Causes of conflict (cont.)
Role of religion in conflicts
Three dimensions of living conditions

- Material
- Psychological and emotional
- Social

The dimensions are interconnected.

A change in one of the dimensions causes a change in the other two.

The nature of the change is relative to individual and social conditions.
Staub’s model 2

- Three sets of functions
  - Psychological processes (both social and individual)
  - Modes of action
  - Patterns of thought
- The functions are governed and directed by
  - cultural factors
  - ideological models.
Staub’s model 3

- Dimensions and functions put together:
  - Change in any dimension of the living conditions launches psychological processes and increases the need to act.
  - Psychological processes and modes of action are (often/easity) directed by patterns of thought.
  - Dimensions of living conditions and functions are governed and directed by
    - cultural factors
    - ideological models.
Does this make sense?

- Understanding the causes of a conflict
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQPlREDW-Ro](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQPlREDW-Ro)
- What could we add to the analysis with the help of Staub’s model?
Back to the agenda

- Circles of actors in violent conflict
- Patterns of thought
- The role of religion in violent conflicts
Circles of actors in violent conflicts

- Violent conflicts involve different types of actors depending on their proximity to violent acts and their attitude to the use of (ideologically justified) violence.
  - Servants of ideology (fanatics: ideology as an end in itself)
  - Parasites of ideology: ideology as a means for individual ends (e.g., revenge or individual psychological needs).
  - Sadists who find an outlet for their desires through ideology
  - Exploiters of ideology (for economic gain or the like)
  - Conformists (adaptation as a means)
  - By-standers
  - Retreaters
  - Passive resisters
  - Active resisters
Most crucial roles

- Fanatics
  - Problem: How does good turn into evil?
- Bystanders
  - Often the largest group, a role to play?
- Resisters
  - A futile victim or an effective agent of beneficial change?
The fanatic

- The purpose of (most) ideologies is to make the world a better place to live.
- How does good turn into evil: the way from devotee to fanatic
- Decisive questions:
  - Means and ends: do the noble ends justify the use of just any kinds of means?
  - The role and position of outsiders and dissidents: Is there just one way of life?
  - Are the critics treated as enemies or respected as an important resource for improvement?
  - Does the ideology define what is good or can we criticize the ideology morally?
The behavior of bystanders is (often) decisive:

- Escalation of the conflict into violence – resolving or transforming the conflict nonviolently
- Bystanders form a critical mass.
- Even a minimal sign of opposition may be decisive.
- Silence is most often interpreted as consent.
- If there is someone who breaks the silence or acts differently, it becomes easier for others to join in.
It’s hard to get involved

- It’s natural to people
  - not to meddle in each others’ business
  - to obey what an authority figure tells us to do (even when we would not like to)
- because we have a strong innate need to
  - belong to a group and to be part of a group
  - be accepted by a group/ be one with the group
  - be a good member of a group (being good makes me one of us)
  - excel and succeed
  - take part in co-operation
- Differing from the view and behavior of the majority (or of our own group) endangers these basic social goods
The resister

- Is the price paid for resisting too high: a futile and meaningless sacrifice?
- What is the motivation behind resistance: is resistance just a mirror image of the ideology it opposes?
- What is the motivation of the resister: vanity, self-aggrandizement, or the like? Does the motive matter?
- Do the ends and means of the resisters differ from those they wish to oppose?
- Are just any kinds of (dumb) heroes morally admirable?
  - Resisters should do the cost-benefit-analysis before acting.
  - In the end, team play, not individual heroism is what counts.
- Less may be more: the invisible work of “small” people
People (=we) tend to think and structure our view of reality along fixed patterns of thought.

Patterns of thought have the tendency to become an integrated part of our sense of reality that directs our actions.
Patterns of thought

Patterns of thought that direct our action

1. We – others dichotomy
2. The just world fallacy
3. Image of the radical evil
4. Finding the scapegoat
5. Utilizing the victim position: self-victimization
6. The myth of scarcity
1. We – others

Starting point

1. I am good.
2. Those who belong to the same group as I, are like me.
3. We are good.
4. Not everyone belongs to our group.
5. Outsiders are different from us.

Inference:

Those who are not part of us, are not good.
Those who oppose us are bad/evil.
Need to protect one’s self-image

- Worsening of living conditions often gives rise to the need of protecting one’s self-image.
- Factors that strengthen the need to protect one’s self-image:
  - Sense of superiority (change poses a personal insult)
  - conviction concerning a right to rule over others
  - (often unconscious) uncertainty concerning one’s own value
- The need to protect one’s self-image calls forth the need to strengthen one’s group-identity.
- Easiest way to strengthen group-identity:
  - Creating a threatening Other.
Strategies in terms of the "Other"

1. Projecting guilt to the Other:
   - Cherishing a memory of offence, suffering, humiliation or victimhood

2. The Other as impediment:
   - Fight for a common cause: struggle against those who are seen as hindrances (struggle-identity)

3. The Other as exploiter:
   - Life is a battle to regain what is rightfully ours (battle-identity)

4. The other as stain:
   - Cleansing the community/society/world and purifying oneself (sanctification-identity)
   - Two strategies:
     - Isolating or eliminating the Other – Isolating one’s group
We-groups

- We-groups tend to strengthen uniformity of opinion and aggravate differences (between us and "them", against dissidents).
- Antidote:
  1. Allowing and encouraging expression of different opinions
  2. Cherishing an atmosphere of self-criticism
- 1. and 2. help to prevent
  - schematic thinking in terms of we – the others
  - misrepresentation of reality
Communities based on a singular model of good life maintain their stability through pressure to uniformity.

A collective culture of social compliance serves as a basis for authoritarian leadership and weakens the resource to think and live differently.
2. Fallacy of a just world

- We tend to think that there is (basically) some sort of justice behind everything that happens.
  - Those who fare ill (must) have (somehow) deserved it.
  - "They must have done something."
  - "There must have been something wrong with him."
  - "You reap what you sow."
  - Blaming the victim
  - Law of Karma
3. The myth of pure evil

- Evil comes from outside
  - We, in our group, are basically good.
  - Evil occurs unexpectedly and takes us always by surprise.
  - "He was always so polite and nice to children."
- Evil has no connection to anything that took place previously.
  - The 9/11
- Evil is inexplicable and resembles forces of nature.
- Explaining the cause of evil
  - totalizing explanations and static features such as a person’s character, becoming crazy, ethnic attributes, etc.
The myth of pure evil is detrimental

- The easiest (and most efficient?) means of improving things is to start from oneself (and one’s group).
- If evil is something outside of us and it is seen as something alien and incomprehensible, we give up (perhaps the only possible) means to change things.
- The myth of pure evil distorts our picture of reality (and of ourselves) and weakens our resources of constructive action.
4. Scapegoat

- We have a strong tendency to
  - keep up a positive self-image
  - make sense of reality by seeking explanations
  - find a culprit when something goes wrong.
- For this reason:
  - It is characteristic for human beings to find someone to blame when things go wrong (even because of my own mistakes but especially in adversity)
- Fallacy of social blame:
  - Solving problems = placing guilt on someone and punishing them
5. Making use of the victim position

- The world is basically good and just:
  - People get what they deserve.
- There is an exception:
  - If I/we fare ill, someone else (an evil outsider) is to blame.
  - “It’s really, really unjust!”
  - I am / we are an innocent (and helpless) victim of circumstances/evil people.
- Victim position offers many kinds of advantages but it
  - prevents us from taking notice of the situation as a whole.
  - weakens our resources of action.
  - restrains us from taking responsibility.
6. Myth of scarcity

- There is not enough of anything:
  - space, nutrition, employment, possibilities, power
- For this reason others are our rivals/adversaries.
- Myth of scarcity combined with a totalizing ideology reinforces the dichotomy between us and them:
  - Immigrants take over our country!
  - Heretics will corrupt the purity of our faith!
  - Foreign influences will destroy our culture!
Force of patterns of thought

- Patterns of thought have an impact on our views and actions.
- Patterns of thought are linked with ideological models of explanation.
- Particular cultures
  - enforce or weaken fixed patterns of thought
  - help or inhibit to criticize fixed patterns of thought,
- The more different points of view we can attain, the less prone we are to act according to fixed patterns of thought.
- Essential resources: humor, comedy, satire, farce and joking are focal in making visible the force and nature of patterns of thought and revealing their ridiculousness.
Role of religion in violent conflicts

• Why speak about religion?
• Three views:
  • There seem to be aspects in human sociality that the political-social-psychological models cannot cover.
  • There are incidents that seem to be incomprehensible if we do not take religion into account.
  • We need to study the nature and role of religion.
• [Link](http://jihadology.net/2014/06/19/al-%e1%b8%a5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-al-sham-there-is-no-life-without-jihad/)
Approaches to the role of religion

1. Religion is part of the socio-cultural tradition and should be given attention as part of the heritage of a particular group.

2. Religion is a remnant of primitive thinking. Religious practices will vanish and religious belief will be replaced by a scientific world view when people get education and attain a higher living standard.

3. Religion is a specific sphere of life that cannot be (fully) understood by reducing it to other phenomena.
Understanding religion

• How to make sense of religion?
  • Religion is human response to a reality perceived as sacred.
• Different features in religion
  • Creed, doctrine, dogmas, religious language
  • Cult and rites, religious deeds
  • Confessional community, religious sociality
  • Code of conduct
    • Ethics and morality
    • Piety, practices and way of life
• We cannot understand religion unless we think it can be understood.
  • Religion is not senseless or irrational.
The three levels of religious language

- 1\textsuperscript{st} level
  - Language in religious use: cult, rites, prayer, meditation etc.

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} level
  - Language of religious authority and teaching: formulations of doctrine and creeds, moral teaching, spiritual guidance

- 3\textsuperscript{rd} level
  - Use of philosophical (and other) methods to (critically) analyze the meaning and use of religious language of 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} levels.
# Religion – something specific?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Social life</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Rules of an institution</td>
<td>Cultural self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cult</td>
<td>Opening of the parliamentary season</td>
<td>Graduation ceremony of a university</td>
<td>Theater, art exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confessional community</td>
<td>Members of a political party</td>
<td>Members of a sports club, NGO, a people?</td>
<td>Members of a language group/nation??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices and way of life</td>
<td>Rule of law</td>
<td>How to behave in the sauna</td>
<td>Culturally justified practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and morality</td>
<td>Code of conduct for party members</td>
<td>Group morality</td>
<td>Habits of a nation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Religion – public and/or private?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Collective</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public</strong></td>
<td>Religious opening ceremony of parliament</td>
<td>Announcing a prayer meeting in a newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private</strong></td>
<td>Taking part in a religious service for personal reasons</td>
<td>Praying and meditating sacred texts alone at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Religion represents the ultimate reality.
  - Religion is (never just) private.
- Religion and secularization
  - Two strategies: inclusivism - exclusivism
Religion in the public sphere

- Private devotion
  - Does it have any public meaning?
- Institutional participation
  - Does it have political implications?
- Social life
  - With whom do we share our lives?
- Political life
  - Public use of religious arguments: who is the audience
  - Religious justification – secular arguments
- Cultural life
  - Separate or shared cultures?
- Emotional life
  - With whom do we bond?
Are there religious actions?

- How does religion show itself?
- Are there
  - specific religious actions?
  - actions that have religious meaning?
  - actions that only make sense from a religious viewpoint?
- Modes, motivations and means of action
  - With whom, for whom, how and for what purposes
We – the other

- The distinction we – them gains specific significance within a religious framework.
- The borders of the we-group
  - Myth of the just world
  - Radical evil
  - Innocence of the victim
- Three strategies for encountering the other:
  - Inclusivism (focus on similarities)
  - Exclusivism (focus on differences)
  - Pluralism (focus on diversity and sharing)
  - Parallelism (separate and common spheres of life)
Internal conflicts

- Three possible sources of internal conflicts
  - Competing interpretations of the fundamentals of the religious tradition in a novel situation (change of living conditions)
  - Religious tradition as a continuum of different interpretations (what is the core of the “true” tradition, which strand of the tradition should we follow)
  - Internal pluralism of a religious tradition:
    - Threat to purity and unity?
    - Resource of renewal and adaptation?
    - Challenge: reconciling the ideal with the real
The specific nature of religion

- Religion is connected to other spheres of life in many ways.
- There are still features in religion that cannot be reduced to anything else.
- Religion is not good or bad, it may be both:
  - Strange and uncontrollable harmony of contrasts.
- Religion is connected to the sacred as the ultimate (nature of) reality, the source of all being.
- The numinous quality ultimate things:
  - *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (Rudolf Otto)
Religious thinking and action

- Because of the specific nature of religion, thinking and acting for religious reasons and from religious motivation is ...
  - not just a question concerning the army uniform or the types of cartridges...
  - Religious reasons are often/usually/always connected with other kinds of reasons.
Religious thinking and action: meaning and significance

- Religious reasons and motivation give (deeper) meaning and significance to one’s actions and life in general.
  - “Bigger picture”: eternity,
  - Wider scope: divine perspective
  - More encompassing significance: sanctity, final purpose
  - More noble motives: fulfilling the will of God
  - Graver consequences: violating the divine order/ultimate goal, eternal destiny
Religion as motivator

- Religion opens a wider and a more profound view to reality, agency and setting of goals.
  - Not just for the visible world
  - Not just out of my own strength and ability
  - Not just for the sake of myself and for my loved ones
- Religious motivation is a powerful instrument of change.
  - Hope, energy, significance
Religious motivation: for good or bad?

- The core of religions is a promise:
  - Better life
  - Better morality
  - More significant agency
- Crucial question: for whom is the promise given?
  - How is the “We” of religion defined?
- What happens to the outsiders and the dissidents?
- What is the nature of the good of religion and the human good?
Crucial distinctions

- Relationship between mundane life and the “otherworldly”
  - Continuity – discontinuity
- Relationship between “Us” and “Them”
  - The deviant we: heretics, sinners, apostates
  - The truly other: possible converts, outsiders, the cursed ones, enemies of faith?
- Role of the chosen/saved/believers:
  - Divine instrument: crusade, retribution
  - Coworker for a higher cause: mission, calling, sacrifice
- The real enemy
  - Infidels, secularization, heretics
  - One’s own imperfection, sinfulness, fallibility
Religion and violence

- Religion as such does not provoke or lead to violence.
- The inclination to use violence depends on the interpretation concerning
  - We-They division,
  - Relationship between the mundane and the sacred, this world and eternity
  - Nature of religious motivation
  - Interpretation of the cause of evil
Are some religions more violent than others?

- All religions can be (and have been) used as a cause and motivation for violence.
- The mainline tradition of all religions stresses
  - the duty not to kill or to harm
  - the call to compassion, benevolence and mercy.
Differences between religions

- "Activist" traditions
  - Stress the religious obligation to change the world.
  - Are effective in building and renewing societies.
- "Passive" traditions
  - Stress meditation and inwardness as ways to the divine.
  - The "activist traditions" are more effective in building and renewing societies.
  - The "activist traditions" are more liable to using violence.
(Why) is religious pluralism a problem?

- Religious pluralism is often connected with
  - Disunity
  - Secularization
  - Loosening of morality
  - Loss of doctrinal purity
What’s so tempting in religious extremism?

- How do mechanisms of social persuasion enhance religious extremism?
- Why is religious extremism “the answer”?
  - Material needs
  - Social needs
  - Emotional need
  - Meaning of life
  - Morality
  - Way of life
What can we do if

- The fanatic can be totally unyielding.
- The force of arguments fail:
  - Cost-effect analysis doesn’t apply.
  - Moral arguments don’t count.
  - Concerns concerning the future don’t matter.
  - Epistemological consistency doesn’t signify.
Arguing with religious extremists – difficulties to overcome

- We are the chosen and elect.
- Having to suffer for one’s conviction is a sign of belonging to the elected.
- We have special and secret knowledge and see reality in the right light.
- We are one and our group is unanimous.
- Dissidence is a sign of the work of the devil.
- Criticism is not a resource but a vehement attack motivated by jealousy and envy.
- Intolerance towards outsiders is not only legitimate but a duty.
Why we comply

• Mechanisms of social persuasion
  1. prevent people from noticing the nature of their actions and commitments
  2. (may) contribute to a process that leads to actions their agents cannot (actually) approve.

• The force of the mechanisms lies in their corresponding with basic (psychological and social) needs and patterns of thought.

• Knowing how the mechanisms work helps to inhibit their effect.
1. Reciprocity

1. Children are socialized to act according to the principle of reciprocity
   • Receiving a gift establishes a duty to reciprocate it. (logic of the gift).

2. Acting against the logic of the gift is a source of disapproval and guilt.

3. The chain of favors and favors in return
   • binds people to continual relationships
   • creates a sense of future duties.
Manipulative use of reciprocity

The principle of reciprocity can be used manipulatively by

1. offering (surprise) ”gifts” or (unexpected) “services” in a manner that the receiver is compelled to accept what is being given.

2. expecting counter gifts and services that exceed the value of the original gift or service,

3. expressing first an unreasonable demand and reacting to opposition with a second, much more moderate petition. The recipient is cheated to accept the second request for the sake of avoiding the unreasonable demand.

4. using gifts and services for creating an illusion of a continuous relationship that (seems to) constitute(s) the requirement to reciprocate endlessly.
2. Consistency

1. There is a strong human need to be consistent in one’s thoughts and actions.

2. Consistency is a (often) sign of trustworthiness and firmness. Such characteristics are an asset in positive social relationships.

3. Consistency helps to make decisions: following one’s principles saves time.

4. Consistency is connected with right-mindedness and honorability.
Consistency and commitment

1. It’s easy to make people commit themselves to something of little importance. Consistency requires that we stick to our commitments even if they change over time. (using a bait)

2. An active, publicly made and voluntary act of commitment that is made after achieving something important is the most effective means to tie people to organizations and activities and increases the need to act consistently.
Manipulative use of consistency

1. First, create
   - principles that guide and obligate to certain types of action and
   - conditions that make the commitment to follow these principles seem both necessary and essential

2. Then,
   - those who have committed themselves to the group/ideology/organization
   - will start to make up and express justificatory grounds why they must stick to the principles and cannot act otherwise.
3. Conformity

1. Acting as a member of a group and conformity with other members of the group increase the possibility to be accepted by the group.

2. There is a strong human tendency to modify one’s actions and thoughts (even perceptions) to conform with actions and thoughts of the majority even when it would be rational to act and think differently.

3. The tendency to conform with others speeds up decisions: you don’t have to consider everything, just follow those who know better.
   - The majority must know best (so many people cannot be wrong).
1. Opinion of the majority is used as a justification for something being necessary. (*Never a valid argument!*)

2. The opinion of a group is presented as something that is based on careful reasoning.
   - If you don’t agree, there must be something wrong with you.

3. The most efficient way to use the majority knows best argument is to claim that the group consists of a chosen elite.
   - If you want to be part of the elite, it’s necessary to comply to their thoughts and actions.
4. Need to being liked by others

1. There is a strong human need to be liked by those whom we like, admire and/or feel fond of.
2. It’s a common human tendency to try to please those whom we like and admire.
   • We are prone to fulfill their requests.
3. We tend to like those whose features and characteristics are (somehow) favorable for us.
Manipulative use of the need to be liked

1. Praising and complimenting the object.
   - “They told me I am intelligent. By the way, I bought this.”
   - Reciprocity comes to your help here.

2. Influencing is easier if the speaker/leader is pleasant, polite, intelligent and (seems to have been) successful.

3. Claiming that the speaker and the listeners share many praiseworthy features.
   - We want to think that we are good and we like people who are similar to us.

4. Claiming that this is something familiar.

5. Combining our ideology/cause with important and/or pleasant things.
5. Authority

1. Complying to authorities is part of the important socialization process in childhood.

2. There is a strong human tendency to obey authority figures.

3. Obeying authority figures is (often) rational.
   - People often have an authority position for a good reason (knowledge, experience, resources etc.).

Dangers:

- We may wish to follow authority figures because we are too lazy to think and want to avoid responsibility.
- We wish to please the powerful.
- We don’t make the necessary distinctions between different (types of) authority figures.
Manipulative use of authority

- Manipulators may make use of
  - Symbols of authority, such as uniforms, clothing, badges, titles and the like
  - Authority position, e.g., buildings, rooms, furniture, paraphernalia, etc.
  - Showing exaggerated respect towards the authority figure
6. Scarcity

1. We tent to give more value to things that are difficult to obtain, that are scarce or that require extra effort to get than to things that are available to everyone and that are easy to get.

2. There is a link between value and effort.

3. One values things that one attains only after an effort.

4. New things seem to us more tempting than those we are familiar with (despite the effort needed).

5. The value of something is even bigger if you have to compete with others to get it.
Manipulative use of scarcity

1. Creating an impression that it is difficult to obtain something (special issue, limited edition, exclusively for our golden club members, only for the brave and fearless, etc.)

2. Creating an impression that delaying your decision will lead to final loss:
   
   • Act now, otherwise it’s gone forever
   • Others will take advantage of the offer in your stead, they get, you don’t.
Sources

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