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Devising a Methodological Framework for Analysing the Potential ofBuddhist Peacebuilding

Mark Owen

Introduction

Economist Paul Collier has persuasively argued that 'war is development in reverse' (2004), and it is widely acknowledged that fundamental to effective and sustainable development is the prevention or resolution of latent and violent conflict.[1] Conflict impacts negatively on economic growth, poverty and hunger, education, health, and the environment, through the destruction of

1. Brahm, Eric. "Latent Conflict Stage." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: September 2003 http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/latent-conflict.

institutions and infrastructure, threats to human security and well-being, and population displacement. The former Sectary-General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his seminal 1992 report 'An Agenda for Peace' was one of the first to make explicit the link between conflict and development: "only sustained, cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems can place an achieved peace on a durable foundation."[2] With the formation of the Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund in 2005, the UN accentuated its commitment to developing a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy and mechanism. It is now widely acknowledged that achieving, and sustaining, the gains made through the Millennium Development Goals will not be possible without proactive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

In light of these developments, the primary purpose of this paper is to explore how Buddhists and Buddhism might contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of peacebuilding processes, and in turn contribute to achieving the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals. Drawing on scholarly work in the areas of Buddhist and religious peacebuilding, and incorporating case study material from Nepal, Sri Lanka, China/Tibet, it will be argued that previous work on Buddhism, conflict and peacebuilding often presents selective, simplistic representations which do not accurately convey the complex dynamics which exist in conflict situations 'on the ground'. In addition whereas the importance of analysing and understanding the conflict context has been recognised in border peacebuilding studies, there has so far been few attempts to articulate how we might deal constructively and practically with the apparent contradictions and tensions evident in work on religious peacebuilding. In attempt to transcend these incongruities, an innovative methodological framework will be proposed for assessing and analysing the potential of Buddhist peacebuilding within a given conflict or context. Observations will also be made on further areas in Buddhist peacebuilding which require greater exploration and clarification.

2. See www.unrol.org/files/A_47_277.pdf

The Problems and Potentials of 'Buddhist Peacebuilding

Traditionally, Buddhism has been perceived as a 'religion of peace', and there are an increasing number of works in the area of Buddhism, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding to support to this presumption.[3] Having never developed a 'just war' theology[4] or openly advocated violence as a means through which to resolve conflict and dispute, it is relatively easy from a doctrinal and philosophical perspective to develop a premise for Buddhist engagement in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Some brief examples: the mental states and conditions which lead to violence and killing were criticised in the early texts (Bartholomeusz 2002: 52). The Buddha himself has been used as an exemplar of pacifist non-violence in his dealings with Devadatta (Niwano 1982: 14-18); as a universal redeemer in his conversion of notorious killer Angulimala;[5] and as a skilled mediator in preventing violence between Sakyas and Koliyas in disputes over the waters of the River Rohini.[6] Often held up as a demonstration of Buddhists' commitment to peace are the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*); and in particular the renunciation of the killing of all sentient being (*pānātipātā*). The concept of *sīla* has also been interpreted as compelling Buddhists to acquire merit by providing compassionate assistance to those in need.

Additionally the *bodhisattva* ideal has been used as a concept by which to demonstrate Buddhist commitment to non-violence and compassion, and as emblematic of an interpretation and understanding of Buddhism which identifies personal salvation with that of all other sentiment beings and the world around us. As Cynthia Sampson points out Buddhists "have tended to pursue… conflict resolution under the rubric of engaged Buddhism" (in Zartman 2007: 304). A socially aware, non-violent movement and

3. See for example Chappell 1999; Der-lan Yeh 2006; McConnell 1995; Morris 2000; Mun 2007; Sivaraksa 1192, 2005; Thich Naht Hanh 1991, 2008; amongst others.

4. See Frydenlund in Tikhonov & Brekke 2013: 102-3.

5. See the Angulimala Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya

6. The commentaries of the Anguttara Nikaya and the Samyutta Nikaya recount these instances.

practice, notable Buddhist teachers and activists such as Thich Nhat Hanh and Sulak Sivaraksa have use concepts such as dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) to underpin socially engaged forms of Buddhism. In fact there are a number of internationally recognised Buddhists who have deservedly received rich praise for their humanitarian and peacebuilding work; Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia; Buddhadasa Bhikku of Thailand; the Dalai Lama; Aung San Suu Kyi; Daisaku Ikeda to name a few. Increasing numbers of Buddhist organisations are involved in conflict transformation and peacebuilding work (the Buddhist Peace Network, Network of Engaged Buddhists, Tibetan Centre of Conflict Resolution, Sarvodaya, the Karuna Trust, SGI, etc.), and it has been argued that Buddhism possesses innate tools for preventing and transforming conflict; such as the practice of mindfulness to help recognise and interrupt the emotional and causal events which lead to violence (McConnell 1995).

Much more has been written on Buddhist peacebuilding than is possible to summarise in the space available here. What this brief outline is intended to demonstrate is that for many scholars and practitioners the philosophy and practices of Buddhism are seen as largely synonymous with peacebuilding and conflict transformation principles. Conversely, it is equally possible to find studies which offer an entirely contradictorily argument. In recent times there has been a significant increase in studies on religion, violence and warfare; and Buddhism is no exception. Iselin Frydenlund has argued that essentialist representations of Buddhism as exclusively pacifist are misguided (Frydenlund in Tikhonov & Brekke 2013), and as Juergensmeyer notes historic and contemporary examples show that Buddhist nations are no stranger to the battlefield (in Jerryson & Juergensmeyer 2009).

Arguably Buddhism has also been complicit in a wide range of structural violence. Studies have shown that Buddhist teachings and *sangha* can have a significant conservative influence in society, and sustain vertical power structures and oppression. Catherine Morris (2000) for example has argued that in Cambodia social inequalities have historically been accepted as the consequences of *kamma* and as a result the rich and powerful are perceived to

be privileged because of merit from past lives, whilst the poor, disabled, or those in bad circumstances experience suffering because of bad actions in former lives. Also in Cambodia, the government and religious leaders have in the past drawn criticism from human rights advocates and campaigners. They argue that Buddhist concepts of forgiveness in dealing with former Khmer Rouge leaders and offering pardons allow perpetrators to escape unpunished and indeed in some cases unrepentant. Similarly Chaiwat Satha-anand has suggested that the desire to address social and structural problems in Thailand is to some degree undermined by a fatalistic interpretation of the doctrine of impermanence (in Mun 2007). David Chappell (1999) has also argued that on a metaphysical level the doctrine of non-self (*anatta*) undermines the concept of individual human rights.

In addition Eva Neumaier has claimed that the Buddhist ideal of the *arhat* and a tendency to internalise problems and so attribute them to karmic consequences can be seen to diminish the importance and need for social and political activism (in Coward & Smith 2004: chapter 4). Buddhism like many other religions also has a history of structural violence and discrimination against women, which still persists in many countries and cultures.[7] Furthermore, Neumaier points out that Buddhism's close historical association with monarchies, and the state sponsorship it has received in a variety of different countries and cultures, has made the development of a direct and overt Buddhist critique of war and violence difficult.[8] Thai social activist and commentator Sulak Sivaraksa concurs with this hypothesis, and suggests that "Buddhism, as practised in most Asian countries today, serves mainly to legitimise dictorial regimes and multinational corporations" (1992: 68). Neumaier concludes her article on Sri Lanka and Tibet by suggesting that in fact Buddhism displays a history of 'lost opportunities' for peacebuilding.

Clearly what these contradictory positions represent are two ends of a broad spectrum; one an idealised view of what Buddhists

7. See Neunaier in Coward & Smith 2004: 86-7; Romberg, Claudia in Gort, Jansen and Vroom 2002: 176-85.

8. See also Juergensmyer in Jerryson & Juergensmyer 2009: Introduction.

and Buddhism should be like, the other seeking out the worst and most destructive examples of Buddhist behaviour. How then do these representations compare to real life situations of conflict 'on the ground'? In Nepal we can see that Buddhism is being used by political and religious leaders at a national level to emphasise the peaceful nature and future of a nation recovering from a decade long civil war. Lumbini as the birth place of the Buddha is being developed as a sanctuary and 'peace zone', and whilst Buddhist images and symbolism have always been used to promote Nepal as a Buddhist 'Shangri-la', 'spiritual tourists' are once again being encouraged to visit Buddhist sites such as Boudha and Swayambhu to partake in 'authentic' peaceful Buddhist experiences. Simultaneously, Tibetan Buddhists who attempt to protest about the Chinese occupation of Tibet are dealt with swiftly and harshly by the Nepalese authorities; under pressure from the Chinese government. Predominantly Buddhist ethnic groups such as the Tamang also supported the Maoist uprising and fought in the armed struggle against the Nepalese government. Furthermore, whilst Buddhists are invariably represented on various interfaith and multifaith committees, and numerous Buddhists NGOs and organisations are involved in humanitarian work, direct Buddhist participation in the national peace process or in reconciliation efforts is noticeable largely by its absence. With few strong Buddhist voices or representation at national level any proactive peacebuilding initiatives seem largely to stem from the growing *Theravāda* communities (Levine & Gellner 2007) as opposed the indigenous Newar or Tibetan Buddhists.

The role of Buddhism in the Sri Lankan conflict is equally as complex, with Buddhism seen to be a driver of conflict as well having acted in a mediation and reconciliation capacity. The role of the sixth-century chronicle the *Mahavamsa*[9] in binding Buddhism to the state has been well-recorded, and has resulted in some Buddhists seeing "the island of Sri Lanka [as] a Buddhist "Promised Land"" (Bartholomeusz 2002: 141). As a result there is a history of Buddhist monks getting elected to parliament on the strength of promising to establish a *Dharma Rajya* (Buddhist Kingdom) in Sri Lanka, and parties like the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) advocating a hard line stance against the LTTE

9. See for example Tambiah 1992; Deegalle 2006.

(Deegalle in Tikhonov & Brekke 2012: chapter 1). Frydenlund has also revealed the complex interaction between monks and soldiers, with monks carrying out *paritta* recitals to protect soldiers entering into combat (in Tikhonov & Brekke 2012: chapter 5). Hayward has noted the disjuncture between the supporting of military efforts in the public sphere, and the more positive roles played by Buddhist clergy in private and at grassroots level (in Sisk 2011: 183-99). Buddhists have been involved in community dispute resolution and mediation; peacebuilding and reconciliation in the wake of the bloody civil war; and supporting humanitarian and development efforts. Buddhist inspired organisations such as Sarvodaya carry out much needed and inspirational work, whilst influential Buddhists play a prominent part in multifaith initiatives such as Sri Lanka's Congress of Religions and The Sri Lanka Council of Religions for Peace, which actively lobby the Sri Lankan political leadership and express publicly their opposition to injustice and violence (Perera 2012).

As one of the most well-known conflicts with Buddhist involvement, the China/Tibet conflict seems by comparison relatively straightforward. Buddhism underpins the Dalai Lama's non-violent opposition to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, for which he has received wide-spread international recognition and acclaim, including a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. However the strong link between Buddhism and Tibetan national identity can also be seen to have a detrimental impact on Tibetans. As McLagan notes: "[B]y framing Tibetans as bearers of an endangered culture... while at the same time elevating them to the level of enlightened beings, little room is left for them to be ordinary people, much less political actors creatively responding to changing historical circumstances." (1997: 75). Furthermore,

> [T]here are many Tibetan nationalists, both inside and outside of Tibet, who are markedly uncomfortable with religious nationalism and who feel ill at ease to self-identify with the moral community defined by the Prayer of Truthful Words and the National Anthem. They argue that Buddhism should not have much of a role to play in Tibetan political institutions, and that the predicament of Tibet is largely due to Buddhism and its non-violent message, which they see as a possibly fatal liability for the

future of Tibet (Dreyfus 2005: 13).

The strong link between nationalist discourse, Tibetan religion/culture, and the Dalai Lama has meant condemnation of one aspect of this nexus has led to accusations of being critical of the others, and it has suggested that the Central Tibetan Administration has intentionally used this relationship to suppress dissent against the strategy of non-violent resistance, with divergence by individuals or organizations from the 'official' stance being criticized as counterproductive to achieving 'freedom' for Tibet and Tibetans (Ardley 2000). In addition, infighting within Tibetan communities has been caused by Buddhist factionalism, with disputes over the selection of the 17th Karmapa[10] (Terhune 2004) and the Shugden controversy.[11] The situation is further complicated by the disturbing series of reportedly over one hundred self-immolations that have occurred between 2009-13.[12], and for understandable reasons, Tibetans exiles have been debating as to whether self-immolation can be seen as a form of violence; with the Chinese government claiming it is a violent act and many Tibetans both in exile and China/TAR refuting this.[13]

Beyond Complexity and Ambiguity

It is of course possible to see comparable examples of complexity and

10. Following the death of the 16th Karmapa, two candidates for the position of the 17th Karmapa where put forward by rival factions leading to a sometimes bitter dispute and legal contest.

11. Dorje Shugden was traditionally worshipped in Tibet as a protector deity. However in 1996 the current Dalai Lama issued a 'ban' on worshipping the deity leading Shugden devotees to claim discrimination and contravention of their human rights. Debate over the deity continues today and has cause strong feelings between rival factions within Tibetan communities.

12. International Campaign for Tibet, "Self- Immolations in Tibet," December 19, 2013. https://www.savetibet.org/resources/fact-sheets/self-immolations-by-tibetans/. See also McGranahan, Carole and Litzinger, Ralph. "Self-Immolation as Protest in Tibet." Fieldsights - Hot Spots, Cultural Anthropology Online, April 09, 2012. http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/93-self-immolation-as-protest-in-tibet.

13. Rekjong, Dhondup Tashi, "Online Debates among Tibetans in Exile," *Fieldsights - Hot Spots, Cultural Anthropology Online* (2012,) http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/112-online-debates-among-tibetans-in-exile

contradiction throughout history in Buddhist countries and cultures across Asia. So whilst studies in Buddhist conflict/peacebuilding which tend towards one extreme or another help to problematise selective representations, they appear to offer little help in trying to understand and deal constructively with real life situations of conflict and dispute. The question then remains, how do we manage and deal with this complexity? In order to help answer this question, and ultimately enhance the theory and practice of Buddhist peacebuilding, it would be useful at this point to contextualise this debate within the broader filed of religion and peacebuilding.

Whilst in recent years religion has received much negative attention,[14] at the same time there has been increasing recognition by scholars and peace practitioners of the substantial resources for peace most religions possess,[15] and how faith-based organisations, religious communities, and religiously inspired individuals have contributed positively to pre and post conflict peacebuilding and development processes (Haynes 2007; Clarke & Jennings 2008). There have been two notable contributions which have helped to delineate and summarise the theoretical and practical developments (and deficiencies) in the area of religious peacebuilding. Katrien Hertog in her important work *The Complex Realties of Religious Peacebuilding* (2010) offers a comprehensive outline of past studies, and suggests that "discourse on religious peacebuilding by both practitioners and scholars often remains very rhetorical and the analysis, systemization, and coherence in the field of study are still lagging behind the practice" (211). In an attempt to rectify this deficit Hertog constructs a 'conceptual model' for religious peacebuilding and applies it to an analysis of the peacebuilding potential in the Russian Orthodox Church. Atalia Omer in her recent article *Religious Peacebuilding: The Exotic, the Good, and the Theatrical* (2012) calls for a much greater reflexive awareness of the discursive formations which underpin a range of implicit assumptions in research this area, and warns that if unchecked they can lead to perpetuating the very types of structural and cultural injustice they are intended to challenge.

14. See for example: McTernan, Oliver 2003; Al-Rasheed, Madawi & Shterin, Marat. 2009.

15. Appleby 1999; Gopin 2002; Coward & Smith 2004; Hertog 2010; amongst others.

As both these outstanding scholars recognise, much of the work in this area is underpinned by Appleby's seminal work *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* which, as its title implies, contends that the ambivalence inherent in all religions creates the potential for both violence and peace-making. Marc Gopin's *Between Eden and Armageddon* (2000) published in the same year as Appleby's study is often recognised as being equally influential in developing the field, and is the first serious attempt to bring into engagement the developing discipline of religious peacebuilding with the more established area of conflict resolution. We can add to these important contributions, influential works by Johnston and Sampson (1994); John Paul Lederach (1997); Gort, Jansen and Vroom (2002); Mohammad Abu-Nimer (2003); Coward and Smith (2004); David Little (2007); and Toft, Pilpott and Shah (2011) amongst others.

What many of these studies have in common is that they dismiss the crass tendency to see religious traditions as unchanging monoliths or to essentialise religious perspectives on violence and/or peace, and seek to emphasise the importance of context in understanding the role and function of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. Gopin states that,

> [I]n the real situation of conflict, priority must be given to an inductive approach, which involves an empirical investigation of a conflict scenario: listening to the needs being expressed in the conflict and then exploring a series of religious ideas, values, and institutions that may be appropriate for that conflict setting (2000: 26).

Similarly Hertog argues that in order to develop insight into the added value of specific religious actors in specific conflict situations…. in-depth knowledge of both the conflict situation and the involved religious traditions and organizations is required in order to devise the best ways in which religion can contribute to a peacebuilding process (2010: 116).

However despite these observations there are few specific or practical details about how this complex task may actually be undertaken, or examples of context specific analysis on which to

draw. Most existing studies tend to produce general lists of possible avenues and resources for promoting religious peacebuilding. Broad definitions mean that religious resources for peacebuilding can be seen to encompass: inner spiritual inspiration and transformation; scriptural and theological 'archaeology'; religious ritual; the use of established networks and hierarchies for enhancing advocacy, empowerment and equality; the mobilisation of practical and financial resources for supporting reconciliation and peacebuilding work; amongst others. Similarly the potential roles for religious actors have been identified as, negotiators, mediators, facilitators, observers, educators, advocates, and 'prophets' or 'heralds' acting as an early warning mechanism for conflict, amongst others (see Appleby 2000, 211-13; Sampson 2007). In addition it has been argued that religious actors can contribute positively at all stages and levels of conflict and peacebuilding processes (see for example Hertog 2010, chapter 2).

More specific case studies are nearly always retrospective as opposed to predictive, and tend to be largely descriptive; usually showcasing isolated examples of reactive peacebuilding, as opposed to strategically planned, comprehensive peacebuilding endeavours.[16] Both these types of studies are of limited value when attempting to, identify and assess the effectiveness of religious peacebuilding resources in a specific conflict; design and implement context specific interventions; or in constructing a framework or model to carry out such analysis. Whilst in recent years a wide range of 'tools' for conflict analysis have been developed, and are regularly used by peacebuilding practitioners to identify problems and potentials within specific conflict contexts[17] these methods are rarely acknowledged or used in the study of religious peacebuilding; with arguably the one notable exception being Hertog's adoption of a 'peacebuilding architecture' to 'screen' the Russian Orthodox Church for peacebuilding potential and resources (2011). This is certainly an extremely useful addition to the debate, but concentrates on one religious tradition, and does not attempt to take account of the complex variables which exist in a specific conflict or context.

16. See for example Coward and Smith 2004; Little 2007, amongst others.

17. See 'Conflict Analysis Tools'. http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/node/81

Considering a Framework of Analysis for Context Specific Buddhist Peacebuilding

So what form might a framework for analysing the potential of Buddhist peacebuilding in any particular context actually take? In this section I will outline a possible structure before going on to, suggest what the unique advantages of developing such a methodological approach are, and recognise some related issues which require further debate and exploration. Before I begin it is important to point out that whilst for obvious reasons I am focusing on Buddhism, in much of this analysis we could equally be talking about 'religion' more generally as invariably the concepts and ideas discussed here are transferable. Furthermore, I would argue that it is extremely rare that Buddhism is embedded in a conflict or conflict where no other religions exist. Therefore we need keep in mind that methods of 'Buddhist peacebuilding' need to be responsive to the dynamics and interaction which exist in situations of conflict and peacebuilding where other religions are practiced.

In attempting to conceive and articulate a framework for analysis it is not necessary to 'reinvent the wheel' (*dharma* or otherwise), and existing work in the areas of religious peacebuilding, conflict assessment and analysis, and peacebuilding theory and practice more generally can provide a firm basis for development. It is widely accepted that attempts to design and deliver constructive and positive peacebuilding interventions demand a thorough understanding of the conflict context, and the nature and causes of the conflict. "In understanding conflict, it is imperative to examine the sources of disconnect and animosity, to identify the phases of evolving relationships between adversaries, and to illuminate the escalation of their struggle" (Ho-Won Jeong 2008: 4). In concurrence Freemen and Fisher acknowledge that effective conflict assessment requires consideration of the levels, stages, contexts, issues, parties, dynamics and sources of a given conflict (Freemen and Fisher 2012: 67). In an attempt to synthesize elements from a number of Conflict Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) Mathew Levinger suggests a 'four-step' process of conflict assessment which constitutes analysis of the conflict 'dividers and connectors'; 'actors or parties'; 'drivers of conflict and peace'; and 'indication of the conflict trajectory' (2013: 95-106).

It is not possible, or I would suggest necessary, to explain in detail each one of Levinger's steps. However what is imperative to re-emphasise is that the success of peacebuilding interventions is directly proportionate to the level of understanding of the conflict causes; and I am not only referring to the immediately apparently reasons for conflict, but also the deep underlying structural issues, inequalities, and injustices which often drive grievance and violence. For the purpose of this study this deep contextual understanding is necessary in order for us to be able to accurately and effectively situate Buddhism with the conflict. This then leads us to the next step of the process or framework, which constitutes a deep analysis of how Buddhism is understood, and it's the role and of function *within the specific context*. Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Buddhism cannot fail to acknowledge that it has developed diffuse traditions and understandings across a range of cultures and countries, and it is imperative we understand how it is interpreted and influences the particular conflict we are studying. This is an important and vital departure from broader studies on religious peacebuilding, or case studies which attempt to infer findings from one study to all other contexts.

This stage would therefore require consideration of: the Buddhists concepts and ideas which are most prominent within a particular community or society; the relationship between Buddhism and other civil society actors; associations between Buddhism and the state, including political, and government institutions; the factions, hierarchies and systems within the *saṃgha*; the legitimacy and authority of religious actors within society; interactions and relations with other religious traditions; traditional methods of conflict resolution and mediation; the role of festival and ritual in resolution and reconciliation; the existence of radical elements or individuals; relationship with, or influence of, Buddhist actors outside the immediate context. Whilst not intended to be exhaustive, this list is supposed to give an indication of the depth of knowledge and understanding required. Lisa Schirch notes that "[I]f the people conducting a conflict assessment are not deeply knowledgeable about local languages, cultures and complex political and economic dynamics in a context, the output of the assessment may not enable the planning process" (2013: chapter 1). I would argue that developing and understanding the complex dynamics that Schirch refers to are

part of the process of conflict assessment, however where I would concur is that existing knowledge, in this case of Buddhist culture, traditions, and practices, is a pre-requisite.

One important point to make is that at this stage of analysis it is imperative to fully acknowledge the potentially negative dimensions of Buddhism in relation to the context, and the barriers to peacebuilding which may exist; and for understandable reasons in my experience this is an area which religious actors are often very reluctant to address. Returning to our case studies, for example whilst Buddhism might not necessarily have been an obviously active component in the conflict in Nepal, its proactive participation in the peace process is hampered by some ethic groups affiliation with Buddhism, the Maoist rejection of religion *per se*, and the 'rebranding' of Nepal as a secular federal democracy.

The next stage of the process is to develop a 'Peace Profile' or to map existing peacebuilding actors and initiatives. This is important to ensure that any intended peacebuilding work undertaken by Buddhists compliments and enhances existing efforts, as opposed to replicates and competes with it. The Peace Centre's *Peace and Conflicts Impact Assessment* outlines four areas on which a peace profile should focus: 'Ongoing Peace Efforts', 'Peace Structures and Processes in Place', 'Peacebuilding Gaps', and 'Peacebuilding Synergies'.[18] Evidently as part of this process we would pay particular attention to what other Buddhist groups and organisations are doing with the intention of identifying and learning from best practice, and ascertaining opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and resources.

The final stage of the assessment and analysis process (discounting of course any project design and/or practical implementation) is matching existing potential and resources with the peacebuilding needs identified in stage 3. This is where we can draw heavily on existing research in religious peacebuilding; whilst not taking it for granted that all forms of Buddhist peacebuilding are relevant

18. See PCIA Handbook v4, 2013, 'Step 3: Peace Profile' - *peacebuildingcentre.com/pbc_documents/PCIA_HandbookEN.pdf*

or effective in all situations. So for example, whilst in studies on religious peacebuilding religious leaders are invariably presented as highly influential,[19] in fact this might be more relevant in religions and societies that are inherently hierarchical and structured, than in say the diffuse and electric religious context that exists in Nepal (Owen & King 2013). Potential areas of Buddhist peacebuilding might include the power of religious teachings and scripture; leadership at different levels of the *sangha*; ritual for personal and communal reconciliation; practical resources and structures for logistics; indigenous and 'elective' peacebuilding and dispute resolution mechanisms. However it is important to reiterate, not all will be relevant or effective in all contexts, and the process of assessment outlined here should assist in identifying which ones have the most chance of success.

Some additional considerations which relate to the development of an assessment and analysis process focused specifically on Buddhism. As Katrien Hertog notes, "for a variety of reasons, religion has largely been ignored in policy design and decision making relating to international politics or peacebuilding processes, often with negative consequences" (2010, xv; see also Gopin 2000, 17). As a consequence most conflict assessments treat religion as a part of wider civil society, and therefore arguably engage with them on a rather superficial level. This evidently ignores the increasing body of evidence which demonstrates that religions have particular attributes to bring to conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Alternatively a framework focused on Buddhist peacebuilding should ensure that Buddhists are given the opportunity to express themselves *in their own terms.* By this I mean they would not be required or encouraged to adopt generic peacebuilding and development terminology (as so often happens), but are allowed to articulate their understandings using Buddhist concepts, beliefs and language. There is also the misapprehension by many agencies and organisations that religious groups need only be engaged when overtly part of the conflict. This again ignores the growing body of evidence that religion can play a vital role in

19. See for example See Appleby 2000; Gopin 2000; Hertog 2010, amongst others.

resolving conflict in situations where they are not an obvious part of the problems or violence (Bouta *et al* 2005); and the framework presented here can be used to assess the potential of Buddhist peacebuilding in any conflict context.

The importance of conflict assessment being a fully participatory process has also been increasingly recognised. "There are substantial benefits from participatory processes, both for the quality of analysis and the potential to contribute to resolution… It is also more likely that recommendations will be implemented if local partners are involved in the assessment and formulation of strategies" (Freeman & Fisher 2012, 76). In carrying out such an analysis we must ensure Buddhists at all levels of society (not just religious leaders or *sangha*) are given the opportunity to input. Furthermore, this process of assessment can be carried out in scenarios at all levels of society; and therefore it is equally applicable to grassroots disputes and tensions as it is to national, international, or regional conflict. That said, just as knowledge of Buddhist traditions and concepts is a necessity, Buddhists carrying out conflict assessments should have some background knowledge and training in this area if they want to circumvent previous critiques of religious peacebuilding as being naive and amateurish.

Finally, it is evident from reviewing literature on Buddhist peacebuilding that there is a lack of apparent consensus and clarity over key terms and concepts. For example given the traditional interpretations of Buddhism as having an emphasis on inner peace there needs to be much greater exploration concerning whether Buddhist peacemakers see peace in a comparable way to 'secular' peacemakers. There is also a debate to be had about what actually constitutes 'Buddhist Peacebuilding', and whether this term pertains only to peacebuilding directly relevant to Buddhists themselves, or whether it is possible to broaden its impact and relevance to non-Buddhists without losing the particularities which make it uniquely 'Buddhist'.

Conclusion

Buddhist peacebuilding and conflict transformation (in common with broader religious peacebuilding) is still in its relative infancy

and as a result currently lacks sophistication and/or analytical rigour. Conflict by its very nature is invariably complex, and our responses to it must match that complexity. As Satha-Anand notes, "The "Buddhist context" may look conducive to peacemaking at first, but it can easily generate a high degree of frustration" (in Mun 2007: 144). Whilst Buddhism undoubtedly displays vast resources for peacebuilding this potential cannot be taken for granted. "Reflecting on the possibilities of religious peacebuilding, we have to beware of naiveté… Religious peacebuilding is not a self-evident, transparent, linear, or strictly manageable phenomenon" (Hertog 2010: 118). Significant work needs to be undertaken to systematise this field of study and clarify key concepts and terms. When the quality of work in this area can sometimes literally mean the difference between life and death, it is incumbent on all Buddhists involved in peacebuilding to strive to be as informed and as systemic as possible, and to eschew haphazard or random approaches to peacebuilding.

In the course of this paper I have attempted to go beyond the rhetoric of dichotomy, and have argued that stereotypes of Buddhists as either archetypal paragons of virtue, or sadistic warmongers lack nuance and deep understanding and are unhelpful in dealing constructively with the real life complexities of conflict. I have also demonstrated that studies in religious peacebuilding and conflict assessment have shown that an emphasis on understanding the conflict context dramatically enhances the prospects of peacebuilding interventions being effective and sustainable. In light of this, whilst by no means intended to be exhaustive, I have attempted to outline a four-stage methodological framework for analysing the potential of Buddhist peacebuilding in relation to a specific conflict or context. This process necessitates: 1) a broad assessment of the conflict actors, relationships and drivers; 2) a deep analysis of the role and function of Buddhism with the chosen context; 3) identification of existing and potential areas for peacebuilding; and 4) matching accessible Buddhist resources and skills with peacebuilding gaps and needs.

In conclusion Eva Neumaier suggests that in the final analysis, "Buddhists are like people who hold in their hands the tools to their liberation but have forgotten how to use them" (in Coward & Smith 2004: 86). It is the intention of this paper to try and help reinvigorate

that memory, and offer a small contribution to enhancing the theory and practice of Buddhist peacebuilding, which in turn has the potential to positively impact on the successful achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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