeeping operations all over the world sending troops to Lebanon, Iran, Yugoslavia, and the Middle East, just to name a few (Calistri 2010, 80).
activities like disarmament and the promotion of human rights. In cases of political confrontations Finland rarely took sides because it regarded the UN as a place for negotiations and reconciliation, not for imposing moral judgments on others. At the time, President Urho Kekkonen aptly described Finland’s role in international relations as being a “physician rather than judge”. This explains why Finland abstained from, for example, condemning human rights violations by the Soviet Union or the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War. (Calistri 2010, 81-82.)

Throughout the cold war skilful political leaders such as Urho Kekkonen and Mauno Koivisto successfully maintained a delicate balance between the conflicting superpowers as well as Finland’s own interests: the desire to be part of Western culture and economy and the need to preserve good political and commercial relations with the Eastern neighbor (Calistri 2010, 3). Piipparinen and Aaltola (2012, 93) argue that the geopolitical position created both a “push” and “pull” factor for Finnish mediation efforts. The dichotomized world order needed neutral mediators in conflicts that involved the competing interests of the two blocks. At the same time, Finland was actively promoting its neutral position by enthusiastically participating in the UN activities and hosting two important international events where the conflicting superpowers could come together, namely: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT), both in the 1970s. Such mediation and bridge-building efforts were a necessity for Finland. In other words, a peace-promoting foreign policy emerged from the concern of Finland’s own national security, independence and territorial integrity. (Piipparinen & Aaltola 2012, 93-94.)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union a new international scenario emerged. Traditional power politics and great ideologies were replaced with a more multipolar world and the notion of the nation state became less important in the rapidly globalizing world. Consequently, it also led to a decrease in the international demand for the unique mediation capacities offered by neutral countries like Finland (Piipparinen & Aaltola 2012, 95). Piipparinen and Aaltola (2012, 94) argue that thus “the meaning of mediation became more strategic than existential for Finland”. It was more linked to national interests in branding Finnish expertise and reinforcing Finland’s international role. In fact, some of Finland’s current peace mediation activities draw on suggestions made in the
Country Brand Delegations final report ‘Mission for Finland’ published in 2010. Among other things the report states that: “The task assigned to the Country Brand Delegation was to determine Finland’s target image. The target image of Finland is to be a country which solves problems” (Country Brand Report 2010, 27).

The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari in 2008 paved the way for Finland to make more systematic attempts to again engage actively in international peace mediation. One could argue that without President Ahtisaari’s work and Nobel Prize, mediation might not be in the forefront of Finnish foreign policy in the way that it is now. For example, shortly after the event, in 2010, the Foreign Ministry of Finland published “Peace Mediation – Finland’s Guidelines”, an initiative that launched the discussion of Finland’s new peace mediation opportunities. At the time, Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb stated that Finland aims to become a great power in peace mediation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2010). In 2011 an Action Plan on Mediation as well as a national peace mediation coordination group were established and the Foreign Ministry appointed a special representative to peace mediation. However, despite all the recent efforts Finland is still in the process of defining it’s role or niche in peace mediation. This will be further discussed in chapter 5.

2.2 Who Mediates in Finland?

Finland’s mediation initiatives currently reflect its wider priorities in multilateral diplomacy and UN policy (Piipparinen & Aaltola 2012, 92). The priorities that Finland has recently pursued in its mediation initiatives in the UN, the EU and elsewhere include gender, rule of law, the participation of civil society and comprehensive crisis management3 (Piipparinen 2012, 87). In fact, peace mediation is perceived to strengthen Finland’s input in comprehensive crisis management and prevention of conflicts. But on a practical level, who actually mediates in Finland?

3 The term comprehensive crisis management usually implies the pursuit of integrating the political, security, development, rule of law, human rights and humanitarian dimensions of international civilian and military crisis management missions into a comprehensive approach. Finland participates in crisis management e.g. under the auspices of the UN, EU, NATO or some other international organisation. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Finland’s Comprehensive Crisis Management Strategy 2009, 6.)
On the level of individuals, Finland has a number of internationally recognized diplomats who have worked in high-level peace mediation assignments. Currently, some of the most prominent mediators include MP Pekka Haavisto (currently the Foreign Minister’s Special Representative to African crisis areas), Ambassador Antti Turunen (UN representative for Georgia), and Nobel Peace Laureate President Martti Ahtisaari.

Besides certain individuals who usually work under the mandate of a bigger international organization, such as the United Nations, various Finnish NGOs also participate in peace mediation related activities through development aid or different capacity building projects. The most prominent Finnish NGOs involved in peace mediation are the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), founded by President Ahtisaari in 2000, and the Finn Church Aid (FCA) established in 1947. Both organizations operate mostly in the realm of unofficial mediation and emphasize cooperation with local partners.

CMI is a Finnish independent non-profit organization and one of the internationally recognized NGOs engaged in mediation. CMI contributes to conflict resolution through mediation, facilitating confidence-building dialogue processes and strengthening local capacities to implement peace. The organization is probably most known for mediating the Aceh peace process in 2004-2005 between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), seeking independence for the Aceh region, and the Indonesian government. Under the leadership of President Ahtisaari the peace talks resulted in the signing of a peace agreement in August 2005. Currently the organization works in countries like Yemen, South Sudan and Afghanistan. (CMI webpage.)

FCA is the largest non-governmental organization in Finland working in development cooperation and second largest in humanitarian assistance. In the realm of peacebuilding, FCA focuses on supporting local communities in preventing and resolving conflicts. The organization has been particularly active in Somalia, where it has supported local traditional and religious leaders in peace mediation. (FCA webpage.) FCA’s Executive Director, Antti Pentikäinen, has significantly contributed to the fact that the inclusion of religious actors in mediation processes has received more attention both in Finland as well as in the United Nations (Muurinen 2013). Most recently, in January 2013, FCA, together with the UN and other actors, co-organized a two-day conference held in
Helsinki called “Strengthening the Role of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers”.⁴ During the event FCA was been appointed to the role of secretariat for the developing phase of a worldwide religious leaders’ peace mediation network (FCA webpage).

Finally, it is important to note that Finland very seldom acts as a neutral state mediator. As described, the country focuses mostly on track II mediation (unofficial mediation) as well as on supporting various mediation or related activities through funding, development assistance and civilian and military crisis management personnel. Therefore, when talking about Finland’s role in international peace mediation throughout this thesis, I refer to the country as a whole as well as to various Finnish actors engaged in peace mediation.

2.3 The Changing Nature of International Conflicts

As mentioned, the end of the cold war marked the end of a bipolar world order and resulted in a major transformation of the international arena. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 inspired hope for a more just, interconnected and democratic world (Bercovitch & Jacson 2009, 1-3). The optimism culminated in Francis Fukuyama’s (1989) thesis about the “end of history”. The famous political scientist argued that “What we may be witnessing in not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (Fukuyama 1989). Even though the aftermath of the cold war did open up new possibilities for international cooperation on security policies etc., the hopes for a more peaceful world were soon downplayed with the emerging of bloody intrastate conflicts and other forms of organized group violence, including terrorism and conflicts between different communal identities (Sheehan 2011).

⁴ The event was organized together with the UN Mediation Support Unit, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Religions for peace (Report of the Meeting on Strengthening the Role of Religious andTraditional Peacemakers 2013).
The cold war had forced many conflicts already inherited from the era of decolonization to remain latent. The United States and the Soviet Union had both supported corrupt and authoritarian governments in order to maintain their influence in countries they regarded as strategically important. In the aftermath of the cold war, many countries drifted into chaos with various identity groups battling for political power and control over resources. (Bercovitch & Jacson 2009, 4-5.) Since the 1990s the nature of warfare has undergone a major shift from interstate to intrastate conflicts. These conflicts have increasingly replaced what we understand as “traditional” armed conflicts – wars between opposed states, related to power, territory or other tangible goals, fought by soldiers and regulated by declarations of wars and signings of peace agreements (Sheehan 2011). Today’s conflicts are ambiguous and decentralized in their nature and ignore boundaries between state and non-state actors. Therefore they are often referred to as “new wars”, “postmodern wars” or “post-Westphalian wars” (Bercovitch & Jackson 2009; Sheehan 2011).

Many of the intrastate conflicts pose a major threat to international peace and security as they often become internationalized due to various spillover effects like refugee flows and the influence of diaspora communities. Moreover, various outside actors often have their own interests, be it security, economic or moral to get involved and shape the development of a certain conflict (Beardsley 2011, 3). The current civil war in Syria serves as an example. These developments have led to the inclusion of both inter and intra state conflicts within the definition of international conflict (Bercovitch and Jackson, 3-4).

Many scholars (e.g. Kadayifci-Oreallna 2009, Appleby 2000, Kaldor 1999) argue that the majority of conflicts today are so-called identity conflicts, where the parties define themselves along ethno-religious lines. One of the central characteristics of these conflicts is the use of ethnic or religious beliefs, myths, symbols and images to justify violence and dehumanize the opponent (Kadayifci-Oreallna 2009, 281). Pessimists may argue that we are thus witnessing what Samuel Huntington (1996) called the “clash of civilizations”. According to Huntington’s thesis, the primary axis of conflict after the cold war would be along cultural and religious lines, especially between the Muslim and Christian worlds.
However, reality is far more complex than that. Gopin (2000, 6) argues that there are many unmet human needs that are active elements in causing seemingly religious conflicts, including basic issues of material resources, issues of psychological trauma, issues of humiliation, shame and issues of empowerment. Moreover, the legacy of colonialism along with the powerful political and social changes and pressures caused by globalization in the recent decades are major factors behind many seemingly intractable conflicts. Poverty, deepening social inequalities, weak or corrupt governance and the proliferation of warring parties are common root-causes in several conflicts. (Bercovitch & Jackson 2009.)

Contemporary conflict constellations are obviously far too complex and indeterminate to be described as simply “clash of civilizations”, yet contestations over cultural differences are indeed part of our current conflict equation (Funk 2007). Conflicts related to ethnic, religious or cultural identities are often the most intractable sources of conflict and hence areas with which conventional conflict resolution is least suited to deal (Johnston 2003, 3; Bercovitch & Jackson 2009, 5). Therefore resolving these complex and asymmetric conflicts requires new approaches. Third party interventions, like peace mediation, should be adapted to meet these new demands.

2.4 Secularization vs. the Revival of Religion

The secularization theory predicted that modernity and “progress” would naturally result in the decline, marginalization and privatization of religion in society. Social thinkers of the nineteenth century like Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber believed that religion would steadily withdraw from the realms of politics and international affairs. In reality, the opposite is increasingly true. (Sakaranaho & Pesonen 2002, 8; Appleby 2000, 3-4; Rubin 1994, 33.) Since the 1980s the secularization theory has come under serious attack due to inconsistencies and incoherencies within the theory itself as well as evidence of religious revivalism (sometimes referred to as religious resurgence) all over

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the world. Religious institutions increasingly assume prominent public roles and religion and politics keep forming symbiotic relations despite the fact that the vast majority of states are officially secular. Developments of phenomena such as “The New Christian Right”, “political Islam”, “Jewish Fundamentalism” or “Hindu nationalism” serve as good examples. (Appleby 2000, 4.)

Nonetheless, it should be bared in mind that secularization, understood as the separation of state and religion and the privatization of religion, in the so-called Western world is a result of a unique historical development started in Western Europe by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, further inspired by the ideas of Enlightenment and accelerated by the French Revolution. It is important to remember that the rest of the world hasn’t followed the same historical path (Rubin 1994, 21). The states of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia emerged to deal with modernity and industrialization in a way different from the West (Rubin 1994, 22). While modernity has of course affected in some ways the entire globe, in several developing countries nationalism as well as a strict separation between the sacred and secular are largely foreign concepts, whereas religion, clan or ethnicity are the primary ties to ideology and loyalty in the histories of their peoples (Rubin 1994, 22; Johnston & Cox 2003, 11). Moreover, weak state apparatus make the religious structures some of the strongest institutions with greatest presence and influence among people in many countries (Rubin 1994,24). This is one of the reasons why an increasing number of conflict resolution scholars stress the importance of including religious leaders or institutions in peacebuilding efforts (e.g. Appleby 2000, Gopin 2000; Johnston 1996; Kadayifci-Orellana 2009).

Norris and Inglehart (2004, 26) predict that the expanding gap between the sacred and the secular societies around the globe will further raise the role of religion on the international agenda. Following the same idea, Rubin (1994, 23) claims that the whole modernization process has made religion’s public role stronger and more necessary rather than causing it to weaken or disappear. Along the same lines, other scholars predict that the perceived threat to traditional values posed by economic globalization

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6 Forms of religious resurgence or revitalization include, among other things, increased intensity of commitment, increased salience of religious identity, the rise of puritanical extremes and a return to political engagement of religion. (Bouma 2007, 188-189.)
and technological changes is likely to increase religion’s role in society and even be the driving force behind religious violence. (Johnston 1994, 4; Gopin 2000, 224.) Either way, the globally observable revival of religious beliefs and thinking is challenging our interpretations of the modern world – what it means to be modern – and this has implications for our understanding of how culture and religion influence international relations as well as issues of peace and conflict (Scott 2005).

This study departs from the supposition that, regardless of people and nations being more religious today than in the past, religion is a socio-political force that constantly affects local and international events, in one way or another. Secularization and religious revivalism are not two opposite and separate trends, but rather simultaneous, somehow interdependent and mutually reinforcing, creating a challenging context for international relations and their conflict resolution attempts, peace mediation being one of them.

2.5 Religion, Peace and Conflict

One has to only think about the conflict between Israel and Palestine, India and Pakistan or the conflict within Nigeria between Muslim and Christian groups, to realize that most of the violent conflicts in the world following the cold war have indeed had a religious dimension. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, many of these conflicts are related to the distribution of resources, social position and ultimately the right to exist. Moreover, it is important to note that many of the conflicts involving religion are fought within religious groups (e.g. Shi’a and Sunni Muslims) (Bouma 2009, 190-193.) Naturally, each situation is unique which is why generalizations should be made with caution.

Religion’s role in both conflict and peace is best described as paradoxical. Religions are capable of uniting and dividing, fostering peace and fueling conflict. Appleby (2000) calls this aptly as the “ambivalence of the sacred”. However, in the media and popular talk, religion is mainly associated with violence and terrorism, especially after the incident of 9/11. Yet, the positive contributions of religious traditions to conflict resolutions processes are not a new phenomenon. In fact, faith-based actors such as the Pope, priests, imams and rabbis; religiously motivated movements and organizations (e.g. Moral
Re-Armament, World Council of Churches, etc.); and religiously inspired charismatic leaders like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. or the Dalai Lama, have long played a role in resolving conflicts and fostering peace (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 176).

A conflict resolution effort by religious leaders or religiously motivated organizations is commonly referred to as religious peacebuilding or faith-based diplomacy.² Simply put, it refers to peacebuilding that is conducted by religiously motivated actors such as, for example, religious leaders (e.g. priests, imams, rabbis), institutions or faith-based NGOs. Forms of religious peacebuilding may include interfaith dialogue, mediation efforts by religious leaders or faith-based NGOs (e.g. Sant Egidio, the Mennonite Central Committee), conflict resolution workshops or the establishment of truth commissions etc. The methods of conflict resolution are often similar to the methods used by secular actors, but what is different is the use of religious and spiritual resources and values. For example, in post-conflict situations religious leaders can cherish attitudes towards forgiveness and reconciliation based on religious values. (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009; Johnston 2003; Appleby 2000.)

In many conflict-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan or Iraq religious leaders have a prominent role and are greatly respected in their societies (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 187). As moral and spiritual guides of their communities, religious leaders have the authority to interpret religious texts and invoke their religious imagery and symbolism. Therefore religious leaders are in the key position to promote the ideas and attitudes, which either inspire towards violence or peace. In fact, influencing the moral-political atmosphere is one of the most significant aspects that religious leaders can shape. (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009.)

Conflicts are always inherently complex and caused by multiple factors related to their unique historical context, the distribution of power, access to resources and unmet human needs. Therefore no conflicts are exclusively religious or nonreligious. (Gopin 2002, 108.) Nonetheless, the impact of religious thinking and behavior in conflicts is often

² Appleby (2000, 211-212) defines religious peacebuilding as “various phases, levels, and types of activity, by religious actors and others, that strengthen religion’s role in creating tolerant and nonviolent societies”. Johnston (2003, 15) in turn, defines faith-based diplomacy as “a form of Track II Diplomacy that integrates the dynamics of religious faith with the conduct of international peacemaking”.

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overlooked or misunderstood, since religion tends to “hide” in culture and society in ways that make it hard to indentify (Appleby 2000, 55). Rubin (1994, 33) argues that totally neglecting the religious influence renders some of the key issues and crises of today’s world as incomprehensible. Gopin (2000, 35) further claims that “Methods of peacemaking that continue to focus only on political and intellectual elites or that fail to address the broadest possible range of religious believers are leading to systematic and potentially catastrophic diplomatic failures in key areas of the world, such as the Middle East”. Consequently, several scholars claim that religious leaders should be included in peace processes and suggest that religious peacebuilding could be carried out simultaneously with official high-level peace mediation and other secular peacebuilding initiatives (Funk & Woolner 2011, 358).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I have chosen the concepts of conflict resolution and peace mediation to form the theoretical frameworks of my thesis. These concepts can be seen as points of views through which the research observations are interpreted (Alasuutari 1995, 40). It is common in qualitative research that a certain theory is simultaneously a goal and a tool. As a tool theory guides the research, whereas the aim of the research is to further develop the theories. However, qualitative research often benefits more from theoretical concepts than from specific theories themselves – this being the case at least in this study. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 81-83.)

3.1 Conflict Resolution: From Conflict Management to Conflict Transformation

Earlier in this thesis I introduced the concept of conflict resolution as an academic field. In this section I will discuss its practical aspect. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009, 1) define conflict resolution as a “a range of formal or informal activities undertaken by parties to a conflict, or outsiders, designed to limit or reduce the level of violence in conflict, and to
achieve some understanding on the key issues in the conflict, a political agreement, or a jointly acceptable decision on future interactions and distribution of resources.” In line with this definition, conflict resolution can be viewed as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of methods and procedures including e.g. arbitration, adjudication, negotiation, peace mediation, and peacekeeping. Nevertheless, there is no consensus among researchers about the exact meaning or implication of the term and over the years different schools of thought have evolved, reflecting ultimately their varying approaches towards conflict and peace.

The most salient, commonly used (and confused) schools of thought are conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation (Paffenholz 2009, 3). Even though these terms are often used interchangeably, they actually refer to different approaches that reflect the changes in the historical and socio-political context of the international system. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009, 2) argue that the change in the nature of conflicts (from interstate to intrastate) has necessitated a paradigm shift from conflict management to conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Next, I shall briefly discuss the different underpinnings of these concepts.

Simply put, conflict management, which is the oldest approach, refers to ending wars through various official diplomatic initiatives. The focus is on short-term solutions with the aim to contain, that is, to “manage” conflicts, without necessarily resolving them. (Paffenholz 2009.) The mechanisms associated with this approach are derived from the traditions, norms, and culture of Western diplomacy, which has its roots in the Treaty of Westphalia8. The so-called Westphalian system, prevalent until the end of the cold war, was based on the idea of supreme sovereignty of nation-states, non-interference in domestic affairs and maintaining the status quo in the international arena. Consequently, the approaches to conflict resolution were characterized by formality, conventional norms of state behavior, short-term goals, and absence of concerns with deep-rooted

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8 The Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648 and ended the thirty years’ war in Europe. The major European countries at the time (the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, France, Sweden and the Dutch Republic) agreed to respect the principle of territorial integrity and the absence of a role for external agents in domestic structures. Scholars of international relations have identified the modern, Western originated, international system of states, multinational corporations, and organizations, as having begun at the Peace of Westphalia. (The free dictionary by Farlex 2013.)
issues in conflicts. Due to the principles of self-rule and territorial integrity, the UN or other actors did seldom, if at all, intervene in internal conflicts. (Bercovitch & Jackson 2009, 6-9.)

The approach to conflict resolution has changed radically after the 1990s. Some scholars argue that after the cold war the international system has moved to a post-Westphalian era “where human security, identity, poverty, and representation issues are included within hegemonic discourses in international relations and conflict studies” (Bercovitch & Jackson 2009, 14). The proliferation of internal wars based on identity issues rather than territorial disputes has rendered the traditional approaches of conflict management largely ineffective. Scholars and policy makers realized that sustainable peace could only be achieved through addressing deep structural issues related to the root-causes of conflicts.

As opposed to conflict management, conflict resolution usually employs an analytical problem-solving approach and furthermore stresses the need to combine both official and unofficial conflict resolution methods together (Paffenholz 2009). While it already embraces a deeper approach than conflict management, the notion of conflict transformation goes beyond the resolution of particular problems and seeks to address what is happening in human relationships at a deeper level. This approach takes a positive orientation toward conflict, envisioning it as a potentially constructive force enabling society’s on-going evolution and development (Lederach 2003) According to Paffenholz (2009, 5) the largest contribution of the conflict transformation school is its shift in focus from international to local actors. The latter puts even more emphasis on civil society and ordinary people than the resolution school.

Without going deeper into analyzing the different approaches, this short overview aimed to demonstrate how conflict resolution is constantly evolving and needs to adapt itself to the rapidly changing socio-political realities. Moreover, despite this depiction as a historical evolution, all approaches are being used, and superficial short-term solutions are still the norm rather than the exception. Of course rapid solutions are needed and important since in case of intensive deadly conflict, the first aim is to halt the violence and killing. However, as argued by many prominent scholars, short-term goals, such as
the signing of a ceasefire agreement, should be combined with long-term peacebuilding efforts in order to achieve lasting peace.

3.2 Peace Mediation

Peace mediation is one of the most widely used tools of conflict resolution processes in international relations (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 176; Beardsley 2011, 3). It refers to a consensual and nonbinding involvement of a third party in a conflict situation where the involved actors have reached a deadlock in their direct negotiations (Beardsley 2011, 3). The United Nations, who has traditionally played a central role in global peace mediation, defines mediation as a “process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements” (UN Guidance for Effective Mediation 2012, 12). Needless to say, numerous other definitions exist.

Peace mediation is derived from the tradition of diplomacy and, as a form of conflict resolution, has its roots in the state-centric Westphalian system (Bercovitch & Jacson 2009, 8). Therefore, traditionally mediation has been stylized and formal and undertaken between official actors with a high-ranked individual acting as a third party. Especially during the cold war, mediation efforts concentrated on short-term settlements and were therefore unable to address deep-rooted issues in conflict. However, the recent changes in the nature of conflicts have required the creation of new, more comprehensive and long-term methods also in peace mediation. Recently also Finland has started to emphasize comprehensive peace mediation, which refers to mediation as a process (not only a short-term solution) practiced at all stages of a conflict (from prevention to reconciliation) and at all levels of society and emphasizing the inclusion of every level of society in the peace process (Kerkkänen 2012; Brand-Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2002).

Since mediation is predominantly a Western approach to conflict resolution it has been criticized for a tendency to be culturally rooted in a secular neo-Protestant context that affects the way conflict is understood and what tools are assumed to work. (Gopin 2000, 77; Brand-Jacobsen and Jacobsen 2002, 15) For example, mediation literature has been
slow in analyzing the significance of cultural differences as well as the contributions that religious and faith-based actors have made and can make in ending violent conflicts (Bercovitch & Kadayifici-Orellana 2009, 177). Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the influence of cultural and religious factors related to the resolution of conflicts has started to gain increasing attention since the end of the cold war. As an example of this, the recent UN Secretary General’s report on mediation published in 2012 recognizes the role of religious leaders as potential peace advocates.⁹

Although peace mediation is receiving a lot of attention and merit, it involves many problems and high risks too, as mediation may sometimes have negative consequences for the peace process. In his book “The Mediation Dilemma” Kyle Beardsley (2011) highlights the long-term limitations of mediation by arguing that mediation is often a superficial approach providing mostly short-term solutions. He states that in the long run, the involvement of a mediator can introduce artificial incentives for peace that do not persist since intermediaries are prone to push for what is the easiest solution and to promote incomplete and watered down peace terms that put off the most difficult choices to the future. (Beardsley 2011: 3-7.) In fact, between one-quarter and one-third of peace agreements ending civil wars collapse within five years (Piipparinen 2012, 90).

Moreover, while the overall aim of mediation and mediators is a peaceful transformation of a conflict and humanitarian interest do play a role, the motivations of engaging in mediation are not only altruistic. When mediators enter a conflict, they usually bring with them to the mediation process their own interests and agenda (Bercovitch and Kadayifici-Orellana 2009, 181; Beardsley 2011, 24). Motivating factors may include the desire to extend and enhance own status, prestige of being involved in the process, or the protection and promotion of own political interests. Naturally, also the parties in conflict have different reasons for wanting a mediator to enter the situation. Such reasons, besides the settlement of the conflict, may include the desire to bring international attention to the issue or to use the peace process as simply a stalling tactic (Beardsley

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⁹ The report states that: “Religious leaders and faith-based organizations play an important mediating role in many conflict situations. These leaders have unique connections to local communities and frequently enjoy the trust of the conflicting parties. Yet, these actors are often not fully acknowledged, and their potential contribution remains underutilized. (UN General Assembly, Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution – Report of the Secretary-General 2012, 16.)
The bottom line is that, in one way or another, all involved parties have their own reasons for accepting, initiating or wanting mediation (Bercovitch & Jackson 2012, 38-42). For example, in the case of Finland mediation is strongly perceived to reinforce the country’s foreign policy profile (Peace mediation – Finland’s guidelines 2010).

Without further analyzing the various risks and problems, it is worth noting that more and more scholars and mediators stress that mediation should be carried out carefully and with patience. Many experts point out that mediation should be used as a tool in all stages of a conflict starting from preventive actions to post-conflict situations (Beardsley 2011; Kerkkänen 2012; Brand-Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2002, Liesinen 2012). On a general level, the concept of peace mediation has thus undergone a similar change or evolution as the concept of conflict resolution, moving from a mono-dimensional, narrowly defined concept towards a more comprehensively and inclusively understood endeavor. Experience shows that only when all stakeholders are involved in a peace process can the risk of relapse to conflict be diminished and all the actors be ready and willing to comply with the provisions of the peace agreement (Piipparinen 2012, 90). Chapter 5 shall further discuss the concept and scope of peace mediation, looking at it based on conceptions and experiences of the research participants.

### 3.3 Actors Involved in Mediation

Mediation is practiced by a wide variety of different actors. The traditional image of international mediation is often that of a high-ranking official (e.g. Lakhdar Brahimi, UN mediator in the Syria conflict) or a state (e.g. the United States in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) mediating between the official representatives of the conflicting parties. Yet today, as the vast majority of conflicts are internal and involve fragmented parties, there is a clear need to practice peace mediation by multiple actors and through both formal and informal channels, commonly referred to as track I and track II mediation or multitrack mediation/diplomacy. (Bercovitch & Jackson 2012.) Besides official track I mediation by states or regional organizations, various NGOs and private diplomacy
actors\(^\text{10}\) are engaged in unofficial track II mediation. All of these actors have different advantages and shortcomings, which is why cooperation and coordination among them is important.

John Paul Lederach’s (see Maiese 2003) simple pyramid model serves as a theoretical tool for illustrating the various levels of society where mediators operate. Even though Lederach designed the model to describe various peacebuilding tasks at each level, I will use it here to illustrate the possible mediator roles and their influence. The aim is also to show how the affected population is represented at each of the three levels, namely 1) the top-elite, 2) middle-range and 3) grassroots. In reality, different mediation strategies and the various people involved in, or around, it are never this clear cut.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Actors</th>
<th>Approaches to Building Peace</th>
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</table>
| **Level 1: Top Leadership** | Focus on high-level negotiations
| Military/political/religious leaders with high visibility | Emphasizes cease-fire
| | Led by highly visible, single mediator |
| **Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership** | Problem-solving workshops
| Leaders respected in sectors | Training in conflict resolution
| Ethnic/religious leaders | Peace commissions
| Academics/intellectuals | Insider-partial teams
| Humanitarian leaders (NGOs) | |
| **Level 3: Grassroots Leadership** | Local peace commissions
| Local leaders | Grassroots training
| Leaders of indigenous NGOs | Prejudice reduction
| Community developers | Psychosocial work
| Local health officials | in postwar trauma
| Refugee camp leaders | |


\(^{10}\) For example, Crisis Management Initiative in Finland is a private diplomacy actor. Usually their role is limited to certain phases, levels or segments of the peace process (Piipparinen & Brummer 2012, 11-12).
The top-level elite leadership comprises the key political and military leadership in the conflict. These leaders are the primary representatives of the conflicting parties and therefore highly visible. Formal track I mediation by states, high-level representatives or other official actors, takes place at this level. Because of the official status, actions and reactions by these mediators can be limited and often locked into certain positions. The primary aim is usually to reach a ceasefire or peace agreement. (Maiese 2003.)

Unofficial track II mediation is practiced among grassroots and midlevel actors including leaders of NGOs, government organizations, religious sectors and civil society. Local middle-range leaders are far more numerous than top-level leaders and they serve as an important connection between the top elite and grassroots levels. They have lower visibility and are free from the political and bureaucratic constraints, which is why they tend to have more freedom, creativity and flexibility in a mediation situation. Unofficial mediators working at this level are often perceived with less suspicion than formal diplomats and therefore it may be easier for them to gain access to the warring parties. (Wigell 2012, 16-17; Maiese 2003.)

As can be observed from the pyramid, the top-level elite leadership represents the fewest people, whereas the grassroots level involves the largest number of people, who also best represent the population at large. The grassroots level includes those involved in local communities, such as members of indigenous NGOs or local religious groupings. Because of their long-term presence on the ground in conflict zones these people have deep understanding of the underlying relationships between parties and can often better comprehend the root causes of the conflict. In addition they have a wide network of contacts. Precisely because of the unofficial setting, mediators working together with local leaders at the mid and grassroots levels can provide a safe and non-judgmental environment in which members of the conflicting parties can engage in private discussions and explore ideas for conflict resolution in a non-binding and flexible way. (Wigell 2012, 17; Maiese 2003.)

The inverse relationships of the pyramid (top-level leaders have more power but less influence, whereas people at the grassroots have better contacts and flexibility but less power), poses difficulties for the design and implementation of peace processes.
Therefore, different conflict resolution and mediation approaches must be adopted at each level of the hierarchy and then integrated into a comprehensive framework. Together, all three levels and their associated approaches form a comprehensive framework for mediation and conflict resolution. (Maiese 2003.)

As the diversity and proliferation of various actors involved in mediation increases, new kinds of problems arise. Mediation, besides regarded as good politics, has become fashionable and therefore the field is currently quite crowded and competitive. Some actors may try to get involved only to pursue their own interest without deep expertise and commitment. Also Finland can be criticized for marketing the idea of becoming a “great power” in peace mediation. It raises the question of whether the motives behind the urge are only related to increasing the country’s relevance in the international arena. Moreover, problems arise if various actors fail to communicate between each other since it might lead to suspicion and overlapping projects. Without coordination and somebody taking the lead role, there is a danger that the different mediators will pass both responsibility and blame on each other when things go wrong (Wigell 2012, 20). Through better coordination, the complementary nature of the different tracks of mediation can be realized. Wigell (2012, 21-22) argues that small states like Norway, Switzerland and Finland, which have a good international reputation, resources and wide networks, could well take on a coordinating role. (Wigell 2012, 16-22; Piipparinen & Brummer 2012, 12-13.)

4. RESEARCH METHOD

This thesis employs a qualitative research method. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative research aims at understanding, explaining and shedding light on a certain context-specific phenomenon (Golafshani 2003, 600). As the name points out, the focus is on quality instead of quantity, indicating that with careful analysis even a small amount of data can provide in-depth knowledge of a certain phenomenon (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 18). I chose to use a qualitative method since it is especially apt to exploratory studies
Furthermore, since the issue of religion and peace mediation is complex and delicate, a qualitative approach enables to explore the topic in more depth and detail.

4.1 Data Collection – Semi-structured Interviews

The primary data of this research consists of 9 semi-structured interviews conducted in Helsinki during February and March 2013. In order to complement the interviews and to get a broader insight of the respondents’ conceptions, I have occasionally made use of articles and other material produced by, or about, the participants. The research questions (see Appendix 1) were built around the following themes: Finnish peace mediation, religion’s role in conflicts, and religion’s role in peace mediation.

I conducted the interviews in Finnish with the basis of a semi-structured (thematic) interview method, which is especially suitable in situations where a topic has not been previously studied. In addition, it is a good way of gaining data that may provide new ideas to guide further research. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 35.) An interview is described as a conversation-like situation. The interviewer guides the interviewee into particular areas and makes sure that all themes are covered whereas the respondent usually decides the actual path followed. (Eskola & Vastamäki 2007, 27-28.) A semi-structured interview protocol is constructed around key themes, yet there is no pre-decided order or form for the questions – a factor that provides the researcher with more flexibility.

Initially my aim was to interview Finnish peace mediators, however, I soon realized that it would be hard to find “pure” peace mediators (understood in the narrow sense as people who’s job is to primary act as peace mediators in official or unofficial peace talks between conflicting parties). I thus decided to expand the focus to include also peace mediation experts – people whose work is closely related to the field of peace mediation and who have vast knowledge and experience in conflict resolution in general. The interviews were mainly undertaken at the respondent’s work places or in a café and lasted between 30-75 minutes, depending on the participant’s schedule. In general it was easy to arrange the interviews, probably since the topic was perceived as important or at least interesting. I
am truly grateful for all the interviewees for their participation as well as their support for my thesis project.

Despite common interest and experience in conflict resolution, the research participants (see table 1.) form a heterogeneous group. Their expertise ranges from high-level peace mediation to leading peacekeeping operations, coordinating national dialogue workshops in post-conflict situations and facilitating local peace processes (for more information see “Notes on Interviewees”). I wish to emphasize that the purpose is not to compare individual views or organizations but rather to bring out different viewpoints and experiences related to the topic at hand.

Table 1. Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Title/Position</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pekka Haavisto</td>
<td>Finnish Government / Member of Parliament</td>
<td>Foreign Minister’s Special Representative to African crisis areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimmo Kiljunen</td>
<td>Foreign Ministry of Finland</td>
<td>Foreign Minister’s Special Representative to regional peace-mediation tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antti Pentikainen</td>
<td>Finn Church Aid</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahdi Abdile</td>
<td>Finn Church Aid</td>
<td>Peace Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalle Liesinen</td>
<td>Currently a lecturer, writer and columnist</td>
<td>Civilian and military crisis management specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristiina Rintakoski</td>
<td>Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission</td>
<td>Director, Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikaeli Langinvainio</td>
<td>Crisis Management Initiative</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeri-Maria Jaarva</td>
<td>Crisis Management Initiative</td>
<td>Head, Black Sea and Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maruan El Krekshi</td>
<td>Crisis Management Initiative</td>
<td>Senior Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The names are published with the permission of the interviewees.
4.2 Analysis of the Data

Analyzing qualitative research data is the most challenging part of the study, especially since it gives the researcher so much freedom and responsibility over interpreting the observations. Therefore, and in order to increase the transparency and reliability of this rather subjective process, it is necessary to describe the basis on which the analysis was made.

Qualitative data analysis is an ongoing activity throughout the research process. Yet, the analysis can be roughly divided into two phases: the purification of observations and the interpretation of findings. (Alasuutari 1995, 13-16.) In this study, purification of observations refers to classifying and combining the interview answers into smaller segments with a systematic content analysis technique. Content analysis aims at formulating a concise, meaningful and clear picture of the phenomenon under study without losing any of the essential information (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2001, 107-108.). For the interpretation of the observations I used abductive reasoning, which can be situated between deductive and inductive reasoning. The benefit of the abductive method is that the units of analysis are based on the data itself, but theory can still be used as an aid in the analysis. Instead of testing theories, the aim is to discover new issues and themes that could be relevant for further research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 91-100.)

After transcribing and carefully reading the interviews, I systematically coded data segments into thematic categories using a software programme for qualitative data analysis called ATLAS.ti. Firstly, I classified the data segments into their corresponding interview themes. Secondly, using these classifications I formed new thematic categories out of issues that emerged and recurred during the interviews. The ATLAS.ti programme enabled me to compile lists of the data segments belonging to each thematic category for further analysis. I chose to concentrate on three broad and central themes in accordance with the research questions: peace mediation, the role of religion in conflicts and the role of religion in peace mediation. Under these, I created sub-categories, such as: perceptions on Finland’s peace mediation activities, definitions of mediation, facilitation, national dialogue projects, experience with religious actors, and so on. While advancing
with the analysis process some categories were dropped out and others merged together in order to form a clear and concise picture of the whole.

Finally, the interview protocol also included questions related to the participants’ own religiosity and motivation regarding their work in the field of conflict resolution. However, due to the delicacy of the issue and time constraints (that inhibited me to ask everyone about them), I decided to leave these topics out of the scope of this thesis. These decisions, among the other decisions that I have made as a researcher, naturally bring up the question regarding the reliability and limitations of the study.

4.3 Reliability and Limitations of the Study

Traditional concepts of reliability, validity and generalizability are common in evaluating quantitative research. However, these are not directly applicable to qualitative studies since they are rooted in a positivistic perspective and often imply the existence of an objective and measurable truth or reality. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 185-187; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2001, 134-137.) Nonetheless, this does not mean that qualitative research should not or cannot be evaluated. Many scholars of qualitative research methodology stress that the most important way of improving the reliability and credibility of qualitative research is the transparency of the whole research process and the recognition of the researcher’s subjectivity (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009; Eskola & Suoranta 2008).

Thus, in order to improve the reliability of my study, I have informed the reader about the data collection process, described how I did the analysis and why I have decided to focus on certain themes. My personal interest and background to studying the issue of religion and peace mediation in expressed in the introduction of this thesis. In addition, I have made use of data triangulation, which implies combining additional sources of information to the original data in order to increase the validity of a study (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 69). For example, I have occasionally cited texts written by or about the participants.
Besides reliability and validity, another critique towards qualitative studies relates to the question of generalizability of the findings. It is therefore important to emphasize that the results of qualitative research always form a case study, tied to a certain ever changing historical place and time. The findings are not meant to produce results that could be generalized as such to other contexts. Still, it is important that the researcher demonstrates how the analysis relates to concepts and realities beyond the collected material. According to Alasuutari (1995), the relating of the context-specific phenomenon to a broader entity can be regarded as a generalizing operation although he suggests replacing the term with extrapolation. (Alasuutari 1995, 145-153.)

Naturally, there are also some specific limitations related to using interviews as the method for collecting data. Most importantly, one should bear in mind that an interview is based on interaction between two people and thus both the interviewee and the interviewer influence the process, providing both with an incomplete understanding of each other. Furthermore, the interviewee might give only what he or she perceives as socially acceptable answers, whereas the interviewer’s preconceptions and knowledge level may influence their interpretation. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 35; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2001, 73.)

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that this thesis is not set out to provide an extensive picture on the highly complex topic regarding the role of religion in conflict and mediation processes or the position of Finland in international peace mediation. However, my aim and wish is to gather some insights and experiences from Finnish mediation experts with the intention to sharing these for the use of further research and discussion.
5. FINLAND’S ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL PEACE MEDIATION

In the following chapters I will analyze and discuss the interview findings with the overreaching aim to bring out different conceptions that evolve around the discussion of peace mediation in Finland. At first, I concentrate on how the interviewees conceive Finland’s role (with this I mean the state as well as Finnish actors) in the field of international peace mediation. While it is in some way a separate topic from religion’s role in peace mediation – the actual focus of this thesis – it serves as an important background for understanding Finnish peace mediators’ stances on how peace mediation should be conducted overall. In order to let the interviewees’ conceptions lie on the forefront of the analysis, I have included a notable amount of direct quotations in the text (all references to the interviews are marked with the last name only).

Peace mediation is perceived to strengthen Finland’s input in comprehensive crisis management and prevention of conflicts. Finland’s peace mediation guideline issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010, 13) states that if peace mediation were to be systematically developed, it could become a niche capability for Finland; a natural task that would fortify Finland’s international image. Why? Finland has a long history of active commitment in development cooperation and UN-peacekeeping (even though participation in the latter has declined in recent years\textsuperscript{11}) and the country is generally regarded as a reliable actor in the realm of international relations (Kerkkänen 2012, 118). During the last decade the country has been one of the forerunners of capacity building and participation in the EU’s civilian crisis management missions\textsuperscript{12} (Kerkkänen 2012, 118) and most recently has significantly contributed to the development international mediation structures through the United Nations. These activities, in addition to Finland’s

\textsuperscript{11} Kalle Liesinen points out that the number of Finnish military crisis management personnel has dropped to one fifth during the last two decades. For example, while the number of military crisis management personnel was 1600 during 2001, there number is currently around 400. (Liesinen 2012, 225-226; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland 2013)

\textsuperscript{12} Civilian crisis management (CCM) usually means the stabilisation of conflict and crisis areas by civilian means. In practice, it is about seconding experts to take part in advice, training and monitoring missions and to perform different executive functions. Tasks can for example involve monitoring the implementation of peace and ceasefire agreements or the promotion of minority issues and democracy. (Ministry of the Interior Finland 2013.)
experiences during the cold war, are regarded as a good basis for developing national capacity for a more active involvement in international peace mediation.

But what kind of involvement is Finland seeking in practice? Ari Kerkkänen (2012, 116) argues in his article “The way ahead: Recommendations for the development of Finnish peace mediation capacities” that a degree of national consensus must be achieved on the definition of mediation before any systematic national capacity development can be launched. Until now no such definition seems to exist. Even the Finnish Action Plan for Mediation (2011, 25) – one could assume that a clear role needs to be defined before writing an action plan – states that Finland must consider developing a Finnish concept for mediation and suggests that Finland could offer “frames and facilitation for mediation”. Among other things, this would entail supporting local peace initiatives, offering Finland as a venue for negotiations as well as strengthening peace mediation capacities of the UN and EU. The findings of this research support the idea of Finland acting as a facilitator for peace, but at the same time indicate that more concrete and courageous actions are needed in order to match the current level of ambition with reality. The next chapters shall look at this more closely.

5.1 On Peace Mediation and Finland’s Role in It

Despite the increasing attention given to peace mediation (“rauhansovittelu”) in Finnish media, official documents and public talk, the term was perceived by most of the interviewees as too narrow and misleading to be used in describing peace activities carried out by Finland or Finnish actors.

I think there is perhaps too much talk about mediation, or that in the Finnish agenda the term mediation is very strongly emphasized. In the end those situations come up quite rarely. Then there are a lot of other activities that support the process of peace mediation. (Rintakoski)

Since most of Finland’s actual participation in peace mediation happens indirectly through providing development aid, seconding staff to civilian crisis management missions and supporting various NGOs and international organizations engaged in peacebuilding,
overemphasizing the word *mediation* in the Finnish contexts may indeed appear misleading, especially since Finland very seldom acts as a state mediator. Interestingly, for example Norway, who has extensive experience in conflict resolution and is considered an example for Finland to follow, consciously seems to retain from using the term *mediation* and instead describes its activities as “peace and reconciliation efforts” (Norway’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2013). Similar terminology was suggested for Finland:

I wouldn’t really talk about mediation in the Finnish contexts. If peacebuilding is perceived as too broad, I would talk about conflict resolution or conflict prevention, for example, because then a lot more is covered. Peace mediation is after all a very narrow term.” (Jaarva)

In majority of the interviews the concept of peace mediation was mainly associated with high-level peace talks and therefore conceived as inappropriate to describe Finland’s activities in the realm of conflict resolution. Furthermore, high-level peace mediation was generally conceived as “only the tip of an iceberg” in a peace process, i.e. as only one possible tool that needs to be complemented with other means. This reflects reality. The ambiguous and complex characteristics of contemporary conflicts have rendered the effects of high-level peace mediation less effective, or at least less enduring. For example, Beardsley (2011, 4), who has analyzed the short and long-term effects of mediation, states that out of all mediated conflicts that end up with some sort of formal agreement, 52% recur. Therefore, careful consideration of when to use high-level peace mediation and when to apply other means is important, as Rintakoski and others state in the interview.

Pentikäinen points out that the reason behind many unsuccessful peace agreements is that people in the conflict areas have not been part of the peace mediation process. In fact, there is more and more evidence showing that even the best peace agreement is insufficient to guarantee a good peace process unless it is based on widespread support and involvement by a large number of people at every level of society (Brand-Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2002, 75).
Peace mediation is not the privilege or profession of some organizations or mediators, but it is the right of the people living in midst of war. They should have primary influence on what is happening there. For some reason the international processes that circle around peace mediation have not been able to take this into account very well. This has been disastrous for the end results of these processes and probably one reason for the failure of many agreements.iii (Pentikäinen)

In a recently published article also Liesinen (2012) argues that peace mediation is required at all levels of society. Furthermore he states that while it might work through the efforts of third-parties in high-level negotiations, on a civil society level peace mediation needs to be foremost undertaken through local people – even if mechanisms and training would be based on help from outsiders (Liesinen 2012, 233). Similar observations are made throughout the world and therefore especially inclusivity and local ownership of a peace process are currently highlighted as keys to successful mediation (e.g. UN Guidance for Effective Mediation 2012).

Including the wider society in the peace mediation process might, among other things, reduce the risk of using peace mediation as a stalling tactic13. Problems arise especially if different peace mediation endeavours are not coordinated to form a joint effort towards peaceful transformation of the conflict. If peace negotiations are perceived to serve other ends than peace, trust, a crucial element in peace mediation, might be lost. While being involved in many UN peacekeeping and crisis management missions, Liesinen accounts witnessing several occasions in which peace negotiations were only used for gaining time and strength to win over the other party by violent means.

At some point a decision was made somewhere that these negotiations are not about peace, but instead these peace negotiations are used for gaining time so that the other party gets stronger to the extent that it wins. You cannot possibly know it when you are there as a ceasefire observer, involved in negotiating practicalities. It would be horrible to know that form the point of view of the other party you are decoying them. [...] this experience relates to the fact that peace mediation needs to be undertaken at all levels, but it would be very good if somebody manages these levels so that everyone knows what is going on. So that there is some sort of coordination and leadership on these things at all levels.iv (Liesinen)

13 Stalling tactic refers to using the peace mediation process as an opportunity to gain strength to take the battlefield from a stronger position (Beardsley 2011, 20).
For Liesinen these kinds of experiences have revealed the loopholes and risks of engaging in peace mediation at only one level of the society and without coordination between different efforts and mediators. Coordination entails coming to an agreement about the specific roles that each actor plays and sharing information about what is happening across different levels. Wigell (2012, 21-22) argues that a coordinator role would particularly suit smaller states with a good international reputation since they would be able to both reach down to local civil society actors and reach out to relevant regional and international organizations. However, this aspect did not come up in the interviews.

Returning to the terminology of peace mediation, especially the rhetoric about making Finland “a great power” in peace mediation (mentioned e.g. in Finland’s mediation guidelines 2010) was conceived as the wrong way of marketing Finnish activities and expertise by the interviewees. It also raises the question of why Finland wants to become a more visible actor in conflict resolution. What are the motivations behind this urge to become a more significant peace mediator? Besides referring to foreign policy goals etc, Finland’s Action Plan for Mediation (2011, 5) states that “Finland is aware of her responsibility for international peace and wishes to make a visible impact on maintaining and increasing it”. Lanz and Mazon (2012) argue that it is common that the promotion of peace mediation is built around two arguments from which one is related to responsibility and concern over the maintaining of a peaceful world, the other associated with national interests, reputation and relevance in the international arena (Lanz & Mazon 2012). However, as Kerkkänen (2012, 123) points out, the aim should not be in selling or branding mediation or fostering unrealistic expectations of what mediation can achieve. This might only lead to mistrust within the own population as well as amongst the people in conflicting areas. Also, as Liesinen mentions “it is foolish if we start to believe in our own propaganda”.

According to Kiljunen the discussion of Finland becoming a great power in peace mediation, was at the time reflecting the idea of getting involved in high-level peace mediation. However, it has now been replaced with a broader understanding of what mediation is and how Finland could engage in it.
I think that at the time when we talked about Stubb’s idea of a great power in peace mediation, it started with this...that we produce more Ahtisaarís here. So the starting point was really in this kind of naive, narrow peace mediation agenda. Today then...we evaluate it as a broader concept.” (Kiljunen)

In fact, whether the term peace mediation is appropriate or not in describing Finland’s activities depends ultimately on how it is defined, i.e. what Finland means with it. The results of the interviews support what many conflict resolution experts suggest elsewhere, namely, that Finland should adopt a comprehensive approach to peace mediation (e.g. Kerkkänen 2012, Piipparinen 2012, Liesinen 2011). Broadly defined, it means that peace mediation is understood as a long-term inclusive process, conducted at all levels of society and at all stages of a conflict. This also sustains John Paul Lederach’s idea, illustrated in the pyramid model (see chapter 3.3), that all levels of society should be included in a peace process.

Comprehensive peace mediation goes under the idea of comprehensive crisis management, which is said to be one of Finland’s focus points. Simply put it means linking various peacebuilding efforts, such as peace mediation, peacekeeping and military and civilian crisis management activities together to form a joint endeavor. This is desirable since resolving conflicts and building peace requires a large number of peacebuilding actors and stakeholders. Thus it is logical that mediation as such cannot be isolated but constitutes an integral part of other activities seeking conflict resolution. As Kerkkänen (2012) argues, in order to be successful, it needs to be coordinated with peacekeeping, and conflict and crisis management activities, and it must take into account the basic premises of any conflict resolution by gaining the genuine support of all levels of the society in conflict. (Kerkkänen 2012, 116.)

In the article “Kriisinhallinnan tulevaisuus ja Suomi” (“The Future of Crisis Management and Finland”) Kalle Liesinen (2012, 232) argues that the concept of comprehensive crisis management has been generally accepted in Finland, but in practice the various operations – military and civilian crisis management, humanitarian work, and the development policy section – all still operate in their own administrative clusters competing with each other over resources and best approaches. However, Liesinen predicts that coordination will improve in the future. After all, as already mentioned,
Finland is still in the process of developing its capacity and finding its role in the field of peace mediation. In the words of Kiljunen: “Finland is still moving on quite new grounds regarding peace mediation”.vi

Based on the above discussed, the general discourse evolving around peace mediation in Finland has become more humble, moving from the idea of a great power in peace mediation towards e.g. acting as a facilitator for peace. In other words, since 2008, (the year of President Ahtisaari’s Nobel Prize for his peace mediation efforts), there has been a gradual shift from the idea of engaging in high-level peace mediation towards a more comprehensive approach. The next chapter discusses this in more detail.

5.2 From Mediation Towards Facilitation and Supporting National Dialogue Projects

Haavisto argues that in order to get involved in peace processes Finland needs versatile expertise, many different capacities, deep knowledge of the conflicting areas and parties, good networks and resources. At the moment Finland has “a respectable set of activities” (“kunnioitettavaa aktiivisuutta”) but according to Haavisto, a lot more is required.

We don’t know these conflicts so well, we don’t have people in the field...therefore, facilitation, we can facilitate, be involved in facilitation, we can provide assistance and resources, we can sometimes send people who have know-how and expertise, but we need to be active, knowledgeable, and humble in peace processes. We need to be visible in the areas where there are conflicts and this is how we can get such tasks that bring the process forward. vii (Haavisto)

In favor of a facilitative approach, Haavisto argues that peace mediation cannot be planned “on a drawing board in Helsinki”. Instead, the best approach is to combine Finnish expertise with local capacities. Along the same lines, Kiljunen states that the task of a mediator is not just to settle a dispute but instead to create favorable conditions for local political and national dialogue processes through which a consensus on how to proceed and resolve the conflict may be found. These comments are supported by Brand-Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2002,76) who argue that rather than attempting to steal the conflict from those experiencing it, peace mediators need to be humbler in their approach and aims, work to promote greater cooperation between efforts, and greater
support for indigenous forces and capacities for peace.

The findings of this research indicate that peace facilitation as well as supporting national dialogue processes are conceived simultaneously as more sustainable peace efforts than peace mediation (if defined in a narrow way) as well as more appropriate tasks for Finland. Facilitation is often viewed as a specific style or sub-category of peace mediation since the term, like mediation, also refers to a way of assisting negotiations between conflicting parties (see e.g. Beardsley 2011, 18). However, facilitation is usually less directive and less involved in shaping the substance of the negotiations, whereas mediators may have formal mandates from the conflicting parties or use leverage to influence the process and substance of the negotiations. (Greminger 2007, 2.) National dialogue projects are usually implemented in a political transition period when the society needs to find consensus over several national issues (El Krekshi).

Looking at the issue from a more theoretical side, engaging in facilitation and supporting national dialogue processes can be regarded as different mediator strategies. Bercovitch (2009, 347) classifies mediator strategies into three categories depending on how active the mediator is:

- communication facilitation
- procedural strategies
- directive strategies

The first two are considered non-directive and can thus be regarded as facilitation tasks. These include for example passing messages from one party to the other, providing information, and creating favorable environments wherein disputants can negotiate (in Finland this could mean offering Finland as a venue for negotiations). Here the mediator empowers the disputants to take responsibility for the negotiation process and reach their own agreement. Beardsely (2011, 188) argues that if third parties can direct the disputants toward an agreement without relying on carrots and sticks, then such agreements will have a stronger change of surviving than those reached with the help of a directive strategy. The interviewees supported this view. For example, for Abdile it is very clear that lasting peace can never be forced from the outside. He compares peace to a journey that can as its best be facilitated by outsiders, but ultimately must be completed
by the traveller itself. Similarly, according to Rintakoski, a state of peace that is achieved through a national dialogue process, i.e. a result of the conflicting parties own efforts, is usually more sustainable in the long run.

The directive, or manipulative, strategy is the most powerful form of intervention where a mediator affects the content and substance of the negotiations by providing incentives or issuing ultimatums (Bercovitch 2009, 347). In contrast to Beardsley, Bercovitch (2009, 348) argues that directive strategies appear to be the most successful strategies, especially in the case of an intensive deadly conflict. However, he also points out that probably the most that can be achieved is a partial cessation of violence.

Under different conditions and stages of conflicts different mediation strategies may work more effectively, but the role on Finnish actors has mostly been in the first two and, according to the interviewees, was further seen as the best task for Finnish actors (see also Action Plan for Mediation 2011, 25-26). Moreover, the presumed lack of influence make small states in general more suited to carry out this kind of mediation efforts (Bercovitch & Jacson 2009, 39). Basically the lack of significant political and financial power is automatically opting out the directive strategy from the scope of small countries like Finland. At the same time, this situation opens up new possibilities that may result in more sustainable outcomes in the long run.

Some of the interviewees also drew attention to the terminological difference between mediation and facilitation. Namely, where the difference between facilitation and mediation is usually blurred in conflict resolution literature and policies, on a practical level a noteworthy difference between the terms lies in what they are intuitively associated with. In conflict areas it is often more convenient to use the term facilitation because its connotation is perceived as less intrusive:
For example when Finns go to Myanmar\textsuperscript{14} and talk about peace mediation it is not understood very well since people there have made it very clear that they don’t want a mediator. They will resolve it themselves. And after all Finland is referring to measures with which to help. So many times it may give the wrong impression.\textsuperscript{viii} (Rintakoski)

Kiljunen also prefers to use the term facilitation, especially for describing Finland’s activities in conflict areas. Nonetheless, he argues that in Finland and the UN contexts it is clearer to use the term peace mediation since peace facilitation might give a too vague description of the activities (as it may also refer to development aid). “So it is also depends on whom you are addressing\textsuperscript{ix}, he states.

Overall, the results of this study enable to draw a conclusion that – compared to the idea transmitted from reading some of the official publications of the the Finnish Foreign Ministry (such as Peace mediation – Finland’s guidelines 2010) – the Finnish mediators participating in this research have a rather pragmatic and down to earth approach to peace mediation. They emphasize the importance of facilitating local peace initiatives and empowering the conflicting parties to take responsibility and ownership of the peace processes. Yet, as the following chapters demonstrate, on the country level this approach might be leading to too much carefulness and avoidance for taking concrete action as well as on concentrating almost only to theoretical or supportive actions that evolve around peace mediation. Therefore, in order to fully develop and implement its possibilities as a peace mediator, Finland as a country still needs to find a balance between its strengths, possibilities and limitations.

5.3 Strengths, Limitations and Possibilities

Regardless of certain criticism towards the term peace mediation, all the interviewees expressed contentment about the fact that Finland has now raised it to the forefront of

\textsuperscript{14} The above quote refers to a peace and reconciliation project in which the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has been involved in Myanmar since August 2012. The project, funded by the Finnish Foreign Ministry, aims at strengthening the capacities of different ethnic groups to engage in national dialogue and peace processes. (Serkkola 2013.) The project serves as an example of how Finland is acting as a facilitator for local peace initiatives, empowering the different parties to take responsibility of their own peace process by combining Finnish expertise with local capacities.
foreign policy goals. For example, the work of the Crisis Management Initiative, Finn Church Aid and certain individuals, especially President Martti Ahtisaari, was emphasized as something to be proud of. Moreover, Finland’s own history (civil war and cold war experiences), political position (neutral, militarily non-aligned country) and Nordic location were perceived as Finnish strengths. Only one interviewee mentioned Finland’s non-membership in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a weakness. In general, Finnish actors were described as “pragmatic”, “trustworthy” and “credible”. Finland has potential to become a bigger actor in peace mediation. Expertise related to development cooperation, peacekeeping and civilian crisis management, building functioning social structures and promoting democracy, are some of the strong points of the country.

However, the common foreign policy goal has not translated into concrete actions and enough national expertise so far.

I think it is great that we now have this foreign policy goal and a quite wide consensus about it, yet operatively it doesn’t mean much so far. We have sporadic peace mediation funds [...] but we don’t have a professional strategy or national expertise nor has it been put to that level.7 (Pentikäinen)

Many interviewees expressed frustration on the prevailing difference between words and actions as well as pointed out that there is a gap between the level of ambition versus resources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a way, the failure of Finland’s UN Security Council campaign in 2012 pointed out this contradiction, being an event that forced Finland to look at its current activities in a more realistic way.15 Perhaps Ahtisaari’s success and Finland’s past had given the impression of Finland being a bigger and more significant actor than it is, at least until recently.

One of the major hindrances for developing Finnish peace mediation capacity seems to lie in scarce funding. This is not surprising since all in all, Finland has annually supported peace mediation with only a few million Euros. In comparison, Switzerland’s peace

15 Finland was hoping to get a seat among the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council for 2013-2014. Finland’s long and rather confident campaign for the seat ended in disappointment as the two available seats of the category “Western European and Others Group” were given to Luxemburg and Australia. (Huhta 2012, Helsingin Sanomat.)
Finland has lately been emphasizing the role as a supporter, developer and coordinator of international mediation structures and one of Finland’s focus points is the strengthening of international mediation structures (e.g. supporting capacity building of regional organizations in the field of peace mediation). The activities related to UN and other international and regional cooperation (e.g. the establishment of the Friends of Mediation group together with Turkey) were perceived as positive, nonetheless, some interviewees stated that there is too much concentration on the theoretical side of peace mediation. Concentrating on the theoretical side is surely important since meetings and conferences contribute to the distribution and sharing of knowledge and expertise – let alone provides the country with positive PR. Yet, at the end, it is the concrete actions that can make a positive difference on the conflict areas.

As Jaarva explains, concrete actions involve high risks, a lot of time, resources as well as courage to say things out loud. However, according to Jaarva, a typical Finnish

16 The Friends of Mediation group was established on the initiative of Finnish and Turkish foreign ministers in 2011. The aim of the group is to develop and raise awareness of international mediation, especially in the UN and among regional organisations. The group comprises of altogether 25 countries. Through the efforts of the group, the UN General Assembly adopted the first resolution on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution in June 2011. (Action Plan for Mediation 2011, 10.)

17 In addition to what has already been mentioned, there are several other risks that a country or actor needs to take into consideration. For example, mediators might be caught between accusations of partiality and inefficiency since upholding an image of neutrality is often impossible. Wigell et al. (2012, 102-103) point out that “Accusations of bias are often part of the negotiating tactic of the parties to the process. In fact, success may even require the mediator to silently accept blame so as to take some of the pressure off the negotiating parties and help them continue with negotiations. For a state mediator, these are situations that may have a negative impact on its reputation and that may have far-reaching repercussions for its activities not only in the mediation field, but also more generally in other areas such as development cooperation.”
characteristic is to overthink how Finland is perceived from the outside – a characteristic very much related to the cold war period when Finland had to carefully balance between the competing superpowers. Calling on constructive debate with Russia or the United States, Pentikäinen argues that without taking risks and engaging in debate Finland is not going to move forward and be become a more significant actor in peace mediation. Also according to Swiss researchers, Mason and Lanz (2007), there is a danger that if a state is too risk-averse, it will circle around mediation, missing opportunities for getting involved or opting out at the most crucial phase in the process and leaving the parties in a ditch. The challenge, they claim, is for a state to build domestic support and a cross-political consensus on peace mediation, empowering its representatives to take the necessary risks to achieve their intended outcome (Mason and Lanz 2012, 77).

Until recently the cautious approach of the Finnish government has been evident in the little support it has offered for the most active and courageous Finnish peace mediators, like Martti Ahtisaari and Pekka Haavisto, whose success has for the most part been a result of their own personal efforts (Pentikäinen 2010). This raises the question whether Finland’s reputation as a peace-promoting nation is relying too heavily on the efforts of single individuals. At least to some extent this has been the case until recently. Of course the efforts of organizations such as the Crisis Management Initiative and Finn Church Aid have contributed to enhancing the reputation of Finland as a whole, yet these organizations don’t necessary emphasize their “finnishness” so much. El Kerkshi argues that Finland could bring itself out more than it currently does. For example, the Finnish Foreign Ministry funds the majority of Finnish mediation projects, but it never really requires that this should be brought up in the field. “If it were some other donor I would think that they would want a lot more visibility”xii, El Krekshi ponders.

After weighing the pros and cons that the interviewees brought up in relation to Finnish peace mediation, there seems to be a quite unanimous suggestion that Finland should concentrate on finding alternatives to the traditional role in which a neutral state mediator takes a lead role in mediation processes. Among other things, Finland’s role in international peace mediation was conceived as being a facilitator for peace. The findings thus back up findings of several previous publications on the topic (e.g. Piipparinen et al. 2012; Liesinen 2011). Overall Finland and Finnish actors were seen as trusted and reliable,
and with a lot of potential to engage more actively in international peace mediation related activities. However, more resources, political will and courage are needed to implement strategies into concrete actions.

6. CONCEPTIONS ON RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACE

As discovered in the previous chapters, Finnish peace mediators emphasize a comprehensive approach to peace mediation and peace processes. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word “comprehensive” refers to including or dealing with all or nearly all elements or aspects of something. Would it thereby also imply the inclusion of religious leaders in peace processes if necessary? In what follows, I shall concentrate on the role of religion in contemporary conflicts and peace processes. I will particularly try to find answers to “Whether and how religion, according to Finnish peace mediators, should be included in peace mediation?”

Finnish areas of strength and focus points in peace mediation are currently related to the promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, environmental issues and gender equality. For example, Finland has been very active in implementing and promoting the UN 1325 resolution on Women, Peace and Security and the role of women in peace processes continues to be one of Finland’s main priorities. (Action Plan for Mediation 2011.) Antti Pentikäinen, Director of FCA, has suggested that Finland would include support for the inclusion of religious and traditional leaders in peace processes into these focus areas. This is understandable considering that through the work of FCA, Finland has had a significant role in promoting the inclusion of religious and traditional leaders in peace processes – both on the grassroots level as well as at the UN. For example, the UN has asked FCA to provide consultation sessions and help in reaching out to the religious and traditional leaders in conflicting areas (Muurinen 2013).
Our recommendations in, say the Foreign Ministry’s coordination group for peace mediation, have been that Finland would identify 3-5 fields of activity on which to start focusing. We have wished that this (religion) would be one of them and justified it with the fact that we have here been creating something new and we have good chances to do so also in the future. So it would be natural, if thinking about Finland’s somewhat existing added value, to include this. (Pentikäinen)

However, the inclusion of religious and traditional leaders in peace processes is a contested issue that divides opinions. It is probably both useless and impossible to answer the question “is religion ultimately good or bad” or to explain exhaustively why religiously motivated conflicts exist. In the words of Appleby (2000, 10) “the either/or method of analyzing religion – build on the assumption that one must decide whether religion is essentially a creative and “civilizing” force or a destructive and inhumane spectre from a benighted past – is no less prevalent for being patently absurd. Both positions smack of reductionism”. Despite the fact that both views came up implicitly or explicitly in the interviews, the majority of the interviewees saw religion as an ambivalent factor, i.e. having a role in both conflict and peace – even though to what extent, varied.

Understandably, notable differences in conceptions exist especially between the mediators working in faith-based organizations and the mediators working in secular organizations, as the different conceptions reflect the background and experiences of the interviewees. Most participants working in a secular organization argued that the inclusion of religion in peace processes should be considered case-specifically. For example, according to Langinvainio, religion is a significant factor in many conflicts, but regarding peace mediation “you have to always specify which conflict is at hand. Not always and how to deal with it is another question. Is it significant or not, does it need to be dealt with, who can deal with it etc.” In contrast, Abdile argues that religious leaders should always be included when discussing a conflict resolution strategy (if religion is an integral part of the conflict dynamics). He states: “Since the beginning on you should consult religious leaders and make sure that peace mediators, UN staff or government officials discuss and meet with them. Since the beginning.” The aim of the following chapters is to analyze the different conceptions in more detail and relate them to the broader discussion evolving around the inclusion of religious actors in conflict resolution.
6.1 Religion and Conflicts: Conceptions and Experiences

A recent study examining Finns’ attitudes towards religion reveals that 63% of Finns see religions as causing more conflicts than peace (Ketola 2010, 48). Thus, probably one of the first questions coming into mind when reading the title of this thesis is whether religion ultimately causes conflicts or not.

Religion has a big role and big significance, and many actors, also violent actors, justify their activities with religion. From these an extreme case is the Lord Resistance Army in Uganda that attacks people, takes slaves and this kind of things [...] I have met their negotiators in Juba and they might interrupt the conversations just like that and say ‘hang on there is a message coming from God’ and then that message might last 20 minutes before he proceeds... I haven’t seen this anywhere else, but this is an extreme case, as there are thoughts and claims that the movement’s guidance comes from God...and in this sense all kinds of things exist. “” (Haavisto)

The above experience presents an extreme example and serves to show that religion may indeed be used as a justification for violence. However, despite noting the increase in religious extremism, the findings of this research indicate that Finnish conflict resolution experts do not conceive religion as the primary source of conflicts.

Bercovitch et al. (2009, 6) explain that broadly speaking two kinds of issues are at stake in all conflict situations: issues expressing a disagreement over means (resources and other tangible interests), and issues expressing a disagreement over ends (values, beliefs, ideologies). When conflict issues are defined in terms of interests, the basic incompatibility between the parties is perceived as differences on the preferred distribution of resources, however, when they are defined as conflicts over value, the basic incompatibility is perceived in terms of difference in beliefs and ideologies. The latter ones are often much less amenable to a compromise solution than conflicts over resources. (Bercovitch et al. 2009, 6.) Of course, in reality the reasons are never this clear-cut as various root causes become intertwined in complex ways. Funk (2007) explains that a common pattern that emerges when conflicts escalate and prolong is that the “us versus them” confrontation easily develops an autonomous dynamism meaning that what may have begun as a simple dispute over resources becomes a clash of identities.
According to the research participants, conflicts stem primary from a disagreement over means, for example, an uneven distribution of resources. As mentioned above, religion was not perceived as the primary source of conflicts. I believe this is an important point, since religion is often depicted as constituting the primary source behind violence and wars, especially through images and stories portrayed by popular media (Johnston 2003; Appleby 2000). Nonetheless, even when not openly so, religion may have a lot of influence in the conflict dynamics. Often religious identity and argumentation becomes intertwined with, or is taken advantage of, in resource-driven conflicts, especially as conflicting parties sometimes seek opportunities to utilize religion for their purposes. Reasons behind religiously motivated violence might also stem from the marginalization of a certain religious group or the reduction of religious freedoms. Resembling the conceptions of most interviewees, El Krekshi states:

> Often if you take a closer look at conflicts that seem religious, they prove to be about something else. There are economical questions on the background or social questions or then it is about perhaps marginalizing some group or then the religious rhetoric or argumentation is used for a certain cause. It is not necessarily a religious conflict per se.\textsuperscript{xvii} (El Krekshi)

Moreover, most violent and difficult conflicts were seen as occurring within religious traditions, not between them as Huntington argued in his “clash of civilizations” thesis. In fact, researchers Funk (2007) and Bouma (2007) claim that in many respects the most significant conflict in the world today are being played out within, rather than between civilizations and that much of current religious conflict is involving the defining and redefining of boundaries between subsets of larger religious groups. Consequently, for example various inter-faith dialogue initiatives might be much easier to arrange than meetings between representatives belonging to the same religion, as Pentikäinen points out.

> Basically the first interface is within the religious group. It is probably the most painful, difficult, dangerous and violent interface [...] you can get the different religions to the same table, they talk politely to each other and keep on with an atmosphere of hospitality. But where a lot of people die is in within religious group conflict, such as the Shia-Sunni conflict.\textsuperscript{xviii} (Pentikäinen)
Partly because of this phenomenon, some interviewees felt that working in a Muslim country with a Christian background was an asset instead of being a problem. As Liesinen points out in the below quotation, mentioning his Christian background in Iran was perceived as helpful and an attribute giving legitimacy in a mediation situation.

In Finland I would say that yes, I am a member of the church but I am not a denominational Christian. But well there I said that I am a Christian. “Good. Then we have the same God and it is possible to negotiate with you. If you had been a secularist, you wouldn’t matter. You would be a pagan.” My negotiation status would have dropped down. At the time I noted that there is no point for me to start evaluating my personal relationship to God in this matter. This Evangelical-Lutheran status is very good. It gives leeway to every direction.”

(Liesinen)

In contrary to what might be the general idea in Western countries, the religiosity of a mediator is a factor often increasing his or her legitimacy. It is moreover one significant reason why faith-based actors are sometimes more successful in a mediation endeavor than their secular counterparts. Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009, 190) argue that as people of faith, religious leaders and faith-based actors are more likely to be perceived as evenhanded, trustworthy, and possessing a strong moral and spiritual commitment.

Rintakoksi argues that Finnish people are slowly becoming more aware of how religion affects people’s thoughts, actions and societies as a whole. This is because the significance of religion in international politics has increased in general. Phenomena such as the Arabs Spring as well as the increasing presence of immigrants is raising public discussion on the role of religion in society and requiring also Finnish politicians to increasingly take stands on these questions. However, Rintakoski ponders that this may be challenging, as religion has long been regarded as something mostly belonging to the private sphere of life in Finland (see also Kyllönen 2012, 11).

Whereas religiosity may be considered as a private issue in Finland, to opposite is true in many of the current conflict areas. This has led to also some Finnish mediators, like Liesinen’s experience above shows, to be more open about their religiosity or religious background in the conflict areas. Many interviewees also noted that it is important to be able to talk about one’s religion. However, the extent to which the participants of this
research had cooperated with religious actors varied notably. In addition to the mediators working in faith-based organizations, only a few participants, like Haavisto, had systematically cooperated or negotiated with religious leaders. For some, the interview at hand was the first time really being faced with the question regarding the role of religion in conflicts and the issue was not really seen as belonging to one’s own sphere of work and expertise.

Probably due to the Finnish preference to separate religion from politics and other spheres of public life, the inclusion of religious actors or aspects into conflicts resolution is still in a way a distant matter for many Finnish mediators. Yet all participants were open and willing to take part in this research and the topic was conceived as important. This shows that there is more and more awareness of the issue in general. The observation leads us to the next chapter, which presents some of the areas in which the participants conceived the inclusion of religious actors as (potentially) positive.

6.2 How to Engage the Religious Dimension?

In many societies, if I think about where we work, religious leaders are very appreciated and respected. They can also have a role as mediators or encouragers. xx (Rintakoski)

Deciding whom to include in a mediation process and how to include them is fundamental and challenging. There is a growing international consensus that multiple actors should be included in the peace processes to increase the inclusivity\(^\text{18}\) of a peace process. As an example of this, the “United Nations Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities” (2009, 8) states that “In general, the process should be as inclusive as possible, since excluded parties have greater motivation to act as spoilers to the peace process.” One means of balancing warring parties is to involve a broad-based group of widely respected nationals, including elders and religious

\(^{18}\) Inclusivity refers to the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort (UN Guidance for Effective Mediation 2012, 11).
groups. (United Nations Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities 2009, 8.)

Johnston and Cox (2003, 14) claim that the following attributes may give religious leaders and institutions significant influence in peacemaking: well-established influence in the community; reputation as an apolitical force; a respected set of values; unique leverage for reconciling confliction parties, including and ability to rehumanize relationships; and the capability to mobilize community, national, and international support for a peace process. Moreover, religious leaders can help to expand mediation to national dialogue as well as help mediators to understand what kind of resolution would be ethically sustainable and acceptable for local populations (Workshop report 2012).

On a general level, all interviewees agreed that religion has a role to play in both conflict and peace. Regarding peace processes, the religious leaders’ potential role to act as value leaders, inside (local) mediators as well as connectors between the elite leadership and wider society was brought up. In addition, some emphasized their role in post-conflict reconciliation as religious leaders have the potential to foster forgiveness or establish truth commissions. Overall, religion’s role was conceived as positive especially on the community level. In sum, religious leaders were perceived as positively influential in the following situations:

- local peace initiatives acting as inside mediators and as part of national dialogue projects
- reconciliation and in peacebuilding processes after conflicts, especially regarding questions of forgiveness and justice

Inside mediation refers to a person who is a so-called “insider” to the conflict – someone who knows the conflict, the parties as well as the history and traditions of their communities. Oftentimes this kind of mediator is seen as more credible, trustworthy and legitimate than a third-party outsider. According to Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana (2009, 186-187), religious leaders and other faith-based actors may have a good basis for assuming the role of an inside-mediator since they often have a better understanding of the way the disputants make sense of the world and how they think. (Bercovitch &
In Finland, both CMI and FCA use inside mediators in their conflict resolution projects, but only FCA has systematically included local religious leaders in the mediation processes. According to Kiljunen, the possibility of religious leaders to act as inside mediators at the local level could be further researched.

The notion of inside mediation is closely linked to the idea of national ownership\(^{19}\) and the inclusivity of a mediation process, both topics that are being emphasized as necessary elements for successful mediation (see e.g. United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation). The usage of inside mediators may encourage the conflicting parties to take more responsibility of the peace process and thus increase the inclusivity and ownership of the peace process.

Rintakoski emphasizes the importance of ownership, but brings up the fact that even the increasing involvement of NGOs in peace mediation is not necessarily contributing to the inclusivity as much as generally thought.

> Often the challenge in peace processes is the ownership since peace negotiations are held at the elite level of the society and even if it would be a very inclusive process it still in a way concerns the NGO elite.\(^{xxi}\) (Rintakoski)

Also Brand-Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2002,76) claim that “Where NGOs often criticize governments for their `suits and limousines` approach to conflict resolution, it is worth remembering that in many conflict areas, the NGOs themselves are the ones in `suits and limousines`[…], and often with little or no knowledge or understanding of the underlying dynamics of the conflict”. One of the assets of religious institutions is that they can help expanding the inclusivity and ownership through their extensive membership and networks. This is why they are often more representative than NGOs, Rintakoski argues. Supporting this view, Appleby states that religious leaders’ involvement in peace mediation is one of the most powerful methods to make sure that the negotiation results have also grassroots’ support (Appleby 2000, 283).

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\(^{19}\) National ownership implies that conflict parties and the broader society commit to the mediation process, agreements and their implementation and perceived it as their “own” process, not as something belonging to the political elite (United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation 2012.)
As already discussed in chapter 5, national ownership and inclusivity are also issues that Finland as a country as well as the comprehensive peace mediation paradigm in general, support. For example, Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja (2013) has said: “Mediation should be utilized throughout the conflict situation – from conflict prevention to conflict resolution. Importantly, national peace processes must be complemented with local, grassroots level, initiatives. Communities must be equipped with credible and lasting capacities for internal mediation, dialogue and conflict management.” Yet, the research findings indicate that while Finnish peace mediators recognize that religious leaders and other faith-based actors have significance and influence in many of the current-day conflicts, apart from the work of FCA, the recognition has not resulted in much action so far.

The significance of religious actors in peace mediation is increasingly understood [...] and especially in the realm of inside mediation [...] we have understood its role [...] but it is embryonic, so there is no systematic approach regarding it yet.\footnote{Kiljunen} This observation leads to the question whether Finnish peace mediators think that the religious aspect should be taken more into consideration than so far has been the case. The answers varied but were most commonly seen as something to be regarded case-specifically. This is understandable since there can be no “one solution fits all” in matters of conflict and peace. Simultaneously, it is true that often the religious dimension cannot be avoided since religion is strongly part of the society where mediation projects take place. Langinvainio points out that: “You cannot deal with many things in countries of the Middle East of North Africa without touching religion [...] The whole society’s different functions are based on certain religious values and insights.\footnote{Langinvainio} Therefore, even if not directly included in official peace mediation talks, mediators need to be aware of the views and influence or religious leaders.

### 6.3 Criticism and Challenges

It is important to note that faith-based mediation or the inclusion of religious and traditional leaders in peace processes cannot be effective or desirable in every conflict or
community. Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana (2009, 194) point out that the effectiveness and usefulness depends on various conditions. Most importantly, the parties must perceive religious leaders, institutions or discourses as legitimate and trustworthy. Legitimacy, in turn, is closely related to the identity of the parties, the nature of the conflict and the relationship between the parties and the mediator. (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 194.)

Often religious leaders are more “capable of” than “committed to” promoting peace and tolerance. Many leaders continue to pursue narrow sectarian or ethnic agendas, think only of the needs and rights of their own group and fail to oppose the demonization of others. (Appleby 2000, 281.) This is why not everyone sees the inclusion of religious actors in peace mediation as recommendable. Critics argue that involving religion in any way in a peace process will only serve to accentuate social cleavages, reinforce perceptions of irreconcilable values and impede rational dialogue about structural and institutional problems and inhibit pragmatic compromise (Funk & Woolner 2011, 363).

In my opinion religions have hardly made peace. Usually it is so that a secular leader, like in Indonesia, has the capacity to make peace. If religious actors had been included in the process the situation would have turned difficult. This is because often religious actors consider their values more important than peace whereas for secular actors, who think about business etc., peace is the basic prerequisite for their activities. Easily it happens so that religious actors are in reality more ready to grab a sword than pragmatists. xxiv (Liesinen)

Liesinen shuns the idea that religious leaders would stand at the forefront of a peace process because he opines that the inclusion of some of their values, such as Sharia (religious law of Islam), to the negotiation table, would change the nature of the process. This happened for example in Aceh, Indonesia, where Liesinen was involved in the peace mediation process led by President Ahtisaari. Liesinen recalls that the involvement of religious leaders into the peace process led to a situation where the interpretation of Sharia-law became tighter and the position of women deteriorated. (Muurinen 2013, 1820.) Therefore Liesinen opts for “neutralizing” the religious leaders influence by keeping them informed about the peace process.

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20 The comments are derived from a recently published article in the magazine “Maailman Kuvalehti”.

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I have always in an Islamic country contacted the Ulama and kept them informed. This is because if religious communities are not informed, in order for them to respond even in some way neutrally, they are the first spoilers to whichever attempt. So they always have to be taken into consideration, but I don’t want to let them to the negotiation table, because after that we start discussing about things that are related to their values...So the religious community needs to always be included, but, this is my personal view, they shouldn’t be let to the main negotiation table because they bring there tons of things that are outside of war and peace, that have to do with developing the society and so on.\textsuperscript{xv} (Liesinen)

Liesinen’s comment shows how religious leaders are often perceived as so-called spoilers in mediation situations. The term “spoiler” is commonly used in mediation literature and refers to leaders and parties, who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and therefore they might use violence to undermine the attempts to achieve peace (Højlund Christensen 2006, 1). However, there is a growing consensus about the fact that also spoilers need to be addressed in a peace process since they can be vital if they are keys to the conflict situation. (see e.g. United Nations Security Council 2009, 8). As an example, the United States has started to realize that peace in Afghanistan is not going to be achieved without engaging in peace talk also with the Taliban (BBC News 6/2013). Abdile was the only participant bringing this aspect up in the interview. Referring to the situation in Afghanistan he stated “it (achieving peace) is an impossible task if everyone is not negotiated with\textsuperscript{xvii}.”

Pentikäinen approaches the above-discussed challenge from a different perspective, arguing that precisely due to the violent features of some religious leaders or groupings, the capacities of those religious leaders who are fighting for peace need to be supported. Along the same lines, according to Abdile, many religious and traditional leaders have a strong and serious role to play in fostering peace but they haven’t yet taken on that role or are lacking the proper tools and support. This is why strengthening their capacities is important, he argues. Also Johnston (2003) and Appleby (2000) have noted that without any logistical, technical or diplomatic support from outsiders, religious actors cannot be expected to succeed in bringing parties to the negotiation table or offering them incentives to reach an agreement.
However, Haavisto, who has extensive experience in negotiating with religious leaders in e.g. Darfur, Sudan, presented an important reason for caution when considering strengthening the capacities of religious and traditional leaders. He argues that in some cases it is counterproductive to reinforce traditional structures of society, since modernization is actually weakening the role of traditional and religious leaders as significant social and political leaders of their respective societies.

...the limits of using religious and traditional leaders are somewhere there, meaning that they can be utilized but one needs to also understand that modernization is advancing in these processes whereupon the old conception are not valid anymore today [...] So in a way the old structure is there. We think that they still govern and that their advice is followed. But then a new structure has emerged, modernization, young combatants, very different structures that don’t obey the advice by the old religious leaders or traditional clan leaders. And this modernization needs to be seen, needs to be taken as a fact in some of these negotiation situations and one needs to operate on many different levels at the same time and this is not easy in these conflicts and it brings a lot of difficulties.xxvii (Haavisto)

Haavisto also mentioned that in some occasions the United Nations had unsuccessfully organized a religious leader to take part in a peace mediation process. In many cases the person who showed up did not have any real authority in front of the conflicting parties. For Pentikäinen this is merely a sign of incompetency and cultural illiteracy from part of the international community. Taking the case of Somalia as an example, he argues that the international community has had difficulties in identifying and reaching out to the “right” religious and traditional leaders.

The Somalians are typically people who constantly tell a story in which they emphasize their own importance. If one should find, or when religious leaders had to be found there, several thousands of people appear reclaiming that they are the most important ones. Then when you bring them in front of people who really have authority, they fall silent. The community can find it out, but you cannot trust anyone’s own claim about him or her being this or that if you cannot investigate or prove or go through it. They (the UN) had totally wrong people around the table and they were sort of lost about what the reality was.xxviii (Pentikäinen)

Despite differing points of views, the experiences of both Haavisto and Pentikäinen show that there are always self-appointed individuals claiming to have authority and that the elected religious leaders may not always be the best actors in peace mediation
As mentioned, one of the conditions for successful mediation is that mediators are perceived as legitimate. If the legitimacy is questioned, their efforts will most likely fail (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, 194).

Recently there have been several initiatives and recommendations concerning the issue on how to find and include the “right” religious leaders in a peace mediation endeavor. The suggestions include among other things: regular baseline studies, collecting data of the religious leaders and organizations, creating of a permanent structure of sharing lessons learned and best practices, briefings on religious and ethnical dimensions of the conflict and proper training of cultural sensitiveness to mediators (Workshop Report 2012).

All in all, the above-mentioned experiences show how challenging it is as a mediator to navigate between different layers of society and culture, different stages of the conflict and various actors involved in it. The observation once again brings up the importance of coordination and cooperation between different mediation efforts and local peace initiatives. There is no clear answer to the questions as to whether include religious actors or not and how to do it, as each situation is different. Still mechanism to improve the possibilities of their participation would be important. Moreover, an inclusive peace mediation process does not necessary imply that all stakeholders, such as religious leaders, participate directly in the formal negotiations. The most important thing is that the process facilitates interaction between the conflict parties and other stakeholders and creates mechanisms to include all perspectives in the process (Un Guidance for Effective Mediation 2012, 11).

6.4 Need for Training?

The importance of more training and research on peace mediation is emphasized in many recent publications concerning the development of Finnish peace mediation capacities (e.g. Action Plan for Mediation 2011; Piipparinen & Brummer 2012). The observations of this thesis raise the question whether some sort of training would be necessary also on the issue of religion and peace mediation. The question is perhaps slightly anticipated
since currently there is generally very little (tailored) education for mediators in Finland. The expertise of active people in the field stems mostly from personal efforts, interests and experiences. It can also be questioned whether cultural or religious sensitivity and “knowledge” are things that can be acquired through education in the first place. In fact, personal motivation, ability to be sensitive and learn fast as well as interest and experiences were seen as the best teachers according to most of the interviewees. Nevertheless, the majority supported the idea of basic training regarding cultural and religious issues in conflicts. The interviewees themselves had received very little or no training (in forms of workshops, courses etc.) at all, in matters of religion and culture during their different assignments and positions.

In an article aimed at conflict resolution practitioners “What Do I Need to Know About Religion and Conflict?” Gopin (2002, 108-111) argues that peacemakers should understand to the best of their ability how religion contributes to each conflict and be able to frame ideas and values of human rights and democracy in deeply religious terms. Even if this idea did not come directly up in the interviews, a few research participants brought up the importance of knowing how to use religious argumentation or language in a peace mediation situation.

If we talk about Arab countries it is important to know how to use it as an argument when talking. The rhetoric resonates very differently to the listeners when one is able to use thoughts or arguments based on the Islamic framework. Then it sounds somehow more their own and they can relate to it in a different way. xxx (El Krekshi)

Haavisto has occasionally used religious argumentation even more directly: “with the argument that what you are doing, taking civilians as hostage here, is against your religion xxx”. According to him it may work sometimes, but is by no means a guarantee of success. Besides this, as discussed in earlier chapters, sometimes only the ability to be able to talk openly about one’s religious background is something that can foster the establishment of trust between the mediator and the disputants.

Pentikäinen, who gives the most concrete suggestion from all interviewees, proposes the establishment of an education pool comprising of politicians, NGO professionals and
officials from various fields. He especially stresses the need of peer support, sharing knowledge and learning from one another about best practices. Based on this research, also specific courses regarding different cultural frameworks and the role of religion in conflict dynamics could be added.

Besides courses there are however also other ways of increasing cultural sensitiveness and awareness, such as the use of inside mediators and Diaspora (Pentikäinen 2010; Liesinen 2011). I believe that putting the already existing versatile know-how in Finland into broader and more efficient use through sharing experiences and best practices, combined with more courses also on the impact of culture and religion in peace processes, could have positive consequences in strengthening the country’s capacities and improving the sustainability of its peace mediation projects.
7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Since many current day conflicts involve issues related to ethnic and religious identity or occur in highly religious societies, the inclusion of religious leaders and institutions in peace mediation has become a relevant and important question. Through nine semi-structured interviews with Finnish mediation experts, this study has provided insights on how Finnish peace mediators perceive the role of religion in international conflicts and peace mediation. Special attention was paid to the question of whether and how religious actors should be addressed in conflicts. Simultaneously, the purpose was to discuss the overall role of Finland in international peace mediation, as the country is in the midst of developing and strengthening its national mediation capacities.

Conceptions evolving around Finland’s role in international peace mediation prove to be quite consistent regardless of the background of the research participants. Finland’s role in conflict resolution is foremost perceived to be in facilitating local peace initiatives. On a more general level, the participants of this study stress the importance of a comprehensive approach in peace mediation. This means, among other things, that Finland needs to establish better links amongst the various functions of peacebuilding (such as civilian crisis management, development cooperation and peace mediation), engage in long-term peace projects and cooperate with local actors in conflict areas. However, in order for Finland to put these goals into actions and to become a more significant actor in the field of international peace mediation, more funding as well as courageous approaches in foreign policy are needed.

This thesis demonstrates that Finnish peace mediators are critical towards the aim of Finland becoming a great power in peace mediation and wanting to get involved in high-level peace talks. On one hand, as I have discussed throughout this study, this is because Finland lacks the political and economic capacities to use directive mediator strategies, and on the other hand, because high-level peace talks have become less effective in general. Therefore, Finland should not be opting to assume the role of a neutral state mediator – in contrast to what is often perceived as the niche of small countries. In this regard this thesis backs up previous publications and supports, for example, Wigell et al.’s
(2012, 104) suggestion that Finland should build its capacities on novel strategies with which to respond to the changing nature of conflicts. One of the aims of this thesis was to find out whether the inclusion of religious actors in peace mediation would form part of these novel strategies.

The research observations indicate that most Finnish conflict resolution experts do not consider the topic of religion in peace mediation as part of their own expertise and work. This shows that the inclusion of religious actors is still mostly regarded as a separate cluster in peace mediation, i.e. as something perhaps only belonging to the work sphere of faith-based actors. At the same time, this thesis reveals that there is increasing awareness and interest towards the issue. In fact, regarding the role of religion in peace mediation, the interviewees proved to be rather open-minded, or perhaps diplomatic, resembling the traditional, “physician approach” of Finland in conflict situations. In addition, I believe that the overall shift towards a comprehensive approach in mediation has resulted in conflict resolution experts being more aware and open towards engaging religious leaders in peace processes – at least on a theoretical level. In practice, apart from the work of faith-based NGOs, the awareness has not resulted in much activity or initiatives in Finland so far. While this is understandable, considering that Finland is still developing its mediation strategy and capacities, at the same time it means that now is a crucial time to introduce new ideas and perspectives of cooperation into Finland’s peace mediation agenda.

In general, the inclusion of religious leaders in peace mediation is seen as potentially positive, however, as a matter requiring case-specific consideration. The latter raises the question of whether there are some specific conditions under which their inclusion would be desirable or especially effective. While the interviews did not give direct answers to this question, Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) argue that religious actors must be foremost perceived as legitimate by the parties. Thereafter religious leaders and other faith-based actors can have unique advantages in peace mediation if religion plays a key role in the social life and identity of the parties (Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). In this study, the role of religious actors is seen as most influential at the community level, for example, as inside mediators or linkages between official and unofficial peace mediation projects. Also their role in post-conflict situations is perceived as important.
In contrary to what the general idea might be, this research indicates that most of the conflicts including strong religious dimensions are occurring within religious groupings. Moreover, the study supports the idea that conflicts are never only religious (see e.g. Gopin 2000, Funk 2007) and that religion does not usually constitute the primary source of conflicts. Despite this observation, there are many challenges related to the direct inclusion of religious and traditional leaders in peace processes. Among other things, two significant factors came up in this thesis: difficulty to identify the right religious leaders (the ones that would have real authority, legitimacy and will to promote peace) and the contradiction between strengthening traditional structures of society against simultaneously occurring modernization processes that weaken the old structures of society. Another challenge that however was not touched upon in this thesis, relates to the issue of terrorism and religious extremism. Namely, talking to religious leaders may sometimes mean talking to groups labeled as terrorists. Since Finland has been rather cautious and risk avoiding in its foreign policy, Finnish actors might not be ready for this.

Personally, writing this thesis has been a continuous learning process that has brought up many ideas and questions in need of further investigation. First of all, based on the results of this research, I believe that a needs and means assessment of cultural sensitivity training to Finnish mediators would be useful and give more detailed insights on how to practically increase awareness and competence for working in religious societies or cooperating with religious actors. Secondly, it could be useful to expand the aim of this thesis by conducting similar interviews amongst Norwegian and Swiss peace mediators and comparing the results, as these small but successful countries in peace mediation are regarded as examples for Finland to follow. Moreover, there are some important issues that have not been addressed here due to limited space and scope of the study. For example, I did not touch upon the issue of gender even though the participation of women in peace mediation is one of the keys to making peace efforts more inclusive and sustainable. Accordingly, the topic is among the top priorities of Finland and organizations such as CMI and FCA. Strengthening of the role of religious and traditional leaders often equals fortifying highly patriarchal structures of society, which is why it might result in deteriorating women’s position and possibilities to be part of the peace process. Therefore, more research on how the inclusion of religious leaders affects women’s participation in peace mediation is needed.
During the next 40 years the world’s population is predicted to grow from around 7 billion up to 9 billion people. If we are about to live peacefully together, new ways of cooperation and interaction need to be found. There is no point in pondering whether religion is ultimately good or bad, since it is simply a reality. Therefore we need to study how to create new ways of integrating it into methods of conflict resolution. As this study has shown, Sociology of Religion has good bases for taking on this task. Through further research on linkages between conflict resolution, international relations and religious traditions, the discipline can make itself relevant and contribute to society’s development more than it perhaps currently does.

Finally, despite more research and innovative ideas, peace mediators will never be able to come up with a precise formula of what is, and what is not to be done in every peace process. However, to the extent that long-term conflict resolution is desirable, they must find a delicate balance between providing needed assistance and letting the parties take ownership of the peace process. Therefore, it is important that mediators do not lock themselves in any one particular solution or approach, but remain open and flexible to new proposals and processes. Finland has the potential to become such a flexible mediator, as Finnish conflict resolution experts emphasize a comprehensive approach to peace mediation and want to support the conflicting parties to take ownership of their peace processes. In this regard, Kekkonen’s statement about Finland being a physician rather than a judge in the international arena is accurate also in the field of peace mediation.
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Publications and Internet Sources


Unpublished Works


Pentikäinen (2010) *Miten Suomesta voi tulla rauhanvälitystoiminnan suurvalta?*

9. APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL IN ENGLISH AND FINNISH

• Background Information / taustatiedot
  o What kind of peace mediation work have you done?
    *Millaista rauhansovittelutyötä olet tehnyt?*
  o How long have you been involved in mediation activities?
    *Miten kauan olet toiminut sovittelutehtävissä?*
  o What is your work like?
    *Mitä työnkuvaasi kuuluu?*

• Finnish Peace Mediation / suomalainen rauhansovittelun
  o How do you define peace mediation?
    *Miten määrittelet rauhansovittelun?*
  o How do you conceive Finland’s role in international peace processes/peace mediation?
    *Minkälaisena näet Suomen roolin kansainvälisessä rauhantyössä/rauhansovittelussa?*

• Religion’s Role in Conflicts / uskonnon asema konflikteissa
  o How do you conceive religion’s role in today’s conflicts?
    *Minkälaisena näet uskontoperinteiden roolin/merkityksen tänän päivän konflikteissa?*

• Peace Mediation / rauhansovittelu
  o How do you conceive religion’s role in peace mediation?
    *Mikälaaisena näet uskonnollisen roolin/vaikutuksen konfliktiensovittelussa?*
  o How much is the role of religion and culture taken into consideration in your work?
    *Kuinka paljon uskonnon ja kulttuurin vaikutusta sovitteluprosessissa käsitellään työssäsi?*
  o Has the role of religion/questions related to religion been treated in any way in your education (e.g. workshops etc.)?
    *Onko uskontoa/uskontoon liittyviä kysymyksiä käsitelty missään vaiheessa koulutuksissa (workshopit yms)?*
  o Has religion been present in any of your peace mediation activities? If yes, how?
    *Onko uskonto ollut läsnä kohtaamissasi sovittelutehtävissä? Jos on, niin millä tavalla?*

• Religion in Peace Mediation / uskonto rauhansovittelussa
  o Should it be more considered? How?
    *Pitäisikö ottaa enemmän huomion? Millä tavalla?*
  o How is the religious dimension already present/considered?
    *Millä tavalla uskontoa jo huomioidaan?*
  o Have you cooperated with religious actors?
    *Oletko tehnyt yhteistyötä uskonnollisten toimijoiden kanssa?*
• Own Motivation / *oma motivaatio*
  o What motivates you as a peace mediator?
  o *Mikä motivoi sinua työssä sovittelijana?*
  o Does religion play a personal role in your work?
  o *Onko uskonnolla henkilökohtaista merkitystä työlesi?*
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUOTATIONS IN FINNISH

i Mun mielestä puhutaan ehkä liiankin paljon tämänää ‘mediation’ tai että tässä Suomen agendassa korostuu hirvein vahvasti ‘mediation’. Loppujen lopuksi niitä tilanteita tulee aika harvoin. Sitten on hirvein paljon muuta toimintaa, joka ikään kuin tukee sitä rauhanvälitysprosessia.


iii Rauhanvälitys ei ole joitakin järjestäjien tai välittäjien etuoiheista aikoihin, vaan se on sodan keskellä elävien ihmisten oikeus. Heillä pitäisi olla virallinen vaikutusvalta siihen mitä siellä tapahtuu ja jostain syystä näitä kansavälineitä prosessit, mitä rauhanvälityksen ympärillä on, ei se ollu monikertainen ja se on ollut sitten prosessien lopputuloksen kannalta pitäessä huomaamaan ja varmaan yksinäinen minkä takia monet sopimukset ei osoitettu niihin.

iv Jossain vaiheessa tapahtui jossain päätös, että tässä ei rauhasta nevottelu vaan tätä rauhanneuvottelua käytetään ajan saamiseksi siten, että toinen osapuoli saadaan niin paljon voimakkaammaksi, että se voittaa. Sähän et voi tietää sitä, jos sotan tuollakin tämänä aselepotarkkailijana, neuvotteleet siinä näitä käytännön asioita. Siis se olis olnut aivan tietää sitä, että sotan tässä toisen osapuolen kannalta houkuttelemassa niitä ansaita. [...] Tässä kokemus oikeestaan liittyi siihen, että ne rauhanneuvottelut pitää tehdä kaikilla tasolla, mutta et olisi äärettömän hyvä, että joku hallitsee ne tasot, että kaikilla tasolla on se tieto, et on jonkinlainen koordinointi ja johto näissä asioissa kaikilla tasolla.

v Mä luulen, että silloin kun puhuttiin Stubbin rauhanvälityksen suurvalta-ajatuksesta ni se lähti just liikkeelle tätä, et tehdään Ahtisaaria enemmän tänne. Eli se on sit ihan tässä niin kuin niinä lapsessa rauhanvälityksen agendakohdassa ollu varmaan se lähtökohta. Tänä päivänä sitten, miten me nyt arvioidaan tätä, niin se on nyt vähän laveampi käsite.

vi Mutta se on kyllä ihan vasta hahmottumassa. Olemme kyllä hyvin semmoisella uudella maaperällä.

vii Ei me niin nyvin noita konflikteja tunnetta, e meiil oo jalkautuneita ihmisiä tuolla, että...fusilitointi, me voidaan fusilitoida, voidaan olla mukana fusilitoinmassa, voidaan antaa eväitä, voidaan antaa resurssuja, voidaan joskus lähetettä ihmisä, jotka on osaavia ja muuta, mut pitää olla liikkeellä, pitää olla osaava, pitää olla aika nøyrra rauhanprosesseissa ja pitää olla koko ajan näkyvissä niillä alueilla missä näitä konflikteja on ja silloin voi saada semmosia tehtäviä, jotka sitten vie sitä prosessia eteenpäin.

viii Esimerkiksi kun Suomi menee Myanmariin ja puhuu peace mediationista, niin sitä ei ymmäretä hirvein hyvin, koska he on tehneet selväksi, että he eivät halua välittää. He ratkaisee tän itse. Ja kuitenkin Suomi tarkoittaa tavallaan roolipiteitä joilla he vois auttaa. Et se myös monesti ehkä antaa väärrän kuvan.
et siinä vähän tulee myöskin, et mikä se sun yleisö on

Musta se on mahtavaa, että meillä on tälläinen ulkopoliittinen tavoite nyt ja aika suuri yksimielisyys siinä, mutta eihän se operatiivisesti tarkoita vielä juuri mitään. Meillä on niitä yksittäisiä rauhanvälitysrahoja [...] mut ei meillä sellaista ammatillista strategiaa tai kansallista osaamistasoaa ole eikä sitä ole nostettu sille tasolle.

Suomessa aika paljon se jää ehkä siihen policy puolelle, et miten esim. YK:ssa voidaan, mut Suomella ei oo oikeestaan itsenäistä roolia kovin monessaakaan konfliktinvälittämisessä. Siinä tarvittais tosi paljon enemmän resurseja, tosi paljon enemmän poliittista uskallusta, koska niistä tulee aina välillä takapakkiita, huonoa mainetta, epäonnistumisia ja mä en oo ihan varma, et ollaanko Suomessa valmiita siihen.

Jos se olis joku toinen donor, niin mä vähän veikkaan, että ne haluais paljon enemmän näkyvyyttä.

Meidän suositukset näissä, vaikka tässä UMn rauhanvälitysverkostossa on ollu, että Suomi identifiois 3-5 toimialuetta, joihin se lähtis satsaamaan. Niin on toivottu, että tää (uskonto) olis yks niistä ja perusteltu sillä, että me ollaan oltu tässä luomassa uutta ja miellä on ihan hyvät mahdollisuudet tehdä niin jatkossakin. Et tavallaan olis luonteva, et jos ajatellaan suomalaista lisäämää täässä missä se on jokseenkin olemassa, niin sitä otettais mukaan.

Pitää aina eritellä mistä konfliktista puhutaan. Ei aina ja sit se että miten sitä asiaa käsittelään on ihan toinen kysymys. Et onks se merkittävä vai ei, pitääkö käsittelä, kuka sitä voi käsittelä jne.

Alusta lähtien pitäis ottaa ja konsultoida ja varmistaa, että rauhanvälittäjät, YK-ihmiset tai valtion miehet keskusteleen uskonnollisten johtajien kanssa, mitä mieltä he on ja tapaa heitä jne. Alusta lähtien.

Kyllähän uskonnolla on suuri rooli ja suuri merkitys ja monet toimijat, monet myöskin väkilautaiset toimijat perustelee toimintaansa uskonnolla, et josta on aivan ääripäänä Lord Resistance Army Ugardassa, joka hyökää ihmisten kimppuun ja ostaa orja ja kaikkea tästä [...] mä oon tavannu heitä Jubassa näät heidän neuvottelijoitaan ja hehän saattaa keskeyttää niin kun tähän pisteeseen ja sanoo, et hetkinen tulee jumalalta viestää ja sit se viesti voi kestä 20 minuuttia ja sit se jatkaa...Mä en ole nähy tämmöstä muallalla, mutta se on siis tämmöstä ääri, jolloin jopa luullaan tai väitetään että sen liikkeen ohjaus tulee jumalalta ja täs mieles kyl kaikkea mahtuu.

Usein sellaset konfliktit, jotka täyttää siltä, että ne olis uskonnollisia, niin jos kattoo vähän tarkemmin niin siel on kyse jostain muusta. Siel on taloudellisia kysymyksiä taustalla tai sosiallisia kysymyksiä tai sitten kyse on siitä, että ollaan ehkä marginalisoitu joku ryhmä tai sit se uskonto on lähinnä semmonen, et käytetään sitä uskonnollista retoriikkaa tai argumentaatiajon jonkun tietyn asian puolesta. Se ei välttämättä oo mikään uskonnollinen konflikti sinänsä.
Se ensimmäinen rajapinta on tavallaan sen uskontoryhmän sisällä, se on ehkä se kaikein kipein, vaikein, vaarallisin ja väkivaltaisin rajapinta [...] kyl sää niin kuin nää eri uskonnot saat samaan pöytään, et ne puhuu kohteliaasti toisilleen ja haluaa pitää semmoista vieraanvaraisuutta. Et se misää kuolee paljon ihmisiä on uskontokunnan sisäiset, niinku tää Shia-Sunni –konflikti.


Monissa yhteiskunnissa, jos mietin missää me työskennellään, kirkolliset johtajat on harveen arvostettuja ja kunniointettuja. Heillä voi olla myös sellanen välittäjän tai rohkaisijan rooli.

Uskonnot ja uskonnot valmistuvat kaikilla eri tavalla ja väliaikaisessa prosessissa sen tässä vaiheessa. Uskonnollisten johtajien merkittävä rauhanvälitystö on kasvavasti ymmärretty.

Sä et voi käsittää montaa asiaa, joka sisäisessä maailmassa maailmassa kaikilla maailmilla. Koko yhteiskunnan kaikki toiminnon perustuu uskonnon tietyyn arvokuntaan.

Uskonnot ei ole oikeastaan mun mielestä ollaa kauheasti tehnyt, vaan monesti se tapahtuu sillä lailla, että joku maallinen johtaja niin kuin Indonesiassa, niin sillä on kyky tehdä rauha. Mutta jos sillä olis paastettu kovin pitkälle näär uskonnonlaiset toimijat niin se olis mennyt vaikeaksi. Ja se tulee monesti siitä, että uskonnonlaisilla toimijoilla arvat, joita he edustavat, ovat tärkeämää kuin rauha. Kun taas maallisilla toimijoilla, jotka ajattelee bisnestä ja kaikke sellasta, rauha on nk. sen toiminnan perus edellytys. HELPOSTI käänntyyn niin, että sitten uskonnonlaiset toimijat...ne on niin kuin todellisuudessa valmiimpia tarttumaan miekkaan kun pragmatikot.

Mä olen aina islamilaisessa maailmassa marssinut ottamaan Ulamaan uhhteyttää ja pitänyt ne informoituina. Ihan sen takia, että jos uskonnonlaiset yhteisöt eivät ole informoitujia, jolloin se suostuisi suhtautumaan edes jotenkuten neutraalisti, niin ne on ensimmäisiä spoileriteita mille tahansa tallaiselle yritykselle, että ne pitää niin kun aina ottaa huomioon, mutta mä en halua päästä niitä neuvottelupöytiin, koska sen jälkeen me aletaan keskustella sellaisista asioista jotka liittyvät heidän arvomaailmaansa...Siis uskonnonlaisen yhteisö pitää aina olla mukana, mutta, tää on mun henkilökohtainen näkemys, niitä ei pidä päästä päätteenvastuun, koska ne tuovat siihen sääteittäin...
sellaisia asioita, jotka ovat sedan ja rauhan ulkopuolella, niinkuin liittyv siihen yhteiskunnan kehittämiseen ja tällaiseen.

xxvi se on mahdoton työs, jos kaikkien kanssa ei neuvotella

xxvii tän uskonnon ja traditionaalisten johtajien käyttämisen rajat on siellä jossakin, et niitä voidaan käyttää, mut täytyy koko ajan myöskin ymmäätää et modernisaatiossa etenee näissä prosesseissa joilloin ne vanhat käsitykset ei enää päde tänä päivänä. […] Eli tavallaan vanha rakenne on siellä. Ajatellaan, että he edelleen hallitsevat ja heidän ohjeita noudatetaan. Mut sit on tullu uus rakenne, modernisaatio, nuoret taistelijat, hyvin erilaisia rakenteita, jotka ei noudata näiden vanhojen uskonnollisten johtajien tai traditionaalisten heimojohtajien ohjeita ja tä modernisaatiossa pitää myöskin nähä, ottaa myöskin faktaana joissain näissä neuvottelutilanteissa ja toimia nk. monella tasolla yhtäaikaa ja se ei oo helppo näissä konfliktteissa, et se tuo paljon vaikeuksia.

xxviii Jos puhutaan vaikka, tää Somalia esimerkkinä […] Somalit on tyyppillisesti sellasia, että ne kertoo koko ajan tarinaa, jossa ne korostaa omaa merkitystään. Jos siellä pitäis löytää, tai kun on pitäny etäitä uskonnollisia johtajia, niin sieltä löytyy monta tuhatta ihmistä, jotka on sitä mieltä että he on kaikkien tärkeimpia. Sitten kun sä viett ne sellasten ihmisten eteen jotka oikeesti on sitä niin ne vaikenee. Et se yhteisö kyllä pystyy selvittää sen, mutta sä et voi luottaa kenenkään omaan väitteeseen et må oon sitä tai tota, jos et sä pysty tutkii, todentaa tai käymään sitä läpi. Niil oli ihan niinku vääriä ihmisiä pojissä ja ne oli ihan tavalla hukassa siinä, et mikä se todellisuus oli.

xxix Nyt jos puhutaan arabimaista niin kyl sitä pitää osata käyttää niin ku argumenttinä, siis kun puhuu, et se retoriikka mitä käytetään niin se resonoin kuulijoilla ihan eri tavalla kun osaa käyttää islamilaiseen viitekehykseen perustuvia ajatuksia tai argumentaatiota, niin silloin se kuulostaa jotkin enemmän omalta, et ne osaa suhtautu siihen ihan eri tavalla.

xxx sillä argumentilla, et se mitä te teette; otatte siviilejä täällä panttivangeiksi, on teidän uskonnon vastaista