Religious resources for conviviality: a cultural and dimensional perspective

Rasool Akbari[1], Mahdi Hasanzadeh [2]

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The present article pursues two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to review the existing literature and conceptualize an approach to understanding the dynamics of religion and peacebuilding from a religious studies perspective. This involves exploring essentialist and functionalist views, integrating sociocultural theories, and employing Ninian Smart's dimensional model of religion to provide a comprehensive framework for analysis. By doing so, the article emphasizes the significance of studying peacebuilding through its association with religion not merely as a static set of beliefs but as a dynamic cultural system deeply embedded in social practices and interactions. Secondly, the article seeks to analyze how religion serves as a resource for promoting conviviality, which encompasses mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence within diverse communities. Using Smart's dimensional model, the study examines specific dimensions of religion, i.e. doctrinal, ritual, mythic, experiential, ethical, social, and material, and demonstrates how these aspects contribute to fostering a culture of peace and cooperation. This dual approach not only enriches the theoretical understanding of religion's role in peacebuilding but also provides practical insights into leveraging religious resources for enhancing social harmony and resilience.

Keywords: religion, cultural resources, conviviality, peacebuilding

1. Assistant Professor of Comparative Religions and Mysticism
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran E-Mail:
2. Associate Professor of Comparative Religions and Mysticism
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. corresponding author. E-Mail:

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Problem: the ambivalences of religion

Given that this research on religious resources for conviviality will broadly relate to the dynamics of religion and peacebuilding, it is appropriate to begin with a brief overview of the conceptual field and thematic scope in which numerous studies on the entanglements of religion, peace, and of course conflict, have been conducted. Particularly after 9/11, the notion of the resurgence and revival of religion on a global scale (Berger, 1999) has been frequently discussed. This discourse is reflected not only in academic research and academia but also in various political, social, and media campaigns. Consequently, it has attracted the strategic concerns of policymakers, public attention, a significant volume of media production, and substantial research and operational budgets.

It is often said that this "return of religion" (Alberg, 2017) has permeated various aspects of individual and collective life, from politics and economics, to art, media, and education, leading to profound transformations in international relations. As a result, efforts to understand, interpret, and analyze this trend, along with the examination of its implications for society and individuals, have led to a diverse range of opinions and positions regarding the correlation between religion and various issues and phenomena. Especially in the areas of religion's political and social influence, and its connection to issues such as violence, terrorism, war, or peaceful coexistence and peace, the discussion about the ambivalent relationship between religion and conflict and peace has been a central focus of many academic studies, resulting in a substantial body of literature (see, for instance, Omer, Appleby, & Little, 2015).

The interplay between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding has been extensively examined across multiple academic disciplines, highlighting both the constructive and destructive potentials of religious phenomena. From a broad perspective, both essentialist and functionalist views can be discerned on two sides of an analytical axis. On the one hand, there are essentialist views that certain intrinsic characteristics of religion(s) inherently incline them toward either conflict or peace. While some criticize religion and faith, both, as inherent factors in creating conflict, violence, and terrorism

(see, for instance, Avalos, 2005; Kimball, 2008; Jacobs, 2003; Harris, 2004; Dawkins, 2006); others believe what we face is actually "the myth of religious violence" (Cavanaugh, 2009) and that the promise of achieving tranquility and peace has always been at the heart of religious teachings, since history has recorded religious models and strategies for compassion, altruism, sacrifice, forgiveness, and the promotion of peace. It is in this context that someone like Huntington (1993) in his "Clash of Civilizations" argues that fundamental cultural and religious identities are primary sources of conflict, particularly in the post-Cold War era. This essentialist perspective suggests that inherent doctrinal differences and exclusive truth claims within religions create an inevitable clash when diverse religious groups interact.

Beyond these two perspectives, which often focus on religion as an essentially sui generis factor in either producing violence or fostering peace in human history, another significant body of analytical approaches has emerged, especially since the studies leading up to September 11 attacks. This body of research considers religion as a parallel and coexisting factor alongside other influential factors and phenomena impacting violence or peace in human society. Such research is often based on a diverse range of historical, statistical, quantitative, and empirical as well as qualitative data about the correlation between religion and conflict and peace. These functionalist views emphasize the roles and functions of religion within broader social and political contexts, suggesting that religion can be a powerful force for not only violence and conflict, but also conflict resolution and peacebuilding when appropriately engaged. Functionalists argue that religions often provide ethical frameworks and communal bonds that are constructive for social cohesion and peace. For example, Gopin (2000) in "Between Eden and Armageddon" asserts that religious rituals and narratives can be harnessed to foster reconciliation and healing in post-conflict societies. Similarly, Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, and Abu-Nimer (2005) emphasize the significant contributions of faith-based organizations in promoting dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among conflicting parties. This functionalist perspective is further evidenced by Lederach (1997) sees religion helpful in building peace, promoting sustainable reconciliation in divided societies, with the unique assets that religious actors bring to peace processes, such as moral authority and grassroots mobilization.

Functionalist perspectives also highlight the adaptive and transformative capacities of religions in response to sociopolitical dynamics. Haynes (2009) discusses how religious institutions, for instance in the politics of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, can adapt their roles to mediate and mitigate conflicts effectively. Similarly, Smock (2006) highlights religious contributions to peacemaking and illustrates how religious leaders and institutions have historically played critical roles in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. Functionalists like John Paul Lederach advocate for a deeper integration of religious insights and practices into peacebuilding frameworks, arguing that religious worldviews offer unique resources for fostering enduring peace and reconciliation.

Indeed, the dualistic or ambivalent potential of religion as both a source of conflict and a catalyst for peace necessitates a nuanced understanding of its role in contemporary conflicts. Scholars like Seul (1999) approach religion in entanglement with concepts such as identity to analyze problems of intergroup conflict; hence, the importance of religious identity is emphasized in both exacerbating and resolving conflicts. Seul argues that religious identities, when threatened, can lead to heightened intergroup tensions, but these same identities can also provide a powerful basis for reconciliation when properly engaged. Similarly, Johnston and Sampson (1994) see religion as the missing dimension of statecraft and advocate for the inclusion of religious considerations in diplomatic and peacebuilding efforts, highlighting numerous historical instances where religious leaders have successfully mediated conflicts.

Moreover, the contextual and contingent nature of religion's impact on peace and conflict is underscored by several scholars (e.g. Philpott, 2007; and Powers, 2010). They argue that the influence of religion on peace and conflict is largely dependent on the specific socio-political and historical contexts in which it operates. This view is supported by Rittner and Roth (2016) who study Rwandan "genocide" in the twentieth century and examine how religious institutions in Rwanda both contributed to the escalation of violence during the genocide and played crucial roles in the post-genocide reconciliation process.

The superdiversity and conflict of views on the dynamics of religion with various sociocultural and political, local as well as global issues, have

ultimately led to an accumulation of research literature and the formation of a conceptual or discursive framework referred to as the "Ambivalence of the Sacred" (Appleby, 2000). In other words, conceptually, the main theme and prevailing spirit in the agenda of religion-violence-peace studies can be summed up in this multifaceted nature of religion (Omer, 2015). It can be seen that the experience of the ambivalent religion in its relation to contemporary human society reflects the diversity of human interpretations and understandings in encountering religion as the "sacred." Thus, what is often expressed in various research and analytical horizons regarding the correlation between religion, violence, and peace is ultimately a reflection and expression of the internal transformations within religions and the diversity and plurality of views and approaches to the sacred, and multiple interpretations of religion and religiosity. This perspective can draw attention to the very important theological, cultural, and contextual dimensions that should be seriously considered in discussions related to the correlation between religion, violence, and peace.

However, this reveals the gap in existing literature: insufficient attention to the internal dynamic and cultural contexts that create diversity in beliefs and behaviors in religious societies and lead to different and sometimes contradictory actions and reactions in relation to issues such as peace and conflict. In other words, addressing various questions about the relationship between religion and peacebuilding, reconciliation, and coexistence (or on the other hand, violence, terrorism, conflict, and war) in human society seriously requires a systematic and interdisciplinary study of religion as a phenomenon with multifaceted origins and functions. This entails understanding religion as a multifaceted phenomenon that is significantly influenced by the local context in human cultural habitats, and grows within that framework, leaving important impacts and functions. As the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz suggests, religion needs to be approached as "a cultural system" (Geertz, 1966), and in the process of studying it, efforts should be made to provide a "thick description" of the topics and issues under discussion.

Background: religion as a cultural system for peacebuilding

Studying the dynamics of religion with peacebuilding is culturally relevant due to the significant role culture plays in shaping peace and conflict

resolution processes. Theoretical contributions, such as those by Johan Galtung, emphasize the importance of incorporating cultural dimensions into peace research. Galtung's frameworks, including his concepts of "cultural violence" (Galtung, 1990) and "peace culture" (Galtung, 2011) highlight how culture legitimizes both peace and violence, and stress the need for a multifaceted and multi-method approach to studying peace. Similarly, anthropologists like Foster and Rubinstein (1986) have integrated cross-cultural perspectives into peace and war studies, advocating for a comprehensive understanding of the cultural underpinnings of peace. These contributions underscore the necessity of considering cultural variables and local contexts to formulate effective peacebuilding strategies.

Furthermore, contemporary scholarship and practical peacebuilding initiatives have increasingly recognized the importance of cultural resources in sustaining peace. With an emphasis on the significance of understanding local cultural values, traditions, and moral imagination in the peace process, a cultural sensitivity is highlighted that is essential for creating sustainable peace, as it roots peace efforts in the experiences and resources of local communities. The evolving literature on "indigenous peacebuilding" (Mac Ginty, 2011) and "hybrid peace" (Anam, 2018) further highlights the relevance of local cultural norms and practices in promoting peace and reconciliation. These approaches call for a deeper empirical and multidisciplinary examination of peacebuilding efforts, emphasizing long-term fieldwork and close engagement with local actors. Overall, acknowledging the cultural dimensions in peacebuilding enriches our understanding of the complex interplay between religion, culture, and peace, fostering more effective and contextually appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

Existing scholarship on the interface between religion and peacebuilding relies on perspectives from diverse disciplines, including peace and conflict studies, political science, international relations, history, legal studies, sociology, psychology, and theology. Omer (2015) classifies the literature into three major trends: "the theatrical," "the inspirational," and "the theological." This opens the possibility for a dimensional approach to seeing religion and peacebuilding. The theatrical approach focuses on ritualistic models and techniques religions offer for peacebuilding. The inspirational trend emphasizes the personal qualities, cultural sensitivity, and moral

imagination of religious peacebuilding practitioners. The theological approach seeks to retrieve "good" religion to combat "bad" or "perverted" religion. Constructive approaches to religious peacebuilding have also explored the internal pluralities and multiple hermeneutics of religious traditions and institutions (Abu-Nimer, 2003; Gopin, 2012; Philpott, 2012; Haar and Busuttil, 2005). This "conflict transformation approach" highlights the significance of cultural sensitivity, creativity, and moral imagination in religious peacebuilding (Omer, 2015). Practically, religious peacebuilding programs have contributed to breaking negative stereotypes, humanizing the other, advocating for justice and human rights, and supporting nonviolent resistance (Abu-Nimer, 2013).

Despite these contributions, there are critical gaps in the systematic association of religion with peace. Much of the existing scholarship either reports on religious techniques for peacebuilding, reacts to the predominant religion-and-violence discourse, or devises religious roadmaps for justice and conflict transformation. These studies often feature traditions of pacifism and nonviolence based on prescriptive or instrumentalist interpretations of religion and peace (Omer, 2015). The field has been critiqued for its "instrumental approach," "faith-based diplomacy," "constructive religious leadership," and "(un)critical caretaking" with a focus on peace and development agendas. There is a growing call for multidisciplinary, critical, and descriptive perspectives to address the theoretical, methodological, and practical shortcomings in religious peacebuilding research. Abu-Nimer (2013) highlights the need for specialized research to develop systematic mechanisms to evaluate the impacts of interfaith peacebuilding. Omer (2015) advocates for a critical-analytic lens in the academic study of religion and peacebuilding to examine religious knowledge and practice more rigorously. Additionally, Bräuchler (2018) proposes an "epistemological turn towards culture" to enhance the conceptualization of "the local" and "culture" in peace and conflict transformation research.

Examining the dynamics of religion and peacebuilding from a cultural system perspective offers profound insights into how religious beliefs, practices, and institutions interact with broader societal structures to foster peace. From a religious studies standpoint, this approach underscores the multifaceted role religion plays in shaping cultural identities, social norms, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretive

model, which sees "religion as a cultural system" that provides a framework of meanings through symbols, is foundational to understanding how religious narratives and rituals contribute to peacebuilding. Geertz argues that religion's power lies in its ability to create an overarching system of meaning that helps individuals and communities navigate complex social realities. This perspective is further elaborated by Asad (1993), who highlights the historical and social processes that shape religious practices and institutions, emphasizing the need to study religion within its specific cultural contexts to understand its peacebuilding potential.

From a cultural system perspective, religion is not merely a set of beliefs but a dynamic system that interacts with other cultural systems to influence social and political outcomes. This approach is evident for instance in the seminal work of the sociologist of religion, conflict, and peace, Juergensmeyer (2017), who explores how religious ideologies can be both a source of conflict and a resource for peace. He emphasizes that religious peacebuilding involves transforming religious narratives and symbols to promote reconciliation and coexistence. Similarly, Johnston and Sampson (1994) highlight the crucial role of religious actors and institutions in peace processes, arguing that their moral authority and deep-rooted community presence make them effective mediators in conflict situations. This view is supported by Gopin (2000), who discusses how religious rituals and ethical teachings can be mobilized to heal divisions and build trust among conflicting parties. Therefore, understanding religion as a cultural system allows for a nuanced analysis of how religious identities and beliefs can be harnessed for peacebuilding. This approach is crucial for developing effective peacebuilding strategies that are culturally sensitive and contextually relevant.

Theory: Conviviality as an analytical concept

For a systematic and efficient investigation of the dynamics of religion and peacebuilding, it is crucial to break peacebuilding into several relevant and working analytical concepts, one of which can be conviviality.

Throughout different discourses within sociocultural studies, conviviality has indeed gained attention in various fields over the past decade (Hemer et al., 2020). It refers to the notions of "living together" harmoniously, celebrating inclusive diversity, and fostering constructive social relationships

despite the differences. It has also been demonstrated that the contemporary usage of conviviality is etymologically linked to the Spanish term *convivencia* and originally denoted the diverse cultural and confessional coexistence experienced in medieval Spain or Andalus (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2020). The concept of conviviality is particularly useful in understanding the dynamics of religion and peacebuilding from a sociocultural system perspective. It refers to the quality of social relationships that are marked by mutual respect, reciprocity, and cooperative engagement, which is essential for cultivating social cohesion and harmonious coexistence. This concept is significant for society because it emphasizes the importance of building inclusive communities where diverse religious and cultural groups can coexist peacefully. Conviviality encourages active participation and dialogue among different groups, which is crucial for resolving conflicts and building trust. By fostering an environment where individuals and groups can interact positively and constructively, conviviality helps to mitigate tensions and promote social stability (Nowicka & Vertovec, 2014). This analytical concept aligns well with the goals of peacebuilding, as it highlights the importance of creating spaces where diverse groups can come together, share their experiences, and work collaboratively towards common goals.

With its definition as the quality of being friendly and compassionate, or as the ability of individuals and communities to coexist harmoniously, and as an imperative for "living with difference, mutuality, and togetherness" (Cory, 2020), this concept offers a practical and culturally grounded framework for analyzing peacebuilding in connection with religion. As such, conviviality highlights the everyday interactions and social practices that foster mutual respect and cooperation across diverse religious and cultural groups, in a way that values differences rather than merely tolerating them (Illich, 1973; Gilroy, 2004). By focusing on conviviality, we can examine how religious rituals, ethical teachings, and communal activities contribute to building social cohesion and reducing conflict. This approach allows for a granular understanding of the micro-dynamics at play in religious peacebuilding efforts, moving beyond abstract theories to tangible practices that can be observed and measured in real-world settings. Conviviality, as an analytical concept, thus provides a lens through which the multifaceted roles of religion in promoting peace can be understood and harnessed, ensuring

that peacebuilding strategies are not only theoretically sound but also practically effective and culturally relevant.

Methodologically, the present article applies Ninian Smart's dimensional model of religion to systematically analyze the multifaceted nature of religious traditions and their contributions to peacebuilding, with focus on dynamics of conviviality. Smart's model, which identifies seven dimensions of religion – doctrinal, ritual, mythic, experiential, ethical, social, and material – provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various ways in which religion influences social behavior and cultural practices (Smart, 1996). This multidimensional approach allows us to explore how religious doctrines and ethical teachings inspire peacebuilding initiatives, how rituals and myths reinforce communal identities and promote reconciliation, and how religious experiences foster a sense of empathy and solidarity among followers. By examining these dimensions, we can gain a deeper understanding of how religious traditions contribute to the creation of convivial spaces where diverse groups can engage in meaningful dialogue and cooperative action (Hecht & Ram, 2010). Moreover, this approach facilitates a nuanced analysis of the ways in which religious institutions and leaders mobilize resources and leverage their social capital to support peacebuilding efforts.

The applicability and significance of Smart's dimensional model in this research lie in its ability to provide a holistic and non-reductionist analysis of religion's role in peacebuilding. The Smartian dimensional approach shows that religion cannot be understood in isolation from its cultural and social contexts; instead, it must be studied as an integrated system that encompasses various aspects of human experience. This perspective aligns with Geertz's (1973) interpretive approach, which emphasizes the importance of understanding religion as a cultural system that provides a framework of meanings and symbols. By using Smart's model, we can identify the specific ways in which religious traditions contribute to conviviality within various sociocultural contexts. This methodological framework is particularly valuable because it allows for the incorporation of both emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives (McCutcheon, 1999), facilitating a more comprehensive and empathetic understanding of religious practices and beliefs. Additionally, Smart's emphasis on the interconnectedness of the different dimensions of religion highlights the

complex and dynamic nature of religious traditions, which is essential for understanding their role in peacebuilding (Segal, 1999).

The thematic analysis applied as methodology in this article builds on the data collected from a fieldwork ethnographic research previously carried out between 2018-2020 that focused on studying religion as a cultural resource for peacebuilding. The two-year qualitative research was based on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and document analysis, in a comparative study between Iran and Germany, to investigate religion as a ResourceCulture for peacebuilding among Christian and Muslim communities (Akbari et al., 2024). This background has been instrumental in shaping the current study's thematic approach to data and analysis. The method allows the authors to draw on a rich tapestry of previously collected qualitative data, ensuring that the findings are deeply rooted in the lived experiences of the communities studied. By leveraging prior ethnographic experience, the thematic analysis was able to capture the nuanced and context-specific ways in which religion contributes to conviviality and peace, providing a comprehensive and culturally grounded understanding of the dynamics at play. This approach not only reinforces the validity and reliability of the study's findings but also highlights the importance of building on established ethnographic research to explore complex social phenomena such as the intersection of religion and peacebuilding.

Findings: dimensions of religion as a resource for conviviality

Using Ninian Smart's dimensional model of religion, this study explores thematically how religion can serve as a resource for conviviality. The following findings illustrate the specific contributions of each dimension to the promotion of conviviality within various religious and cultural contexts.

1. The doctrinal and philosophical dimension

The doctrinal and philosophical dimension of religion encompasses the core beliefs and theological teachings that form the foundation of a religious tradition. These doctrines often include principles that promote peace, justice, and the inherent dignity of all human beings. For instance, the concept of Ahimsa in Hinduism, which emphasizes non-violence and respect for all living beings, provides a doctrinal basis for promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect (Coward & Smith, 2004). Similarly, the Islamic principle of Ummah, which underscores the unity and brotherhood of all Muslims,

fosters a sense of communal solidarity and shared responsibility for social harmony (Esposito, 2015). Additionally, the main doctrines of Islam, such as monotheism, prophethood, and eschatology, can be understood to emphasize unity and interconnectedness among human individuals and communities. In a "triangle of human commonality" this harmony has been perceived as comprising three metaphysical, biological, and historical categories (Akbari & Hasanzadeh, 2018). It can be learned from the Qur'an that human beings have the same Creator God (6:102 & 42:11), the same common primordial parents (4:1 & 6:98), and a shared prophetic heritage (2:136 & 10:47). Such a threefold outlook on human commonality can serve as a doctrinal ground for cultivating a culture of empathy and equity. By highlighting these core teachings, religious leaders and educators can encourage adherents to adopt attitudes and behaviors that contribute to conviviality. Field data shows that doctrinal and theological resources are used by the practitioners to deal with the problem of exclusivity in truth claims so that they can, more openly, include outgroup individuals into convivial relationships. Doctrinal resources also serve as justifications for the promotion of convivial interreligious exchange and highlight the significance of theological discussions in cultivating more open and inclusive interreligiosity, while certainly they also show the potential for challenge, disagreement, and tension in interreligious engagement.

2. The practical and ritual dimension

Religious rituals and other practices play a significant role in reinforcing communal bonds and fostering a sense of shared identity. Rituals such as communal prayers, festivals, and rites of passage provide opportunities for individuals to come together, celebrate their shared beliefs, and reaffirm their commitment to communal values. For example, the Christian practice of the Eucharist, which involves the sharing of bread and wine, symbolizes the unity of the congregation and their collective commitment to the teachings of Christ (Mokgoatšana & Mudyiwa, 2022). In a similar vein, the Jewish festival of Passover, which commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery, serves as a reminder of the importance of freedom, justice, and solidarity (Roth, 2019). These rituals not only strengthen internal community bonds but also create a framework for engaging with other communities in a spirit of respect and cooperation. Moreover, Muslims can practically integrate conviviality into their daily rituals and practices by emphasizing

the communal aspects of worship and religious celebrations. For instance, during communal prayers, breaking the fast together in Ramadan, or during the Hajj pilgrimage, the emphasis on community and shared experiences can reinforce the values of mutual respect and harmony. Based on data collected from the field, rituals can function as resources for compassionate and sharing encounters with the religious Other, as resources in building convivial and shared practices in interreligious settings, and as practical measures undertaken by religious practitioners in order to (re)solve or transform conflictual situations.

3. The narrative or mythic dimension

The mythic or narrative dimension of religion involves the stories and myths that convey the fundamental truths and values of a religious tradition. These narratives often provide powerful examples of moral and ethical behavior that can inspire individuals to act in ways that promote conviviality. For instance, the parable of the Good Samaritan in Christianity, which tells the story of a man who helps a stranger in need, exemplifies the values of compassion, altruism, and cross-cultural solidarity (Lederach, 2005). Similarly, the Buddhist Jataka tales, which recount the previous lives of the Buddha, highlight the virtues of selflessness, generosity, and kindness (Hayward & Marshall, 2015). By sharing these stories, religious communities can cultivate a culture of empathy and mutual support, which is essential for conviviality. According to field data, narrative functions as resource for the nurturing the meaning of peace and coexistence with others, as a representation of faithful history that informs the way one enters into interactions with ingroups and outgroups, provides modeling of historical elites from one's own tradition so that it inspires similar pathways for behavior, and of course from time to time serves as resource for intergroup and interpersonal challenge due to its formation of identity and ideology.

4. The experiential and emotional dimension

The experiential and emotional dimension of religion refers to the personal religious experiences and spiritual practices that shape an individual's understanding of the divine and their place in the world. These experiences often foster a sense of interconnectedness and compassion for others. Islamic teachings often emphasize compassion and empathy towards others. The Hadiths, which record the sayings and actions of Prophet

Muhammad, his companions, imams, and other sages and elites, frequently highlight the importance of treating others with kindness and understanding. Similar motifs have also been discussed in countless mystical and spiritual resources in Muslim heritage. For example, the Sufi mantra practice of dhikr, which involves the repetitive chanting of God's names, aims to cultivate a deep sense of spiritual awareness and unity with the divine (Abu-Nimer, 2003). This heightened spiritual consciousness can lead to a greater sense of empathy and solidarity with others, thereby promoting conviviality. Similarly, the practice of meditation in Buddhism, which emphasizes mindfulness and compassion, helps individuals develop a profound sense of empathy and a commitment to alleviating the suffering of others (Coward & Smith, 2004). Field data show how different personal experiences of religious practitioners in settings for interreligious encounters can impact their practice, and vice versa, different practices shape or motivate a variety of emotions that can hinder or cultivate conviviality. In addition, a variety of emotions and experiences can be associated with the human and personal elements of spirituality as a resource for convivial interreligious exchange.

5. The ethical and legal dimension

The ethical as well as legal dimension of religion encompasses the moral principles and jurisprudential codes of conduct that guide the behavior of adherents. According to Ninian Smart's understanding, in small-scale societies religion and society are more effectively coterminous which influences the dynamics between religious ethics and legal system. Smart shows that in the study of religion in society, it is sometimes difficult to disentangle ethics from legal requirements. On this basis, Smart generally accepts that morality can reflect the religious motivations to be good, and in this sense he underlines the notable similarities between different virtues and rules as they were historically integrated variously into religious tradition in order to give motivations to ordinary people to be good and observant. Thus, while there is a long discussion over the divergent or convergent exchange between ethics and law, these imperatives often promote values such as justice, compassion, and respect for others, which are essential for conviviality. For instance, the Jewish principle of Tikkun Olam, which means "repairing the world," can encourage individuals to take an active role in promoting social justice and improving the well-being of their communities. Similarly, the Christian concept of Agape, or selfless love, calls for

unconditional love and compassion for all people, regardless of their background or beliefs. Perhaps one might already think that Islamic ethics with its emphasis on justice, compassion, and social responsibility is the most relevant heritage to the concept of conviviality. Even when it comes to the legal or Shariah aspect, especially such teachings as the prohibition of harming others or avoiding various types of evil in interpersonal relationships can be significantly helpful. By adhering to these ethical principles, religious communities can foster an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. As observed in field data, legal and ethical or moral resources can function both as opportunity for developing successful interreligious dynamics that promote coexistence and constructive engagement, and as challenge or even prohibition and obstacle against interreligiosity and peacebuilding processes. In practice, by providing virtue literacy to the community about those sociocultural and interpersonal implications of religious ethical and legal frameworks that promote conviviality, we can help them develop a moral compass that values constructive self-control, inclusivity, and respect for diversity and the rights of others.

6. The social and institutional dimension

The social and institutional dimension of religion involves the organizational structures and community practices that facilitate social interaction and collective action. Religious institutions and organizations often provide a platform for community engagement and social support, which are crucial for fostering conviviality. For example, many religious communities run social service programs, such as food banks, shelters, and counseling services, that support vulnerable populations and promote social cohesion (Lederach, 2005). Additionally, interfaith dialogue initiatives, which bring together representatives from different religious traditions to discuss common concerns and collaborate on social issues, help to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between diverse groups (Johnston & Sampson, 1994). These social practices create a framework for positive interactions and collaborative efforts, which are essential for promoting conviviality. Observations from the field reveal, despite discernible challenges, the various potentials that institutional resources, including also family, education, economy, church and mosque, etc., provide to practitioners when it comes to building convivial spaces in society and

promoting cooperation and mutual support. Likewise, Islamic tradition places a strong emphasis on community and social structures. Particularly, schools and educational institutions can serve as microcosms of the larger Muslim community, where values of conviviality can be practiced and reinforced. Programs that encourage interfaith dialogues, community service, and cooperative learning can help students see the practical implications of conviviality in building strong, inclusive communities.

7. The material or aesthetic dimension

The material or aesthetic dimension of religion encompasses the physical artifacts, sacred spaces, and artistic expressions associated with religious traditions; numerous types of material objects, and various kinds of arts and devotional expression, from literature, calligraphy, sculpture, architecture, carpets, and miniature, to music, spiritual dance, and theater, to food and clothes and other products, all play a significant role in cultivating a peaceful space of community and togetherness. These material elements often serve as tangible representations of religious values and symbols, reinforcing communal identity and providing a focal point for collective activities. For example, the construction and maintenance of shared places of worship in the form of "multireligious space" provide a potential for communal gatherings, rituals, and social activities that strengthen community bonds (Akbari & Hasanzadeh, 2022). Similarly, religious art and iconography, which depict scenes from sacred texts and symbolize important religious themes, serve as visual reminders of the values and teachings of the tradition. By engaging with these material elements, religious communities can reinforce their shared identity and commitment to conviviality. Fieldwork in multifaith or multireligious spaces can show how aesthetic, spatial, and digital dimensions of religions serve as material resources for the convivial embodiment of social relations or for the enactment of peaceful encounters and practices.

Discussion: practical cultivation of interreligious conviviality

The findings of this study, which highlight the religious resources for promoting conviviality, are practically relevant for contemporary society in several profound ways. In today's increasingly pluralistic and interconnected world, the potential for religion to cultivate mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence is both significant and urgent. By applying Ninian

Smart's dimensional model, we can see how various aspects of religion, i.e. doctrinal, ritual, mythic, experiential, ethical, social, and material, can offer unique resources that can be harnessed to build more harmonious societies. To implement practical pathways for community engagement in interreligious contexts, utilizing the dimensions of convivial religion as identified above, the following strategies can be considered. It would be best if these suggestions are initiated and facilitated in interreligious contexts and involve individuals from various and different sociocultural as well as religious backgrounds and other worldviews.

1. Conviviality as belief

Interfaith education programs can be developed that highlight common theological principles and promote peacefulness, justice, equity, compassion, dignity, and other similar virtues. These programs can include seminars, workshops, and joint study groups, etc. In addition, discussions can be designed and facilitated not only among religious leaders but also layperson adherents about shared doctrines that emphasize unity and interconnectedness. These dialogues can address exclusivity in truth claims and promote inclusive understanding.

2. Conviviality as ritual

Several interfaith events and celebrations can be organized that are associated with significant religious rituals and festivals, such as communal prayers, iftars during Ramadan, or interfaith Seder meals, and even also nonreligious occasions. These events can strengthen bonds and create shared experiences. Moreover, rituals can be employed as tools for conflict resolution by incorporating them into peacebuilding workshops and community mediation sessions.

3. Conviviality as narrative

Several interfaith storytelling sessions can be hosted where members share moral and ethical stories from their traditions. This can be done through community events, online platforms, or multimedia projects. Additionally, the creation of interfaith narratives can be encouraged through collaborative cultural projects, such as plays, films, and literature that depict shared values and histories.

4. Conviviality as experience

Creative interfaith spiritual retreats can be organized that focus on shared spiritual practices, such as meditation, dhikr, or mindfulness exercises. These retreats can deepen understanding and foster empathy. Also, workshops can be conducted that use religious and spiritual teachings to enhance emotional intelligence and empathy among participants. These can include exercises in compassionate listening and reflection.

5. Conviviality as rule

Various joint community service initiatives can be launched that address social justice issues, such as poverty, homelessness, and environmental sustainability. Projects can be guided by ethical principles from various religions. In addition, ethics education programs can be implemented in schools and community centers that teach the moral principles common to different religions, emphasizing values like justice, compassion, and respect for others.

6. Conviviality as institution

Various types of interfaith councils can be established that bring together religious leaders and community representatives to address common concerns and coordinate community activities. Furthermore, partnerships can be created between religious institutions to run social service programs, such as food banks, shelters, and counseling services, enhancing social cohesion and support.

7. Conviviality as artifact

Innovative ideas for shared places of worship and community centers can be designed and maintained where people of different faiths can gather for rituals, social activities, and communal events. The cooperative aspect of these spaces and their consensual making must be supported. Also, interfaith art and cultural projects, including exhibitions, concerts, and public art installations can be programmed and promoted that highlight the aesthetic expressions of various religions. These projects can be used to foster understanding and appreciation of different traditions.

Conclusion

This article has explored the dynamics of religion and peacebuilding with a focus on conviviality as a concept for both analysis and praxis, through a

cultural system perspective and by utilizing Ninian Smart's dimensional model of religion. The findings underscore the multifaceted ways in which religion can serve as a resource for promoting conviviality and constructive cooperation, thereby contributing to mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence in diverse societies. By considering both essentialist and functionalist views among sociocultural theories, the article provides a working framework that highlights the critical role of religion not just as a belief system but as a dynamic cultural resource that shapes social interactions and communal harmony. The relevance of this article extends to both research and policy domains. For researchers, it hopes to offer a new conceptual and methodological foundation for studying the complex interplay between religion and peacebuilding. By demonstrating the applicability of Smart's model, the article encourages a more nuanced analysis of religion's social functions and its potential to foster peace. This approach opens new pathways for empirical studies that can further investigate the specific mechanisms through which religious dimensions contribute to social cohesion and conflict resolution. For policymakers, the insights derived from this study highlight the importance of engaging with religious communities and leaders in peacebuilding initiatives. Recognizing the positive contributions of religious doctrines, rituals, narratives, ethical teachings, and social institutions can inform the design of more effective and culturally sensitive policies. Such policies can harness the strengths of religious traditions to address social issues, promote inclusive dialogue, and support community resilience. Future studies could expand on this work by exploring the role of religion in different cultural contexts and conflict settings, examining the impact of interfaith collaborations on peacebuilding, and developing practical tools for leveraging religious resources in policy frameworks. Additionally, interdisciplinary research involving sociology, anthropology, and political science could further enrich our understanding of religion's role in shaping peaceful societies.

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