Introduction to religion, conflict and dialogue
Agenda for today

1. Why, what and how of the course
   - Purpose
   - Contents
   - Methods of learning
2. What and how should we learn to make the course useful for us?
   - The state of the world today: Religion and conflict?
   - Historical case study: *Indian 1857 Rebellion*
3. Setting the agenda for the course
   - Themes of study: what’s needed for understanding the case
   - Course essay
The aims: course description

• The course is an introduction to questions concerning
  • Conflicts
  • Role of religion in conflicts
  • Tools for analyzing and understanding conflicts
  • Tools for dialogue and peace making?
• The starting point:
  • No solutions without understanding the causes of the problem
    – What is the problem?
    – What are the ‘causes‘ and what do we mean by ‘causes’?
    – What counts as solution?
Contents

- A touch of real life:
  - Where do we stand today?
- A historical case study
  - The role of religion in a violent conflict
    - Indian 1857 rebellion
- Tools for analysis and understanding
  - Social psychology
  - Conflict studies
  - Religious studies
  - Social ethics
- Solving problems?
Where do we stand today?

- [http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warlist.htm](http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warlist.htm)
Conflict, violence and violent conflicts

- What do we mean?
- How are the concepts related to each other?
Conflict?

- **noun**
  1. **opposition**, antagonism, bad blood, difference, disagreement, discord, dissension, divided loyalties, friction, hostility, interference, strife, variance
  2. **battle**, clash, collision, combat, contention, contest, encounter, engagement, fight, fracas, head-to-head, set-to (*informal*), strife, war, warfare

- **verb**
  - be *incompatible*, be at variance, clash, collide, combat, contend, contest, differ, disagree, fight, interfere, strive, struggle
Living with conflicts – part of the human condition

- Conflicts
  - psychological
  - social
  - political
  - are a common feature of individual and social life.
- Conflicts are necessary.
  - Without conflicts there is no action and no development.
- Conflicts as such are not a problem.
When does a conflict become a problem?

- Conflicts are a driving force of change and development (for improving things).
- But: Conflicts consume resources.
  - The price may be too high in regard to the value of the outcome.
  - ”It just takes too long to get there.”
  - ”Was there something fundamentally wrong with our old way?”
- And even worse: Conflicts destroy resources.
  - psychological, social political and/or material resources
  - loss of limbs and lives
  - *Bellum se ipse alet.*
Violence

- Actions or words that are intended to hurt people
- Extreme force
  - (Cambridge English Dictionary)
- A broader understanding of violence includes
  - Injury caused to people or property
  - Interference with personal freedom
  - Psychological hostility that is demeaning, damaging and/or depersonalizing
  - Structural, political, economic, social violence
The problem: violent conflict

- Violent conflicts no longer function as means of change and improvement but become instruments of destruction and undoing.
  - Conflicts as purging fire?
  - Darwinian law of nature?
- Are violent conflicts a necessary or an unavoidable part of human existence?
- Can and should we try to
  - prevent
  - resolve
  - mitigate
  - violent conflicts?
Religion and violent conflicts

- The role of religion in (violent) conflicts
  - Religion is back!
- How to deal with religion involved in conflicts?
  - What does ”religion involved in conflicts” mean?
“Religious violence has probably existed for as long as religion. History has done nothing to calm the passions, hatred, and brutality expressed in the name of religion; if anything, the progress of science and technology have enabled religious extremists to hate and kill ever more effectively. Almost everyone would like to end the violence, but few understand its causes. Even worse, some religious believers are in denial about the causes and connections between violence and their religion.”

http://atheism.about.com/od/religiousviolencecauses/
Religion is not the main cause of conflicts today. Whilst religion has evidently been a cause of many conflicts throughout history it is by no means the only reason for conflict. Surveying the state of 35 armed conflicts from 2013, religious elements did not play a role in 14, or 40 per cent. It is notable that religion did not stand as a single cause in any conflict; however 14 per cent did have religion and the establishment of an Islamic state as driving causes. Religion was only one of three or more reasons for 67 per cent of the conflicts where religion featured as a factor to the conflict.

Religion and violence

• What do we mean when we speak about religion in connection with violence?
  1. Religion as an opposition to violence
  2. Religion as a source of violence:
     • Religion may be the subject or the object of violence
## Religious violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Object</th>
<th>Religious group</th>
<th>Anti-religious group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious group</td>
<td>Religiously motivated violence against another religious group</td>
<td>Anti-religiously motivated violence against a religious group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-religious group</td>
<td>Religiously motivated violence against an anti-religious group</td>
<td>Ideologically motivated violence against an ideological group</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Religion as subject and object of violence

- Religion as a
  - Cause
  - Reason
  - Ground
  - Motivator/motivation to violence
- Violence may also be a reaction to religion.
- What do we mean by all this?
Further complications

1. Violence as the root of (monotheistic) religions
   • Religions claim to hold the truth and are therefore necessarily exclusive and hostile to non-believers, people of other faiths and dissidents of their own community.

2. Love and peace as the core of (the true understanding of) religion
   • People who use religion to justify the use of violence have misunderstood its message.
Religion and conflicts

- There is no single answer to the question concerning religion and conflicts.
  - Answering the question involves interpretations of many sorts.
Let’s study conflicts

• The history of conflict studies, two views:
  1. Conflict studies are as old as humankind
  2. Conflict studies started only after WW II
“War appears to be as old as mankind, but peace is a modern invention.”
- Sir Henry Maine (1822-1888)
- Situation natural to human beings:
  - War and/or violence?
  - Peace?
- Conflict studies:
  - Ancient, focus on war: military strategy, power politics
- Conflict resolution studies:
  - Modern, focus on peace
  - Multidisciplinary, multilevel, multicultural, analytic and normative as well theoretical and practical
Managing conflicts

• Managing conflicts as a continuum of concepts
  • Strategic warfare
  • Conflict management (e.g., ”Divide and rule.”)
  • Peace enforcement
  • Peace keeping
  • Peace making
  • Peace building
  • Conflict prevention
  • Strengthening the preconditions of peaceful co-existence
    – Pillars of peace
From conflict resolution to conflict resolution studies

- Historical process:
  - War is not a necessary and an unavoidable evil.
- Conflict resolution studies:
  - We must and can do something
    1. to mitigate the evils of violence (rules of war)
    2. to enhance peace-making and reconciliation
    3. to prevent violent conflicts (conflict prevention)
  - Both a theoretical approach and a practical enterprise
    - Based on factual research for a normative purpose, i.e., prevention of the ills of violence.
Conflict management reflects historical circumstances

- The understanding of conflicts and conflict prevention/management is dependent on political structures as well as the use and management of ongoing conflicts.
  - Roman empire, *Pax romana*
  - Ọ̀ràézè Ìrì, Kingdom of Nri
  - *Danelagen*, the Viking rule
  - *Mongol-yn Ezent Güren, Pax mongolica*
  - دَوْلَتِ عَلَيْهِ غَمْثَمَانِیِّه, *Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmâniyye*
  - British Empire, *Pax britannica*
  - *Pax sovietica, Pax americana*
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxDyJ_6N-6A
Conflict resolution studies

- The starting point of present conflict resolution studies is extremely Western and reflects the Western (view of) history.
- The four phases of conflict resolution
  1. Westphalian sovereignty
  2. Power-center approach
  3. Liberal peace
  4. "Re-invention of war" (2000-)
1. Westphalian sovereignty

- The Thirty Years’ War 1618-1648
  - A religious undercurrent behind the war:
    - Differing views concerning the understanding of Christianity (Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Hussites, Anglicans, Russian Orthodox)
  - Huge loss of lives, at some areas 50% of the male population and 20-40% of the whole population.
  - Utter material devastation: mercenary armies, looting
  - No victors only losers.
  - Violence and coercion are not a way to settle religious disputes.
Westphalian sovereignty

- Peace of Westphalia 1648
- New system of political order
  - Basis for national self-determination
    - Only sovereign states governed by a sovereign can act as international agents.
    - No outside interference to a sovereign state’s internal issues
    - The right to warfare is restricted: end of mercenary armies
  - The treaty as precursor of international law
  - Beginning of religious toleration (and freedom of thought) as a basic human right
Power-center approach

- Westphalian sovereignty emphasized the role of states as the basis of the international order.
- War is an instrument reserved for a state.
- International relations as an arena of power-struggle
  - Imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and Western cultural values (including religion)
- Peace is dependent on a balance between the most powerful states.
- The power-centers divide the world amongst each other.
Liberal peace

- After the WWII
  - Power-center view still prominent, the USA and the Soviet/Russia, China?
  - The role of international organizations: UN (IMF? World Bank? EU?)

- The developmental view:
  - Given the chance and with some aid, all nations will become (liberal? and capitalist?) democracies with the coloring of their particular history and culture.
  - Religion will lose its role to science as a guide.
  - Development is a way to a peaceful world.
"Reinvention of war"

- The history did not end: new and new kinds of conflicts.
  - Chaotic warzones: the battlefront is everywhere
  - The role of globalization and weak economies: collapsed states
  - New, cheap weapons: asymmetric warfare
  - The return of religion
  - Use of hightech and scientific enlightenedness do not go hand in hand.
  - Westphalian sovereignty, power-center-model and liberal peace no longer work
- What should be done?
Let’s get to work

- What does studying (religious) conflicts mean?
  - What should we know and (try to) understand?
- Historical case study
  - Indian rebellion of 1857
- Read the text and try to find answers to the following questions:
  - How can the text be used as a source for conflict (resolution) studies?
  - If we want to do conflict (resolution) studies, on which themes should we focus?
Course essay

- Write a 8-10 page essay using the lectures and course material to deal with the following:

  1. Choose a news article relevant for the theme of the course and write a commentary of the report.
  2. Apply the course material to analyze the Indian 1857 Rebellion, see the text in Matskut: *Indian 1857 Rebellion*

- All the material for the course are in Matskut: [https://matskut.helsinki.fi/handle/123456789/768](https://matskut.helsinki.fi/handle/123456789/768)
Homework


- What were the causes leading to the conflict?
Sources

- Michael Howard, The invention of peace and the reinvention of war, Profile Books, 2001
- Various articles