

Robert Forster and Christine Bell, 'Divine Intervention: Invoking God in Peace Agreements' in Jolyon Mitchell, Suzanna R. Millar, Francesca Po and Martyn Percy (eds.) *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Peace*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-119-42434-5

Divine Intervention: Invoking God in Peace Agreements

Robert Forster & Christine Bell

Introduction

One of the oldest treaties of which we have a record is the *Treaty of Kadesh*, dating from around 1280 B.C.E. Following a four-day battle in which neither side could achieve a decisive victory, peace was negotiated between the Hittite King, Hattusili III, and Pharaoh Ramses II of Egypt. Written in two iterations from the perspective of both the Hittites and the Egyptians, the resultant treaty bears many similarities to contemporary peace agreements. Interestingly, 1,000 gods of each land were invoked as witnesses and guarantors of the agreement, with blessings and curses invoked which were intended to endorse compliance or check non-compliance, respectively (Bell 2008, 80-81). Religion remained tightly linked to the development of international law as a tool for peace up until the beginning of the enlightenment era. In the 10th Century, for instance, the Church Councils in France sought to implement Pax Dei, or Peace of God, to limit fighting and protect those not involved in the conflict (Jakobson 2008). It was after the peace and *Treaties of Westphalia* in 1648 that the bonds between religious and political power in Europe dissolved in a process that renegotiated the relationship between religion and the state as part of a process of negotiating an end to religious wars in Europe (Zulehner 2014). This process also solidified the modern concept of the secular state and is accredited as the birth of modern international law as a product of diplomacy and reason (De Visscher 1957, 8).

This process of secularization has perhaps led us to assume that the divine no longer plays a role in contemporary treaties and peace agreements. However, endowing peace agreements with religious significance is still a regular although neglected aspect of peace negotiations. The use of religion can itself be contested: one illustration is the disputed naming of the *Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations* signed in Northern Ireland on Good Friday, 1998. For many seeking to legitimise its content, the 1998 agreement is referred to as the *Good Friday Agreement*, in reference to the Christian calendar whereas those who see the Agreements as something that they were pushed to accept usually refer to it as *Belfast Agreement*. The distinction in terminology now operates to some extent as an ethno-religious signifier, as well as a peace process stance, and also reflects differences between Protestant and Catholic approaches to when and how religion should be invoked.

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Invocations of the divine are still regularly introduced into contemporary peace agreements signed to end both intra-state conflict (conflict within states) and interstate conflict (conflict between states) in a range of different contexts and ways. Religious leaders and laws are also regularly given a place in the new political dispensation. The invocation of God and Allah has received little scholarly attention, even in literature considering the connections between religion, conflict and peacebuilding (see, for example, Silvestri and Mayall 2015). However, inclusion of the divine speaks to the importance of belief systems underpinning moral, philosophical, and even legal elements, in societies around the world.

In this chapter, we examine empirically and qualitatively when and how “God” is invoked in peace agreements, and the functions that this invocation serves. The practice of negotiating the end to conflicts has been a global phenomenon: between 1990 and 2015, 1518 agreements were signed in over 140 peace processes – a practice that correlated with a year on year decline in conflict globally, until the death toll in Syria alone began to reverse this trend.¹ Peace agreements are defined in this chapter as written documents codifying terms agreed between parties for the purpose of ending violent conflict, which includes treaties, ceasefires and sometimes, permanent and interim constitutions. The chapter provides a qualitative and quantitative review of references to God (in all forms) and religion in all peace agreements from 1990 to 2015 (Bell et al. 2018), with examples drawn from data that goes up to 2020. In the first section we set out major trends in how peace settlement terms reference God and religion in forging agreement to end violent conflict. In the following sections we analyse the role that invocations of the divine play in constructing agreement between parties to conflict.

In conclusion, we suggest that invocation of God, Allah or other deities, can serve to connect the moral framework contained within belief systems and faith to the agreement. The associations of God and religion with trust, community, judgment, and other values, mean that invoking God helps to reinforce commitments to implement the compromise reached, in the attempt to move beyond a situation of radical disagreement over whether and how peaceful co-existence is possible (Ramsbotham 2010). As with the *Treaty of Kadesh*, they offer an alternative ‘spiritual guarantee’ to reinforce other forms of political guarantee.

¹ This chapter is based on data drawn from version 1 of the PA-X Peace Agreement Database which was released in 2017. See Bell et al. (2017), wider examples are drawn from Version 4, released in June 2020.

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The presence and prevalence of God in peace agreements

When and how is God referenced in peace agreements? Deities may be invoked in documents as varied as state/non-state peace agreements and “peace agreement constitutions” (See Sapiano 2015; Nathan 2020), and even peace agreements of alliance between different non-state armed actors (in fact religious references are more common in more localised agreements). Between 1990 and 2015, religious language and references appear in at least 189 (13%) peace agreements from 56 conflict zones worldwide.² Among these agreements, at least 88 make direct references to a deity, either ‘God’, ‘Allah’, or ‘the Almighty’. In some cases, it is not immediately clear whether an agreement refers to a specific religion or not. Indeed, agreements from the Central African Republic, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe perhaps refrain from indicating a particular faith to ensure that the agreement remains inclusive. Nonetheless, most references relate to the Abrahamic religions (see Table 1) and only the *Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi*, signed in 2000, refers instead to the deity, Imana. References to Judaism are limited to agreements between Israel and other countries, and usually focus on religious sites. The vast majority of references refer to Christianity or Islam. These appear independently in 20 and 17 conflict territories respectively, and appear together in 15 territories (see Table 2). These differences are referred to as ‘Christian’ and ‘Islamic’ further on, but only for convenience.

Term	Conflict territories³
God	24
Allah	9
Almighty	2
Christian or cognates	12
Muslim	19
Islam or cognates	16
Jew or cognates	2

² PA-X enables “word” searches enabling quantitative and qualitative analysis. 189 refers to the number of agreements mentioning ‘God’, ‘Allah’, ‘Almighty’, ‘Christianity’, ‘Islam’, ‘Muslim’ or cognates.

³ Conflict territories refer to the areas of conflict that a peace agreement encompasses. A country may incorporate multiple conflict territories. For example, the Philippines has distinct conflicts in Mindanao, Corderilla as well as Communist insurgent groups, whereas Indonesia has separate conflicts in Aceh, East Timor and the Moluccas Islands.

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Judaism	2
Shar'iah/Islamic Law/God's Law	12
Church	21
Mosque	13
Bishop/Archbishop/Priest/Reverend (Rev.)/Pastor	18
Imam	3
Prayer	11
Devil	1
Buddhah or cognates	0
Sikh	0
Hindu or cognates	0

Table 1: List of religious references and the number of conflict zones in which they appear, 1990-2015 (Bell et al. 2018).

Other trends also emerge. In instances of 'Christian' references, many refer to the involvement of church organisations and figures in peacemaking activities as signatories, organisers, etc. Notable also, is that 80% of instances of direct appellations to God or Allah occur in the context of 'Islamic' peace agreements, in part due to the invocation of the *basma*, as well as the use of quotes from the Quran and Hadith. The *basma* – that is, the invocation 'in the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful' – is a powerful appeal to God's protection and grace and a suggestion that the outcomes of the agreement may require divine intervention (Ali and Leaman 2008, 16-17; Hewer 2006, 95). Among peace agreements, the *basma* is found in agreements from Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Libya, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.⁴ Additionally, although informal prayer is incorporated into both 'Christian' and 'Islamic' peace agreements, there is a greater prevalence of informal prayer in peace agreements drawing on Islamic traditions. Informal prayer, or *du'a* (see Hewer 2006, 95), may be evoked anywhere in the agreement text and includes aspects such as the *tahmid* – 'praise be to God' – and other prayers of thanks, protection, assistance, or benevolence, that will be explored in greater detail in this chapter.

<i>References to Christianity</i>	<i>References to Islam</i>	<i>References to Christianity and Islam</i>
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⁴ A variation is found in Pakistani agreements, wherein the *basma* is signified by the number 786, which according to some interpretations may be adopted if there is a fear of disrespect of using the *basma* in full (see Haddad 2017).

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Angola	Aceh (Indonesia)	Bosnia
Bougainville (Papua New Guinea)	Afghanistan	Central African Republic
Cabinda (Angola)	Algeria	Democratic Republic of Congo
Colombia	Bahrain	Iraq
East Timor	Chad	Israel
Ecuador	Comoros	Liberia
El Salvador	Jordan	Macedonia
Falklands (UK/Argentina)	Lebanon	Mindanao (Philippines)
Guatemala	Libya	Moluccas (Indonesia)
Lesotho	Nepal	Palestine
Mozambique	Nigeria	South Sudan
Myanmar	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Nicaragua	Saudi Arabia	Sudan
Northern Ireland	Somalia	Tajikistan
Peru	Syria	Uganda
Philippines (excluding Mindanao)	Tunisia	
Republic of Congo	Yemen	
Sierra Leone		
Solomon Islands		
South Africa		

Table 2: Christian and Islamic references in peace agreements by conflict territory, 1990-2015 (Bell et al. 2018).

Within peace agreements, invocations of God are most common at the very beginning and the very end of the text and sometimes both. For example, the “peace agreement constitution” negotiated between the outgoing Apartheid government and the African National Congress, the *Interim Constitution of South Africa*, 1993, is indicative of this trend. The Interim Constitution begins with the line – ‘In humble submission to Almighty God’ – and ends with iterations of ‘May God bless our country’ in six languages.

To those who study peace agreements, preambles are often viewed as slightly irrelevant introductions to more substantive provisions; however, preambles often give the peace agreement a more ‘constitutional’ feel. In both constitutions and peace agreements, preambular commitments crucially signal the nature of the state and the new political settlement that is to emerge from the peace process. To illustrate, the 1993 *Islamabad*

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Accord, opens with the line: 'Given our submission to the will of Allah Almighty and commitment to seeking guidance from the Holy Quran and Sunnah.' Thus, the document immediately establishes the strength of the belief in Islam among the conflict parties, as well as the role of this faith in the peace settlement. Additionally, preambles often set out the joint commitment to move from the past to the future and tend to invoke the conflict parties to do so in some way, including through appeals to their faith. Postscripts, invoke the name of God either as blessings,⁵ to give thanks, or framing God as the entity that brought the parties together: 'Allah is the conciliator'⁶ or 'God is the arbiter of guidance and success.'⁷

So why do parties invoke God, and what role, if any, do these invocations play? We suggest that invocations of God have six key overlapping pragmatic functions.

I. Reinforcing the obligation to comply with a peace agreement

References to God can in essence bring the deity to bear on an in as a form of third party guarantor, as in the *Treaty of Kadesh*. Peace agreements embody hard-won compromises made between conflict parties in a situation of lack of trust. As Barbara Walters (2002) notes, third party security guarantees such as peacekeeping are central to securing commitment to the agreement because it provides a mechanism to tackle non-compliance. Trust and commitment can also be bolstered by mutual understandings between the parties that their actions are judged, supported, and aided by God: a reference to God in a peace agreement can operate to acknowledge and solidify the moral obligation of the parties to adhere to the agreement. It produces audience costs – that is, reputational costs with key constituencies of support – if the agreement is not implemented. For example, the 2018 *Agreement regarding the Exchange of Prisoners, Detainees, Remains and Missing Persons* between Ansar Allah and local militias in the city of Ta'iz in Yemen, saw Article 2 proclaim the agreement as 'ethnically, humanly and religiously binding for the two sides.'

Other peace agreements evoke principles of the faith as a driver for reconciliation as a moral duty. Citing the *Qur'an*, the 2017 *Reconciliation Agreement between the Mashashiyya and Zintan Tribes* in Libya, states: 'And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not

⁵ Papua New Guinea (Bougainville), *Agreement to End Hostilities on Bougainville*, 01/03/90, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/295>>.

⁶ Yemen, *The Ajmar Agreement (Black Line Agreement)*, 04/02/14, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2005>>.

⁷ Yemen, *National Dialogue Conference Outcomes Document*, 25/01/14, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1400>>.

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cooperate in sin and aggression'. The agreement goes on to affirm that people should make up for the evil acts done by others by doing good:

Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one have a great portion [of good].

In Plateau State, Nigeria, the 2013 *Declaration of Intent* by the Fulani Steering Committee, reinforces the moral obligation to reconcile by stating, 'Our religion, Islam, is a religion of peace and has encouraged Muslims to be forgiving and always willing to embrace peace initiatives [...] as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, S.A.W.'

Support by religious leaders may further bolster moral obligations and audience costs, as well as lending legitimacy to the agreement in the eyes of followers. In support of the 1995-1998 peace process between Ecuador and Peru, Pope John Paul II attended the signing ceremony and drafted a papal blessing addressed to the presidents of the respective countries as a form of 'moral guarantor'. In the 1998 *Bendición Papal*, John Paul II stated that:

I strongly hope that your sister Nations do not cease to advance, with firm determination and perseverance, along the tracks drawn by this Agreement, entrusting all to the intercession of Saint Marianitas of Quito, of Santa Rosa of Lima and, above all, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, so loved and venerated by the people of both countries.

As recognised by Pope John Paul II elsewhere in the Blessing, religious leaders have the ability to champion for peace particularly on the grassroots level (as well as use the pulpit to inflame tensions) (see also, Appleby 2000; Silvestri and Mayall 2015). In another example, 64 Imams from Ibb Governorate in Yemen issued a call for calm in June 2015 to contain the spill-over of violence from other Yemeni governorates. The so-called *Statement on Security in Governorate of Ibb* is headed by a quotation from chapter 4, verse 93, of the *Qur'an* – Surat al-Nisa (4:93) – stating the penalty for killing fellow Muslims: 'But whoever kills a believer intentionally – his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment.'

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II. Affirming unity by affirming a common religious heritage or belief

References to God act as a powerful reminder of shared values and beliefs, particularly longstanding ones, and are regularly used in peace agreements as a driver for reconciliation. These may occur anywhere in the text, but are often found in the preamble, such as in Burundi's *Arusha Accords*:

During the precolonial period, all the ethnic groups inhabiting Burundi owed allegiance to the same monarch, Umwami, believed in the same god, Imana, had the same culture and the same language, Kirundi, and lived together in the same territory.

Within "Islamic" peace agreements, this reaffirmation of a common heritage is often reinforced through appeals to common heritage as 'Muslims' or 'believers', or to prevent the 'shedding of Muslim blood'. This may be expressed in these terms, or by invoking the *Qur'an*. The 2016 *Draft Agreement between the Elders of the Western Tribes in Zawiyya* in Libya, for example, states, 'There will be an immediate ceasefire between believers.' Similarly, the 2014 *Agreement between the 'Ubaydah Tribes and Ansar Allah* forbids the establishment of checkpoints 'to rob Muslims.' One instance of "unity through faith" goes a step further in its application to different sects of Islam, in this case Zaydi and Sunni Islam. Signed in 2014 between Ansar Allah and Mohammad al-Imam of the al-Nur Institute in Amran, Yemen, the agreement states: 'We are all Muslims with one Lord, one book, one prophet, and one enemy. If we differ on the sub-details of Islam, it dispossess us of our blood [...] as Muslims.' A similar image is invoked by the *Reconciliation Agreement between the Tebu and Awlad Sulayman Tribes* in Libya, which states that reconciliation is 'based on the principles of Islam, which forbid infighting among Muslims and urges compassion, cooperation and solidarity as well as calling for reconciliation and stemming the flow of Muslim blood.'

Peace agreements may also draw on scripture such as the *Qur'an*⁸ or the *Hadith*, as a reminder of shared faith. 'Believers are but brothers' appears before the preamble in agreements from Libya and Yemen, of which the rest of the verse states, 'so make

⁸ To accommodate differences in translation between agreements in this chapter, all quotes from the *Qur'an* are modified to adhere to the Sahih International translation (*Qu'ran*, Sahih International Translation. Retrieved from: <https://quran.com/>.)

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settlement between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy'.⁹ An agreement from Libya further supplements this quotation with the following from the Hadith: 'A faithful believer to a faithful believer is like the bricks of a wall, enforcing each other.'¹⁰ Another verse from Chapter 103 of the *Qur'an*, the Surat Al Imran, appears in peace agreements from Libya, Sudan and Yemen: 'All together hold fast the rope of Allah [faith in Islam] and be not divided among yourselves. Remember Allah's favours upon you when you were enemies; he united your hearts.'¹¹ The appeal to religion therefore stresses the idea of common community, in the face of the history of conflict.

III. Reinforcing a shared national ethos by affirming shared belief

In some peace agreements, the common heritage of shared belief may be taken a step further and used to reinforce the identity of the state by drawing parallels between religious and national identity. This may only be done loosely by calling on God to protect the state or country, which occurs in multiple examples as varied as Bahrain, Colombia, Sudan, and South Africa, or in the case of the United Kingdom, with the mantra: 'God save the Queen' (in Agreements formally ending the conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom, over the Malvinas or Falkland Islands).

However, belief systems and faith in God can further be made an integral part of national identity. In the June 1993 *Mudug Peace Agreement* from the Somali conflict, for instance, it states that 'the Islamic religion, Somali culture and norms shall be respected, strengthened and adhered to.' Similarly, the 1993 *Islamabad Accord* lists among the powers of the president: to '[consolidate] national unity and [uphold] the independence, neutrality and the

⁹ Libya, *Agreement of Social Honour for Tribes of Tarhūnah, and the Tribes of Ghriyān, Mashāshiyah, al-Qal'ah, Yafrin, Jādū, Kābāw, Nālūt and Wāzin*, 08/02/17, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1953>>, in practice quoting, Al-Hujurat (49:10). Libya, *Reconciliation Agreement between the Tebu and Awlad Sulayman Tribes*, 29/03/17, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1954>>; Yemen, *Agreement between Ansar Allah and Salafists from the al-Noor Centre*, 26/6/14, <<https://peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1883>>.

¹⁰ Libya, *Agreement of Social Honour*, 08/02/17, in practice quoting, Sahih al-Bukhari (481), Book 8, Hadith 128; <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1953>>.

¹¹ Sudan, *Final Communiqué of the Reconciliation Conference between the Misseriyya Tribes; the Awlad Hayban and Awlad Serur and al-Metanin*, 01/03/13, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1820>>, in practice quoting, Surat Al Imran (103); Libya, *Agreement of Social Honour*, *ibid*; Yemen, *Agreement between Ansar Allah and Salafists from al-Noor Centre*, note 9. Similar quotes in: Palestine, *The Sha'ti Agreement*, 23/03/14, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1411>>; *The National Conciliation Document of the Prisoners (The Prisoner's Document) (1st Version)*, 11/05/06, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1417>>; *The National Conciliation Document of the Prisoners (The Prisoner's Document) (2nd Version)*, 01/06/06, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1406>>.

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Islamic character of Afghanistan and the interests of its citizens.' The 2000 *Joint Declaration of Fomboni*, also places Islam as a central tenant of Comorian national identity: "The Union [of the Comoros Islands] must be rooted in Islam in respect of the principles of tolerance, peace, social cohesion and solidarity characterising it." A different approach, but with similar connotations is evoked in 2014 Yemeni *National Dialogue Outcomes Document*, where to state is requested to, '[d]evelop a military doctrine for armed forces derived from constitutional principles so as to make the military, a national and professional army, loyal to God first and to the nation.' Thus, emphasizing moral duty to both God and the state.

Enmeshing religion and state identity is particularly pertinent in identity-driven conflicts, where incorporating religious language is used to appeal not just to a common communal understanding, but to a common statebuilding project. The unilateral incumbent-led reconciliation processes in Algeria during the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria insurgency from 1991-2002, and Bahrain following mass demonstrations in 1999, both invoked religion as a central factor of national identity and governance of the state. Algeria, for example, emphasises, 'the republican and democratic character of the state within the framework of the principles of Islam.'¹² In the *National Action Charter in Bahrain*, on the other hand, it states that 'Bahrain was one of the lands that welcomed the call of Islam at an early date and willingly converted to Islam' and was furthermore a 'staunch supporter of Islam' that carried its banner' and contributed to the 'treasury' of 'Islam's realm.' In the case of Algeria and Bahrain, the power of religious identity becomes clear when religious and state identities are merged. As stated in the 1996 *Plate-forme de l'entente nationale*, 'Islam has cemented together Algerian society and has made of the Algerian people a united population, attached to the same land, beliefs, and language, that of the Quran and of the divine message.' This intertwining of religion and state further allows for the justification for the protection of the state as a duty equivalent to the protection of the religion: 'Islam, our sacred religion, must be protected from any behaviour or manipulation which in any way exposes it to "fitnah" [sedition], and must be protected from any political manipulation.'¹³

This approach contrasts with that adopted, for example, in the Philippines, which aims to facilitate a pluralistic approach to the connection between church and state, in the face of a conflict which was not religious in the strictest sense, but was an identity-based conflict in

¹² Algeria, *Plate-forme portant consensus national sur la periode transitoire*, 26/01/94, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/484>>.

¹³ Algeria, *Plate-forme de l'entente nationale*, 17/09/96, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1255>>.

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which religion was an ethnic signifier. The 1996 *Final agreement on the implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement*, for example, focuses on schools 'as the perpetuating vehicle of the values of people,' and the parties agreed that:

Muslim culture, mores, customs and traditions which are mainly based in Islam, as well as the cultures, mores, customs and traditions of Christians and indigenous peoples, shall be preserved through the regular public and special school in the autonomous region.¹⁴

Sudan, which also suffers from multiple identity-based conflicts, adopts a similar approach: "Sudan is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Islam is the religion of the majority of the population and Christianity and the African creeds are followed by a considerable number of citizens."¹⁵ Thus, in inspiring national ethos, God may be invoked to protect the state and peace agreements may situate the faith as an integral part of the national identity to inclusionary and exclusionary effects.

IV. Acknowledging that political forces are subject to transcendent forces (in this case divine)

Invocations of God may also be used to frame the conflict within a grander perspective, encouraging conflict parties to put aside petty differences for the common good. These references can be understood to have two dimensions. First, they help underwrite commitment to the agreement, by tapping into ideas that the agreement has a religious quality. By reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between man and the divine, some peace agreements use this to highlight the responsibility incumbent on people to make peace and enjoy the bounty of God. For example, the 2012 *Provisional Constitution of Somalia* states that, 'After Allah Almighty, all power is vested in the people ...' Another illustrative example emerges from the intercommunal *Nakuru County Peace Accord* signed in 2012 between the Agikuyu and Kalenjin communities in Kenya:

Trust is the centerpiece of peace. We acknowledge that we each suspect and sometimes fear each other's motives, actions and

¹⁴ Philippines/Mindanao, *Final agreement on the implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)*, 02/09/96, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/479>>.

¹⁵ Sudan, Sudan Peace Agreement, 21/04/97, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/550>>.

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even some of our traditions. We are determined to earn trust in and between our communities. We do not pretend that the paths will be easy and we do not have all the answers. But in humility, with God's grace and blessings, we make this Accord in our determination to heal, to learn, and to prevent further violence.¹⁶

Inherent in the acknowledgement of God's power is the implicit reinforcement that there is a need to respect God's creations. In an agreement between the Somali sub-clans of the Yantaar and Hubeer, an area over which there were multiple conflicts of ownership is firmly established under the domain of God through the statement: 'Idale Village was owned by God, then by Somalis ...'¹⁷ As we highlight further below, invoking respect for God's creations may be further extrapolated as the foundation for individual rights, among other things. Ironically, respect for God's creation may also be used to highlight the preciousness of the resource over which there is conflict. Signed in 1999, the *Waat Lou Nuer Covenant*, for instance, states: '[f]or this peace we are willing to die so that our children may live in peace and enjoy this good land that God has given to us.'

Second, these references in a sense lift the responsibility for what are often unpopular elements of compromise off the parties, by suggesting to their followers that the decision to compromise has to be understood as part of God's will, rather than a mere political choice. When leaders among conflict parties call to pray in support of a process – 'Join hands in prayer, peace and to put our destiny to the will of all-mighty god-The Allah' (sic)¹⁸ – they may help parties move to a compromise that their constituencies can accept, by placing it within a broader context of God's will (rather than merely earthly political choice): '... by the presence and approval of Allah ...'¹⁹ At the same time, the references serve as a reminder that many aspects of public political life remain subject to unpredictable events and invoking God in a sense points to an anticipated need to 'transcend' future crises.

V. Endorsing other values associated with 'the good'

¹⁶ REF

¹⁷ Article 2 in Somalia, *Final Agreement from the National Reconciliation Commission-led Initiative*, 15/01/07, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1858>>.

¹⁸ South Sudan, Communique: Dinka Malual & Rezeigat Grassroots Peace Conference, 25/01/10, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1673>>.

¹⁹ Syria, *Agreement between Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Farqa 13*, 22/05/16, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1986>>.

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Invocations of God in peace agreements may also act as a reminder to adhere to higher values and moral behaviour, including human rights. This function may be achieved by thanking God for upholding traits such as patience, hope, compromise, strength, tolerance, etc. The 1997 *Sodere Declaration*, for instance, thanks 'Almighty god for having guided our steps towards the path of understanding, forgiveness, [and] the attainment of common goals ...' The 1990 *Political Constitution in Colombia* (another "peace agreement constitution"), agreed to by the Government, guerrilla groups, civil society and indigenous peoples, invokes God's protection for the National Constituency so they may work 'to strengthen the unity of the nation and ensure to its members life, peaceful coexistence, work, justice, equality, understanding, freedom, and peace within a legal, democratic, and participatory framework that my guarantee a just political, economic and social order, and committed to promote the integration of the Latin American community' and promulgate the agreement itself.

Alternatively, principles of moral behaviour may be evoked through allusions to the 'path of God'. Yemen's *National Dialogue Conference Outcomes* states, 'May God help us for the good of our people and our nation, and guide our footsteps, for he is the guide to the straight path.' This may be further underpinned by scripture: 'O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.'²⁰ Religious principles may further underpin the moral duties incumbent on the signatories. For example, the principles of Islam are referenced in relation to the principle of human dignity, which is itself a foundation for individual rights and freedoms. The 2012 *Provisional Constitution of Somalia* states explicitly that: 'Human dignity is given by God to every human being, and this is the basis of all human rights.'

VI. Bringing divine force to bear on implementation

Lastly, some peace agreements extend the moral obligations to adhere to it further and introduce divine force to bear on its implementation. Some agreements emphasise the importance of honouring commitments 'before Allah and our people.'²¹ In a similar fashion, agreements from Libya and Syria, quote chapter 114 of the *Qur'an*, Surat al-Nisa, which

²⁰ Yemen, *Implementation Mechanism of the Ceasefire Agreement in the Governorate of Ma'rib*, 1704/16, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2010>> in practice quoting al-Baqarah (2:208); Yemen, Dhalea Ceasefire, 20/04/16, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2009>>.

²¹ Bahrain, *Speech by King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifi on Reform*, 01/06/11, <<https://peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1413>>.

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states: 'no good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah - then we are going to give him a great reward.'²² Another quote from chapter 33, Surat Al Ahzaab (33:23), is used in a Libyan agreement from 2015: 'Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah . Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow [to the death], and among them is he who awaits [his chance]. And they did not alter [the terms of their commitment] by any alteration'.²³ Similarly, in Bahrain, the *National Action Charter* states that, 'We pray to God almighty to help us be among "they who are to their trusts and their promises attentive" ...'²⁴

In comparison, diverging from religiously binding agreements may not only be contrary to the will of God, but may also invite retribution or justify intervention. In South Waziristan, Pakistan, a peace agreement signed by a commander of the Tehrik-e-Pakistan, the Mehsud Tribe and the South Waziristan Agency, is finalised with the item: 'God forbid, in case of violation of this agreement, the local government has the right to proceed in accordance with the existing laws.'²⁵ The penalty for non-compliance is also noted in the Tajik 1997 *Act of Mutual Forgiveness*, which states 'May the wrath of the Almighty fall on those who will dare to take revenge or subject people to persecution in connection with the past conflict and may they be damned by the nation. Such persons will be brought before courts.'

In short, the divine may be invoked to inspire compliance through good will, guidance, and upholding their covenants. Alternatively, non-compliance may be interpreted as an act against God, and therefore may justify action on the part of transgressed.

Conclusion

²² Libya, *Reconciliation Agreement between the Tebu and Awlad Sulayman Tribes*, 29/03/17, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1954>>; Syria, *Initiative to Stop the Ongoing Fighting between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya (AAS)*, 19/07/17, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2178>>.

²³ Libya, *Statement by the Martyrs Brigade in Zawiyat al-Mahjoub regarding the ceasefire agreement in Aziziyyah and the latest developments in and near Tripoli*, 26/04/15, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1892>>.

²⁴ Bahrain, *National Action Charter of Bahrain*, 15/02/01, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1437>>, in practice quoting Surat al-Mu'min 28:8.

²⁵ Article 6 in Pakistan, *Srarogha Agreement*, 07/02/05, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1532>>.

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References to “God” can best be understood significant to agreement, rather than rhetorical. They involve phrases crafted to speak simultaneously to a range of constituencies at once – all of whom have different and even incompatible needs for reassurance. The first are internal constituencies. These include the parties’ own ‘followers’ who may be distrustful of the deal and of having core political beliefs “sold out’. Here invocations of God and assertions of God’s will can serve to project the compromise as beyond the control of the parties, and a fulfilment of sectarian battle-field ambitions rather than a negation of them, or conversely as a reason for pursuing peace and compromise. A second internal constituency is the ‘other side’, where joint invocations may serve a confidence-building function and attempt to state the basis for common community. Externally, international actors want to see a serious commitment to the deal; and understand religious groups to be more committed if they affirm in religious terms, but will also see ‘moral guarantors’ within society as an ‘enforcement resource’, notably religious leaders, but also civil society and traditional leaders, whose support may be engaged by using their preferred language.

What then can we learn about peacebuilding from the inclusion of God? As Silvestri and Mayall (2015, 73) write: '[s]ecular and Western presuppositions and philosophies are still hegemonic ideas hindering a nuanced and full appreciation of religion, and in fact these can limit the definitions that we use and the approaches that we take when encountering religion.' Peace agreement references to God and religion point to the need to take the invocation of God more seriously as part of the peace negotiation “toolkit” that local actors can reach for. Religious concepts are used in forging peace, religious actors are woven into agreements, and references to God are used to reinforce commitments to honour agreements, respect others, and nation-build.

Peace agreements must often invoke values that in some sense evoke a common humanity and sense of common moral and political commitment to common community. Peace agreement references to “the divine” demonstrate the diverse modes of invoking God that are used, and suggests a complex set of overlapping functions which these references provide, in helping the parties reach and sustain a compromise in the face of ongoing radical political disagreement. Even where religion has been a source of conflict, articulating a basis for common community in the shared element of the moral codes that underlie the major religions, we suggest, can play a constructive role in the conflict’s resolution.

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Peace agreements:

All peace agreements cited in this chapter are from the P-AX Peace Agreement Database, version 1, released 19 February 2018, <www.peaceagreements.org>

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