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## Peace from Below: Recent Steps Taken along the Track-Two Diplomacy Path

Michael Thomas Kuchinsky

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## Peace from Below: Recent Steps Taken along the Track-Two Diplomacy Path

### Abstract

A review of:

Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution. Edited by David Little. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

and

Peace Out of Reach: Middle Eastern Travels and the Search for Reconciliation. By Stephen Eric Bronner. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

### Keywords

Protracted conflict, Peacebuilding, Track-two diplomacy, Middle East, Africa, Cosmopolitanism, Religion

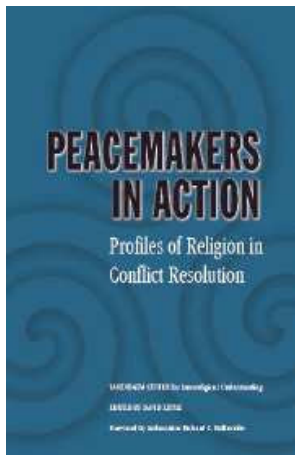
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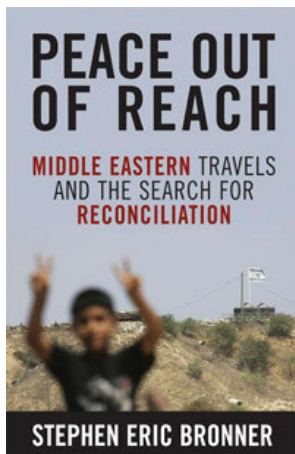
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## Peace from Below: Recent Steps Taken along the Track-Two Diplomacy Path

By Michael Thomas Kuchinsky

**Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution.** Edited by David Little. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.



**Peace Out of Reach: Middle Eastern Travels and the Search for Reconciliation.** By Stephen Eric Bronner. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

Among the many emotional galleries at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, stands a series of tablets describing persons whose courage and compassion pushed them to conceal or save the lives of those hunted by the Nazi regime for extermination. The biographical displays end near the exit doors. Perhaps their placement suggests a purpose, or an interpretation: “Here were people of good will or faith whose conscience pricked them to act against a genuine evil and for a reconciled community.” “Here were some who did more good than harm.” “Here were prophetic voices who understood the urgency of the moment.” “Here were some who hoped in the midst of despair.” Or, “here were those whose visions for humanity were broader than mere power and violence, who believed in the possibilities of peace through human intervention.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The history of World War II offers numerous such examples. One whose actions are included in the Holocaust Museum’s gallery of caregivers was Pastor Andre Trocme’ and his village community and Huguenot congregation in France. The story has been told in Phillip Halle’s book, *Lest Innocent Blood be Shed*, as well as a made-for-public-television documentary. Another storied individual from the time whose family was invested in moving Jews out of Germany as well as other anti-Nazi and religious reconciliation efforts, was the Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The books under review in this essay, the collection of “profiles in reconciliation (as well as courage)” sponsored by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding and edited by David Little, and Stephen Bronner’s intellectual and physical journey across the Middle East examine those who accept similar invitations to struggle for a more peaceful world, for human security rather than persistent violence.

Recently, and certainly since the end of the Cold War, interest in the efforts made by individuals and non-state actors to reduce or solve violent social conflict has increased.<sup>2</sup> Little’s and Bronner’s books add to that descriptive legacy by providing case studies and analysis of individual and group efforts aimed at solving some of the world’s most entrenched conflicts. Their focus is not on any state or national leader, but rather on good-willed and courageous persons from diverse settings, much like those seen at the end of the visitor’s walk through the Holocaust Museum. Little and Bronner point at individuals and their relationships, grassroots organizations or networks, and what their interactions might do to build more peaceful communities and narratives. They are personal stories holding onto the assumption that face-to-face is where the root causes of these conflicts are best understood and where new possibilities for human security might emerge. The two books exemplify the work of multi-track or track-two diplomacy as pioneered by Louise Diamond and John MacDonald, and their relationship to track-two diplomacy is examined below.<sup>3</sup> Though the narratives are compelling and, as models, provide reminders that all persons might be responsible or at least contribute to the pursuit of greater peace, questions should be raised if human will and individual efforts will be enough even under optimal conditions.

The conflict cases, their characteristics, also bring the books together. Consider that the conflicts reviewed include states of the Middle East and Central Asia, Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Horn of Africa, portions of West Africa, and South Africa. Conflicts there have been durable, multi-variate, involving numerous social groups and identities. The causes for the conflicts include economic and political inequities, profound histories of grievance and loss, and contentions over identity, where any cause might catalyze a new cycle of violence and uneasy truce. The settings are not necessarily failed states,<sup>4</sup> although questions can be (and are) raised about the legitimacy of available authority and governance. They have been settings of *protracted* conflict, inclusive of all of the above causal factors and representing hundreds of years of bloodshed.<sup>5</sup> Certainly each case warrants the pursuit of what the authors are presenting—the need and efforts underway for

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Numerous secondary sources, his Letters and Papers from Prison, as well as at least two films released in the last decade have been efforts to detail the role of religious life and thought in settings of extreme violence.

<sup>2</sup> Some earlier work in this field includes the case studies of Johnston and Sampson (1994), Avruch, et. al (1991), and the substantial body of localized and elicited conflict resolution theory and on-the-ground practice of John Paul Lederach and his colleagues at Eastern Mennonite University.

<sup>3</sup> An older but still well delineated approach to the field of multi-track diplomacy is still Diamond and MacDonald (1996).

<sup>4</sup> William Zartman provided a thorough examination of the nature and evolution of failed states in his Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority (1995).

<sup>5</sup> The term and theory of protracted conflict—ones known for their durability, multiple causes, and ability to spiral back into violence with any new conflict factor—was championed by the late Edward Azar. The theory and case studies appear in The Management of Protracted Social Conflict (1990), and in an earlier and condensed form in the journal *International Interactions* 12, pages 60-69.

resolution and reconciliation by alternate means—but protracted conflict, by definition, requires multiple inputs of resources for conflict resolution.

Though they share the same subject and level of analysis, in other ways, however, they are different books spotlighting distinct approaches. Peacemakers in Action is presented as relatively untold and even surprising information, a type of comparative social history of intentional action by individuals caught up by violence yet who believe that reconciled human communities are possible and necessary. The Tanenbaum Center peacemakers work from within their conflict settings. They are local religious leaders from various world religious traditions who find their voice/vocation because their context and their religious principles will not allow them to flee. They use a range of religious ideas, rituals, moral persuasion, spiritual education, or sermons for their craft. Their efforts and hopes originate from their religious faith.

Peace out of Reach is one man's journey, a travel story searching amid modern history and the ruins of past policies for a new and relevant “roadmap” of recommendations that might reconcile a region. Bronner does not so much react to a specific case, but acts upon his cosmopolitan principles. Bronner's citizen diplomacy in search of reconciliation comes as an American citizen and academic, as an outsider to the conflicted settings of the Middle East, whose primary audience is the American people and the US policy maker.

Religion and, perhaps more so, the individual faith of local religious leaders, is a significant aspect of the Tanenbaum peacemaker stories. Religion is motivational and guiding, providing the peacemakers with some of their peacebuilding strategies. For Bronner, religion need not be positive or negative. As a cosmopolitan, it is one variable among many.

The books are about people who both walk the walk and talk the talk of peace. Are these courageous stories and even insightful examinations of the conflicts and their motivations useful and complete? How far do they go towards understanding and alleviating the reality of chronic violence? For while viewing the actions taken by persons grappling with enduring hatreds and grievances may be ennobling, necessary, and even prophetic, they are not sufficient by themselves to resolve, let alone reconcile the many dimensions presented by protracted conflicts. They must be placed into a system of peacebuilding initiatives and institutions. This is where the essay ultimately ends—after reviewing each book's arguments and considerable strengths—by placing them alongside the work of other track-two diplomats and the problems of chronic and cyclical violence.

### **Tanenbaum's Peacemakers**

The Tanenbaum Center of New York City is a non-sectarian non-profit organization that focuses attention and resources on conflict and conflict resolution. Peacemakers in Action is a program developed by Tanenbaum that supports grassroots religious leaders from around the world enabling them to discuss with others their efforts and proposals in pursuit of conflict resolution, the reconciliation of their home communities, and their hope for lasting peace. The book's information also aims to assist those in diplomatic positions and others involved in negotiation by providing new and less utilized information related to religion, conflict, and peace. Their actions are taken at great personal sacrifice to themselves and their families. The core idea of the Peacemakers Program is that

religion and practitioners of faith are useful, important, and essential to the peaceful outcomes of longstanding violent conflicts. The editor of Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution, David Little, formerly pioneered and headed-up the Religion and Conflict Unit of the United States Institute for Peace in Washington, DC. Taken together, the Tanenbaum Center's mission, the project goals, the individual peacemakers, and the editor are well matched and produce a highly readable addition to the literature of conflict resolution and the *vocation* of religious peacemaking.

The vocation of the Tanenbaum peacemakers is not presented as a profession of organized conflict resolution, or as a scholarly pursuit, but instead in the religious character of a ministry by someone who has been “called out” to render such service. The peacemakers are explorers of sorts, who, over time and through the grit of effort, discover what is possible in the nexus between their daily circumstances, communities and contexts, and the compass of their moral principles and treasured religious beliefs.

Each case follows a rhythm. A short introductory section invites the reader into the case either through an evocative incident in the life of the peacemaker, or a significant event in the cycle of the conflict. This is followed by an overview and evolution of the conflict, the actors or groups involved, and major turning points or catalysts. The review of the conflict opens the door to discuss the work of the peacemaker. Most are solitary figures whose lives moved with the sorrow and urgency of events in their homelands, while in three cases (Israel/Palestine, Nigeria, and Northern Ireland) several peacemakers' stories from religious perspectives that are locally in conflict with each other are woven together. In these latter cases, it is not only the issue of a religion's contribution to the local peacebuilding process that is of interest, but the working relationships established in the face of hardened religious boundaries (Protestant and Roman Catholic, Christian and Islamic, etc.). The successes and setbacks made by the peacemakers add interest to the stories making them accessible figures. Each peacemaker's method is unique and contextual (for instance, the use of the elders' traditions in Ethiopia, or a Kosovar monk's use of the Internet, or the use of trustbuilding consultations to change established perceptions by Protestants and Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland). Their differences point to the flexibility and intuition required of the peacemaker in her/his vocation. Yet when collected, the peacemakers' successes and failures form a type of catechism, the much sought after “best practices” based upon grassroots experience. The cases conclude by describing any prospects and next steps that lay ahead for the peacemaker.

Taken as a whole, the religious peacemakers constitute an impressive group. They come from four continents—Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. They represent the three Abrahamic faiths—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as the three major historic divisions in Christianity—Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism. They are spread out across fourteen nation-states or territories where chronic and protracted conflicts have occurred, representing some of the world's oldest heritages (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan) as well as the youngest nation-states (Kosovo). Many are involved in mediation processes in their conflicted homelands. But the distinctive quality that Peacemakers in Action contributes is an ever present reminder that these men and women are religious leaders who come to their social or political task first because of their spiritual commitments and strengths. They do not choose to be conflict resolution specialists or negotiators of truces and treaties. They are local religious leaders. The religious tools of their trade—the pulpit, their scriptures, moral codes, ecclesial organizations and

networks, spiritual rituals and liturgies—complement their skills in communication and patience as they tend to their vocations of peacemaking in contexts of social violence.<sup>6</sup> The Sudanese case featuring William Lowery’s use of meaningful religious ritual and symbolic language for the Nuer and Dinka peoples, or the declaration of a “zone of peace” tradition used in West Papua/Indonesia case, are but two examples of religious behaviors incorporated into local peacemaking processes.

Part of the significance of the Tanenbaum Center’s project with the religious peacemakers was to bring their diverse methods, successes and failures, learnings, and thoughts about the future together in one volume. The tools of religious peacebuilding in the pursuit of reconciliation are displayed and suggest that religious leaders have potent methods and responsibilities at their disposal should they wish to recognize and utilize them. The Israeli/Palestinian and Nigerian cases detail the importance of interfaith dialogue. From Afghanistan comes a story about providing training opportunities for women, using the Koran to teach peace. From Ireland, on both sides of the “peace lines,” and from the Balkan cases, come stories of priests, monks, and ministers engaged in mediation, arbitration, and direct (if at times behind the scenes) negotiation practices. From West Papua, Indonesia as well as from Latin America, come accounts of purposeful organizing that empowers local citizens towards leadership as well as the use of regional sanctuary, the *zone of peace*, to provide safety for those who wish to live free of violence and under human security.

As important as the diversity variable is in the Tanenbaum Center’s program, diversity demands a closer inspection. Some significant chronic conflicts are not a part of the Peacemakers in Action project, or at least not this version of it. The violence that rocks Sri Lanka, or the increasingly fragile harmony of Muslims and Hindus in India, the semi-violent tensions of Tibetan China, the communitarian difficulties of Kashmir and Jammu, the often described cases of identity violence in the Great Lakes region of East Central Africa, or even the multiple religious based nationalisms in modern day Iraq are not a part of this group of cases. The proximity between some of these geographies of misery and the presence of weapons of mass destruction might heighten their importance over against other examples of chronic conflict. Their absence from the project does not lessen the important contributions and value of the Peacemakers in Action approach—only raise an eyebrow and wonder “why aren’t they here.” Additional questions can be raised over the absence of certain religions or types of religious experience.

It is never easy to construct a typology that can cover the available cases for religious agents operating politically, or religious activities in peacebuilding. Typologies tend to describe rather than offer cast-iron explanations. Eric Hanson’s typology divides the social behaviors of the world’s major religions—especially in their relationships to the public spheres of politics, economics, security, and communications—on whether they emphasize the scriptural authority of their faith, the expressive and meditative dimensions of their faith, or how their faith might be involved helping to produce public order. Hanson, who teaches political science at Santa Clara University in California, calls these categories “religions of the book, of meditative experience, and of public life” putting

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<sup>6</sup> A very lucid and persuasive argument on how and why this works and is important comes from Hanson (2006). Hanson not only describes how the political world contributes to the dialogue with religion over issues of conflict and its resolution, but goes into detail on the importance of religion and the characteristics and behaviors that are religiously motivated are the means by which religions engage the political world and global conflict.

forward definitions of religion that are inclusive of both immanent as well as transcendent experience. For Hanson, religion need not be “God-centered” in order for it to still be religious (2006). If one were to look on the heritages of the Tanenbaum peacemakers through Hanson’s categories of religion, their diversity of religious heritage for all would be as examples of religions of the book. Again, this does not minimize the importance of the Tanenbaum peacemakers, or their tremendous (some might say, miraculous) accomplishments. They have done marvelous things. But it is enough to make one wonder—Where are the others? Why are they not here? Are there none? and so on. There is room to suggest investigating the relationship between more theoretical works such as Hanson’s on religious-political behavior and the peacemaker project.

Although the cases follow a pattern and tell compelling stories, some caution should be used regarding their comparability. The book’s introduction and to some extent its concluding chapter, make efforts to tie the stories together, but they are held up more for description rather than comparative analysis. Including a comparative chart would have been useful to both the professional conflict analyst as well as the individual interested in such knowledge. But again, the uniqueness of each mini-biography is the project’s strength. The spotlight of the Tanenbaum Center’s project is aimed at persons and their profiles of peacebuilding behaviors and motives. This is a heuristic project. This is what makes the project significant.

### **Making Peace Less “Out of Reach”: Bronner’s Cosmopolitan Sensibility**

Bronner’s book relies on his experiences with Middle East regional conflict for its analysis on how to move the region towards greater stability. The cover photograph, as well as the book’s chosen title, is bound to raise questions. Juxtaposing “peace out of reach” alongside “the search for reconciliation” brings to mind the fruitlessness of the search, or at least the very long odds for the search to achieve its goal. The cover photograph parallels such sentiments with an out of focus Palestinian child waving his hands in the middle of a ravine of garbage and rubble, his fingers outstretched to form a peace symbol...or is it the “V” for victory? What remains focused is the long view of the picture with its unlimited sky and an Israeli flag atop a fortress. Should peace be seen in the distant rather than the near future? Is Israel at the center or focus of the constraints to Middle East peace and reconciliation? Will hope fade with the clarity of the Palestinian child? Or are photograph and title there to assault the senses, that is, to conclude that a peace that is out of reach for the Middle East region cannot be entertained? Nothing in the region’s recent past and certainly little in the present moment erases the uneasiness, ambiguity, and tension that Bronner leaves with the reader before they even open the cover. The gentle optimism for the future that might come through the works of the Tanenbaum peacemakers is not Bronner’s intent either as an academic, a citizen of the United States, or (dare one say it?) as a global citizen. Bronner’s effort comes across more like the prophets of the Jewish scriptures, individuals who did their best in their time to provide warnings of danger to those in power. If so, he might run the risk of reaping a similar reward—a prophet being “not without honor, save for his own country and in his own house!” (Matthew 13:57).

It is unclear whether disappointment or exuberance should greet the reader once they move beyond the cover and its trenchant ambiguity concerning regional peace and human security. In a way, Bronner’s language and his craft for advocating public policies could excite the reader, for what



Bronner advocates is meant to contribute new thoughts and proposals that could break through old regional stalemates. One might recall a much earlier prophetic appeal of hope and the new thoughts from which “the old will dream dreams and your young will see visions” (Joel 1:28). Yet the legacy of his journey—to Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, and Sudan—reads like a tale from lands of intractable misery and where longsuffering, rather than hope, is the salient virtue.

What anchors Bronner’s book? In a word it must be “dialogue.” And then there is the pursuit of dialogue. And finally there is a strident polemic against those in power in the United States who do not dialogue, especially with America’s enemies.

The latter judgment is aimed at the recently exited Bush Administration and its supporters from America’s conservatives and the Christian Evangelical Right. For Bronner, the Bush Administration had been the epitome of those who do not dialogue, who do not listen to other perspectives. They are those “committed to a self-serving globalism rather than cosmopolitanism, (whose) officials lied to the American public and to the international community,” carrying with it “a peculiar arrogance informed (by) the twin beliefs that only the United States – and perhaps a few of its close allies – has the right to engage in preemptive strike and doing so will evoke limitless gratitude from liberated peoples who wish only to be like us” (6, 7).

Although the passage points to President Bush, the United States, and their efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the sentiment behind these statements carry over throughout Bronner’s Middle East journey and is directed at any who avoid or do not permit dialogue. Thus, as a dialogue partner, the United States, its recently exited leadership, and its foreign policy “increasingly resembles that of a corporate thug – half obsessed with power and half paranoid at the thought of that power being challenged” (7).

From the same breath as his critique of people in power who will not dialogue with those who may have different perspectives on history is Bronner’s principle value and alternative vision/mission—cosmopolitanism—or as it is used in the text, the “cosmopolitan sensibility.” So important is this sensibility, that whatever optional value it may have had in the past, Bronner determines it is essential for our time. After giving credit to Immanuel Kant and others who defined cosmopolitanism in the past, Bronner’s pitch for cosmopolitan sensibility becomes:

*Empathy for others who bear the costs of political action, providing social content to human rights, even as it highlights the moment of solidarity in resisting the exercise of arbitrary power and the dead weight of provincial traditions. It presumes the goodwill necessary to step outside of oneself, criticize the cruder forms of national interest, and engage the other in meaningful dialogue. Any genuinely democratic undertaking (or policy) must be transparent and accountable with respect to the material interests and ethical intentions informing it and that moral and practical limits be place on what is permissible. (6)*

Envisioned is a type of dialectic between one’s home or national intuitions and what the “other” can legitimately expect in return. At one level, the sensibility is a dialogue between the self, and what the self may see of itself in other selves. It is a dialogue that ultimately encourages both consonance and dissonance in intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. At another level, it is the dialogue over the gives and takes, opportunities and constraints, and face-to-face encounters for

change/cooperation/conflict that the pluralist realities of a globalized world permits between persons and communities, communities and communities, states, and supranational entities.

It is not stretching the intent of the author to say that he believes he practices cosmopolitan sensibility. The book's "travel" chapters are individual units of effort taken to advance the vision and mission that a cosmopolitan sensibility encourages others to follow. As cosmopolitan sensibility (CS) stands outside of any particular tradition (religious or otherwise), it acts as both a method and a norm. Bronner separates the practice and norms of CS from any simple identification with Western freedoms and liberalisms when these become little more than acts of license. These CS components are used critically against the West in chapters that discuss events that angered Muslims—cartoons demeaning of the Prophet Mohammad and released in various European publications and historical themes in a speech by the current Pope regarding the use of violence and Islam. For Bronner, the publication of the cartoons unveiled a flawed sense of liberal freedom that should be out-of-bounds for the CS practitioner. Standing outside of particular traditions while appealing to a more universal set of norms brings the practitioner of CS back to the critical (but now global) experience of Jewish prophets who railed against their temple and monarch (power), and whose rewards would run the risk of diminished respect in their home country.

One of the most fascinating and representative descriptions of CS at work is the book's chapter on Sudan and Darfur. The author is among other scholars who attend a conference in Khartoum hosted by the Council for International People's Friendship and the Internal Institute for Peace and Dialogue. Although not explicitly said, civil society groups that are external of official governmental and intergovernmental channels (assumed but unverified), or who do not passively support the status quo, are important. Bronner's organization in this case, Conscience International, and its comments are welcomed as they do not show "the condescension and provincialism exhibited by American diplomats" (97). Members of Conscience International, including Bronner, present their policy prescriptions following the anticipated stalemate which occurs between members of the Government of Sudan and its severest critics on Darfur. The non-governmental presentations were received well by the Sudanese and taken to government ministries. Bronner cites a number of ways that within days, weeks and months, more flexible positions and statements concerning United Nations and African Union forces are made by the Sudanese president, even suggesting that "with revisions, and naturally without attribution, this position taken by the president reflected the most important recommendation made in my presentation" (98).

As the final journey destination in the volume, the chapter presents a particularly clear example of CS at work. Bronner takes pains to show the transparency of the model (the whole conference was videotaped) and reminds the reader of the importance of listening, valuing the other, and providing alternative thinking and talking points from which more flexible responses might arise. The bankruptcy of official governmental positions, as well as the more shrill comments from the American Left (people such as actors George Clooney and Mia Farrow, and Elie Wiesel are mentioned), leave little prospect for movement. Thus for Bronner, saying that "Conscience International was, however, clearly at the right place at the right time, and it seems that citizen diplomacy driven by goodwill always offers the prospect of a better outcome than does imperial hubris" (99) becomes a matter a fact rather than bragging!

One sees already a significant difference between the approaches of the Tanenbaum Center Peacemakers and Bronner. The context of home, religion, nation, and faith are instrumental for the

Peacemakers and essential for the integrity of the peace and reconciliation process to, if not succeed, at least get underway. They are insiders in every meaningful connotation of the word. Their integrity is based on their closeness to conflicted parties and divided ambitions. Even though Bronner's CS allows for such contextual distinctions, it starts from outside of them. It employs a wider space, perhaps even a secular ideology of transcendence. If one returned to Hanson's (2006) typology of religion (which did not require a god to be religious), Bronner's CS falls more in the Hanson category of a religion that pursues order.

The closing chapter of *Peace Out of Reach* builds upon its critique against religious or nationalist particularisms and authoritarian traditions of all kinds. In a real way, the pursuit of peace through cosmopolitan sensibility by the citizen diplomat is an appeal to a reawakening of the Enlightenment experiment and ideals; call it Bronner's closing invitation for a reinvigorated "best of the West." The invocation for universal humanity and freedom does not circumscribe religious traditions, but offers each a chance to thrive in security. The essential ingredients of human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law, tolerance, a democracy of diversity, "the right to be wrong," social contracts, reciprocity form a closing litany of arguments against any one form of traditionalism being sufficient for preserving a peaceful world order. These concepts/beliefs form the foundation for the CS practitioner in her/his pursuit of steps leading to reconciliation and peaceful community and place him in the company of recent proponents of Enlightenment values such as Kwame Appiah (2007) and Al Gore (2007).

### **Following in the Track-Two Diplomacy Legacy**

Identified very broadly, the subjects of these books are non-state actors. The role of non-state actors in society and politics has interested sociologists and political scientists for a long time, and would include the work of multi-track or track-two diplomacy towards the resolution of conflict. The sociologist Peter Berger spoke of the social role of middle agencies that connected program with formal political institutions and citizens (1969). Nye and Keohane's complex interdependence political systems linked the vulnerabilities of issues and actors within asymmetric state relationships (1989). These were made more explicit in the many leveled, fragmenting and reintegrating analytical systems brought on by modern global turbulence (Rosenau 1990). What these earlier texts confirm is the ubiquity of non-state actors to provide services to the wider social and political community for the purpose of maintaining order, providing resources, complementing state run programs, to change or innovate upon existing programs, or criticize and challenge older habits and projects (Josseline and Wallace 2000). They are engaged in the formation of networks that cross political and issue-content boundaries (Keck and Sikkink 1998), hold multiple and essential relationships within the international political economy (Lewis and Wallace 2000), are a significant force helping to advance and perpetuate the globalizing world system (Edwards and Gaventa 2001), and work under conditions of conflict in every aspect of the conflict cycle from their onset, through negotiations, to the time of reconstruction and development (Edwards and Hulme 1996). Indeed, it is their ability to work in networks and across role boundaries that increases their importance and effectiveness. The track-two diplomacy theories affirm this principle as well.

As was said above, the books under review are brought together, in part, as contributions to the field of multi-track or track-two diplomacy, but what is this? Whereas the first track of diplomacy to resolve violent conflict remains at the national level of policy-makers and diplomats (elements that are largely ignored in both Little and Bronner), track-two diplomacy includes all other potential non-state actors and stakeholders with an interest in the conflicted setting. The latter approach includes groups operating within the conflict zone (such as the Peacemakers) and those who enter into the dialogue from outside a conflict (Bronner's citizen diplomacy). Sharing the line of the second track would be NGOs operating in zones of conflict trying to sustain normal life, finding ways to ease tension and grievance between the adversaries, or instigating distinctive ways to bring adversaries together in informal settings of dialogue. The second track may include religiously inspired agents who seek to ease tensions as in the case of the Peacemakers. Track-two diplomacy may include individuals or groups, not associated with any government, but who are engaged in processes of direct negotiation, mediation, or arbitration—a type of citizen diplomacy.

Scholars of track-two methodologies for conflict resolution identify a range of activities taken by religions and their leaders as they struggle with violent conflicts in their home contexts. The variety of methods and programs are neatly identified in a Special Report by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) based upon a conference that invited dozens of religious organizations to speak to their definitions and activities that involved peacemaking. Religions and their affiliated non-governmental organizations might offer training opportunities to local groups and leaders that could be used on the ground to prevent further violence. Resources might be gathered and redistributed where severe imbalances and grievances need to be addressed. All religions contain theologies and practices for peace and/or non-violence offering alternatives to the cycles of conflict and violence. Still more deeply involved are those religious leaders or groups that have developed trust and relationship with parties of the conflict so that they may offer or be asked for their services for mediation or even negotiation. Because of the sincerity held by practitioners of religious faith who are involved in conflict, they may also avail themselves towards the practice of interfaith dialogue, the intentional conversation and relationship-building activity that may move conflicted parties towards alternative views of their enemies and their beliefs, and play no small part in the process of post-conflict reconciliation (United States Institute of Peace 2001).

The overlap between the theoretical literature on multi-track diplomacy as it pertains to religious involvements, and the behaviors of the Peacemakers is substantial. The Tanenbaum Center Peacemakers would likely consider their work as part of multi-track diplomatic efforts, and each of the above USIP catalogued actions taken by religious agents find an exemplar within the Tanenbaum Peacemakers' activities in different parts of the world. Although many have deep or important connections to formal governmental or rebel authorities, none operate through the work of a government or intergovernmental agency. In Stephen Bronner's case, he defined his behavior as one who is engaged in citizen diplomacy (2). Bronner's citizen diplomacy involves time spent in a country that may not have a good relationship with the United States (such as Iraq before the war or Syria), listening and talking with leaders, and bringing home the team's reflections and writings—go, see, and tell.

The justification for non-state actors to have an important role in peacebuilding processes (like the Tanenbaum Peacemakers or citizen diplomats) has been championed by organizations such as the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD), providing conceptualization, training, and

programming for the field of track-two diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> A lesson provided by Diamond's and MacDonald's early work (1996) was the conviction that conflict resolution, especially when facing complex, chronic, or protracted forms of conflict, should be approached through a systemic grid of actors. For IMTD's organizers, religious actors such as the Peacemakers, and individuals engaged in conflict resolution actions such as citizen diplomats, stood alongside and within a complex web of resources and ongoing activities. Some of these would include the opportunities for change brought on by economic actions, by advocacy efforts at forums of all levels, through research, through professional negotiation and engagement, through the training of citizens towards conflict resolution at the most basic of levels, through spiritual and ritual means, and through organizations who could help to offset or alleviate grievances of various types (Diamond and McDonald 1996). Viewed systemically, the important activities of the Peacemakers as well as citizen diplomats should be best seen as complementary to the other track-two efforts underway and the intergovernmental negotiations that would be moving ahead on track one. Religion may be the "missing dimension of statecraft" as the subtitle of one volume of religious peace-building cases suggests (Johnston and Sampson 1994), and therefore in need of rediscovery and implementation; and citizen diplomacy may be as historically grounded in Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitanism as it is fresh in Bronner's latest efforts. But embedding them (as opposed to isolating them) as *parts* of a systemic application of multi-track diplomacy in settings of chronic and protracted violence seems appropriate, justifiable, and in keeping with the documented strengths that non-state actor networks can provide.

### **The Field of Protracted Conflicts: Requiring More than Will and Faith**

Despite the heroic efforts of the individuals and groups portrayed by Bronner and the Tanenbaum Center, how helpful are these books when it comes to understanding the process of reconciliation in the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? A brief review of the status of these conflicted areas, and some comments from the wider field of protracted conflict materials (even identical case studies) and non-state actors help make the point that these efforts contribute to understanding the dynamics of chronic conflict, but not holistically.

What are the current conditions of the conflicts cited in the Little and Bronner books? Most people are aware that violent conflict continues, increases, and ebbs in almost rhythmic patterns in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel/Palestine, while many of the other tense Middle-Eastern communities cited by Little and Bronner carry the potential for violent clashes (Lebanon, Syria) to resume. Portions of Sudan are still sites of bloodshed and structural violence. Though now recognized by some in the international community as a new state, it is not clear how the status and security of Kosovo may change in the future, or if the Balkans will continue to fragment violently into smaller states. The conflict contributing variables of human rights abuses, governmental corruption, and limited governmental transparency cited in the West Papua and Guatemala cases are still likely to contribute to instability. The propensity for violent tension and low-intensity identity based conflict

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<sup>7</sup> McDonald and Diamond founded and headed the well known organization, The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, headquartered in Washington, DC, which has been actively working in global conflict zones and in U.S. neighborhoods for nearly two decades.

continues in the states and regions of the African Horn and Great Lakes, and in any number of countries in West Africa, whether Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire, or Sierra Leone. And now the world might face the implosion of Zimbabwe! Clearly violent conflict remains a reality in the cases highlighted by Tanenbaum and Bronner. And equally clearly, these comments are too superficial to understand the place of these intervention efforts in protracted conflicts.

The case of Northern Ireland stands out in the Tanenbaum peacemaker collection as perhaps the “furthest along” towards overcoming marginalizing economies, clashing political nationalisms, competing stories of cultural legitimacy, religious differences, and chronic violence. No effort is made here to question the importance of the influential Peacemakers in the Northern Ireland case, Father Reid and the Reverend Magee, but others have agonized over the question of “what can bring peace” to Ireland, too. A recent addition comes from the Institute for Irish Studies at Liverpool University in a collection of presentations by politicians, negotiators, scholars, and others hoping to understand what went right there. One contribution that affirms the basic argument on the importance of religion in peacemaking is a case study evaluating the significance of religious organizations working to create alternative visions and stories at the literal streets of intersection between Belfast’s Roman Catholic and Protestant communities (Power in Elliot 2007). This case focuses on the relevance of interfaith dialogue among neighbors and church groups. The groups studied are not linked to Father Reid or Reverend Magee.

As can be imagined in a book that includes the analysis of politicians, labor and business leaders, scholars, and dignitaries such as Lord David Owen and Senator George Mitchell, variables that influenced the Irish peace process and the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement did not only include the personal, the religious, and the grassroots. The Norwegian government and their confidential negotiations, American public sentiments and opinion, the influence of former-President William Clinton, local fatigue over violent behavior, changing economic realities and investment options throughout Ireland, previous partial successes at the negotiating table, a new perception of possibilities in the Post-Berlin 1990’s, shifting policy positions of the British Labor Party under Tony Blair, are but some of the contributions helping to move Northern Irish political realities that come under Liverpool University’s review for peace.<sup>8</sup> But more importantly, the Liverpool work is set inside a wide body of actions in keeping with the recommendations of Diamond’s and MacDonald’s vision for multi-track diplomacy.

This intersection between the Northern Irish peacemakers with a comparable publication that also relies heavily on those involved in the Northern Irish conflict resolution process cannot diminish the important work of Father Reid or Pastor McGee. It only places them alongside others in what is clearly a fertile field of harvest, that is, *the need to better understand the importance of non-state driven initiatives of peacebuilding for the reconciliation of divided communities*. One need only think about the wisdom available given the legacy of multi-track diplomacy efforts and the countless thousands who have been trained by NGOs<sup>9</sup> or by religious institutions linked to a traditional peace church such as

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<sup>8</sup> Although cautiously optimistic that the peace process is irreversible, the collection of authors and editors in the Liverpool University work are not universally sanguine about the roads ahead for Northern Ireland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Challenges and difficulties remain for all the populations affected by decades of mistrust, broken promises, and collective and personal losses due to violence.

<sup>9</sup> The Fellowship of Reconciliation, headquartered in Nyack, New York, is one such organization that has offered its training and facilities for years.

the Mennonites or Society of Friends. After their training, these individuals returned to their home settings to use their learning in the midst of local violence and conflict. What could we learn? The Peacemakers project and approach may be one of many steps towards that process of collecting and telling such stories. The various organizations that Bronner worked with in his efforts of citizen diplomacy add further to this collection of peacebuilding stories from which lessons might be learned and duplicated.

To pursue the resolution of violent conflict in protracted conflict settings means taking account of more than one variable or causal factor, even if an identity factor such as religion or ethnicity plays a significant part in the ongoing story of violence. The definition of protracted conflict is multi-causal, including issues of identity (such as religion, or ethnicity)<sup>10</sup> but not to the exclusion of socio-economic, geographic, historical, or other variables. Scholarly work has also evaluated the importance of the internationalization of identity-based sub-national conflicts over time.<sup>11</sup> The sources of funding, weapons, and cross-border movements of people are as large a part of the local-to-global nexus in protracted conflicts as are more mundane transfers of technology and communication.

Discussing an end to protracted conflicts also requires more than the individuals and organizations which represent a particular cultural grievance. In a finding from an unpublished review of NGOs (religious and non-religious) working towards resolutions in settings of protracted conflict (Liberia, Rwanda, and the Sudan), NGOs contributed most when they presented a profile of activities. In other words, their humanitarian and developmental assistance complemented their efforts at indirect (such as capacity building, conflict resolution education, community reintegration programs, etc.) and direct conflict resolution actions (such as mediations, advocacy, and the monitoring of human rights abuses). The NGOs helped most when they had established diverse and deep relationships between grassroots actors as well as government; and had already been active in the context before the times of violent action (Kuchinsky 1999). There is nothing in the Tanenbaum or Bronner materials to suggest that some of these programs or actions were not already present. Some of these activities are alluded to in several of the peacemaker cases (Afghanistan, Guatemala, Northern Ireland) but not uniformly. In addition, protracted social conflicts incur the real or imagined perception of cultural loss or lost opportunities and community benefits resulting from such loss, and might also need to be understood by national and international participants of conflict mediation processes in order to move toward greater levels of human security (Kuchinsky in Starr 1999). This perception of loss, or the story of what “our community was at one time,” or the losses linked to human need deprivation (Burton in Coate and Rosati 1988:34-56) might affect every one of the communities in the case conflicts discussed by these two books.

### **But still...**

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the well-known standards on ethnic conflict and its resolution would include Esman (1994), Gurr (1993), and Horowitz (1985).

<sup>11</sup> An older but still useful look at internationalizing local conflicts was edited by Manus Midlarsky (1992).

The cases of the Little and Bronner volumes complement the established work of multi-track diplomacy, especially when engaged in the context of protracted social conflicts. Religious agency and citizen diplomacy are parts of a larger systemic profile of track-two efforts. Their instructive capacity would increase by knowing more of the organizational or institutional linkages and complementary processes underway, and thus in keeping with the multi-track diplomacy and non-state actor literature, in the conflict settings that aid their successes. What should not be lost on account of this criticism, is that both of these texts and projects, despite their differences, struggle experientially and with their “presence” in the reality of protracted social conflict—places that by definition combine economic, political, historical, cultural, and identity variables in a cycle of violence and unmet grievances that become highly personal for those in the conflicts. When one speaks of violent conflicts no longer in terms of months or years but rather in decades or half centuries, it becomes apparent that many conflict resolution approaches, those that probably have worked elsewhere, have already been tried and the elusive goals of security, stability, and peace remain...elusive goals. Protracted conflicts are as chronic as they are personal, and certainly in the short life spans of their victims they are forever. These two projects respect the personal dimensions of their conflict cases by their presence, by “being there.”

Those interested in the prospect of peace and human security might recognize in the Tanenbaum Center’s Peacemakers Project and in Stephen Bronner’s citizen diplomacy the efforts of being “voices that cry from the wilderness” (Matthew 2:3) of chronic violence, while at the same time inviting others to take a look at what could be possible even in the most troubled circumstances. Thinking back to the biographical displays at the Holocaust Memorial before one exited the museum to the streets of Washington’s (and our own) daily life—this too, was part of their message. The question becomes not whether it might be time to reflect and act, but how might “I” reflect and act? One past religious figure spoke about the blessedness of taking personal action and responsibility for peace: “blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). What Little, Bronner, and the Tanenbaum Peacemakers are saying is that alongside any imagined blessings, the personal initiative towards improving the prospects of peace is important, often necessary, and taking steps given the urgency of our times cannot be in dispute.

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*Michael Kuchinsky is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina. He teaches international relations, comparative politics and African Studies, political economy and development. His research focuses on religion and politics, and the role of civil society in global development. He has worked for several non-governmental organizations directing and coordinating food security and public policy education programs. He is an ordained clergy person in the Lutheran church.*

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