"Multi-Track Diplomacy" through Enhancing Interreligious Understanding: A Case Study in Abrahamic Trialogue between Jordanian and American Students

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"Rising religiousness is not a danger, so long as it is pure religion, pure commitment to the values and the virtues of what religion is. And here we cannot talk about one religion, we must talk about all religions, because they are all, in that sense, the same."

— AMBASSADOR HASAN ABU-NIMAH

ABSTRACT

Interfaith dialogue has become widely acknowledged as a means to enhance interreligious and intercultural sensitivity, complement state-based diplomatic efforts, and attain sustainable conflict resolution. This study is aimed at examining the potential of Multi-Track Diplomacy, demonstrated through interreligious discourse, to develop interreligious and intercultural sensitivity within the young adult, nonprofessional demographic. The data and analysis is based upon research acquired through interviews with interreligious organizations, religious and academic scholars, and Jordanian citizens in spring 2008; and three interfaith trialogue sessions held April-May, 2008 with participants from the three Abrahamic faith traditions. The analysis indicates that mild tension exists between Christian and Muslim communities, and hostility toward a monolithic Jewish "other" from Arab individuals within the study's demographic; however, interfaith trialogue as outlined in this study is an effective means to developing both interreligious and intercultural sensitivity.

RATIONALE

The 20th century witnessed a sequential collapse of pan-Arab and nationalist identity movements in the Middle East. In the wake of these failures religion in general—and the Islamic faith in particular—has proven capable of transcending national borders, applying to all social and economic classes, and providing an easily-accessible source of pride and dignity to its adherents.[1] Bernard Lewis argued that "the Middle East is a culture in which not nationality, not citizenship, not descent, but religion, or more precisely membership of a religious community, is the ultimate determinant of identity."[2] In what has been termed the "re-Islamization" of the Middle East, individuals increasingly define themselves based upon their faith first.

One of the consequences of religious self-identification is the projection of this identification on others, with perceptions of others becoming tied to a group's religious doctrine and vice versa.[3] In the context of international relations, individual and state actors are being identified by the faith they espouse: in personal interviews with Jordanians, Israelis were commonly identified as "Jews," America as a "Christian" nation, the Middle East as "Muslim."[4] Because of this, stereotypes and misperceptions of other faith traditions or bodies of believers now play an increasingly critical role in how individuals perceive the "other."

In an effort to combat these negative images of other faith groups, governmental and civil organizations in Jordan have begun to utilize interfaith dialogue as a component in civil discourse and maintaining peaceful relations between faith groups. While

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[1] Slackman, "Fashion…" 12/18/2007.
[2] Lewis, 1998.
[3] Maalouf, 2000.
[4] Doctor 2008.

interfaith dialogues are present in Jordan, they have been limited in two areas. First, current dialogue in Jordan is framed primarily within the dichotomies of Middle East/West and Islam/Christianity, which neglects a critical faith and political actor in the Middle East: Judaism and the state of Israel. Second, both academic literature evaluating the potential for interfaith dialogue and the practice of interfaith dialogue itself remain restricted to dialogue between theologians, academic scholars, and political actors, in what has been referred to as track I and track II diplomacy.[5] Significantly, there is little to no attempt to engage the young adult demographic in these interreligious efforts.

This theory of what I refer to as the "trickle-down interreligious sensitivity model" has been widely held as the most effective means of engendering interreligious and intercultural sensitivity, complementing state-based diplomatic efforts, and attaining sustainable conflict resolutions. The primary argument in support of this theory is twofold: first, that political action must occur within the upper echelons of government, and therefore political leaders are those most needed to enact political change; and second, as the Middle East increasingly self-identifies by religion, religious leaders will have a greater impact over their followers and be able to "preach peace from the pulpit."

However, this argument is flawed given the socio-political situation in Jordan specifically and the Middle East generally, and ignores the potential for meaningful dialogue among the general population. Jordan has historically demonstrated a disconnect between rulers and constituents, especially in regard to foreign policy, making stances adopted by political actors ineffective in altering public opinion.[6] Second, while

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[5] For debate on the relationship between the two tracks, and the limits and potential of track II diplomacy, see Chataway, Cynthia. "Track II Diplomacy: From a Track I Perspective." *Negotiation Journal*. Issue 14. pp. 269-287.
[6] Lecture by former Prime Minister Dr. Jawad Anani, 4-10-2008.

it is hoped that religious leaders will be able to exact positive influence effectively over their followers, this is increasingly not the case. Salwa Ismail argues, "One of the main features of re-Islamization has been the increased dependence on *fatwa* [religious legal verdict] to address the ethics and propriety of quotidian transactions and relations in their details. This has required the resort to religious authorities, but has also encouraged the informalization of *fatwa*-seeking and *fatwa*-giving."[7] This informalization implies that *fatāwā* (plural) may be issued by those who lack religious training, but nonetheless garner significant public support. One needs only look as far as Osama bin Laden to see this effect in action.

After a brief overview of the rationalist-constructivist model, andragogic learning, and the methodology employed in this study, I argue that there is a need for interreligious dialogue in Jordan in light of the re-Islamization movement within Jordanian society; the dichotomy of rationalist-constructivist identity creation between Jordan's government and citizens; and the tension which exists between Christian and Muslim populations Second, I review the role of interreligious dialogue within the theory of multi-track diplomacy, and examine current interfaith efforts in Jordan through this theoretical lens. I ultimately conclude that, in Jordan's context, a focus specifically upon private citizens, education, and religion (diplomatic tracks IV, V, and VII[8]) through interreligious trialogue is the most effective means of achieving religious tolerance and understanding. This conclusion is supported through a case study of an interreligious trialogue organization between Jordanian and American young adults.

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[7] Ismail 2007.
[8] Diamond, Dr. Louise and Ambassador John McDonald, 1996.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The evaluation of domestic, national identity and the role it plays in international relations has produced two theoretical constructs: rationalism and constructivism. Rationalism generally assumes that state identity and interests can be held constant, and that state behavior is predicated upon these preferences. Rationalists distinguish between preferences and strategic choices by actors in response to current situations and perceived preferences of others.[9] Constructivism, on the other hand, "builds on the insight that the interests pursued by strategic actors are informed by identity, in that norms and identities give meaning to social action… For constructivists, identities shape the conception of interests both through deep structures of discourse and institutions and through the social process of public contestation." [10]

Where rationalism assumes a static model of identity, constructivism argues that identity can be shifted in moments of "identity conflict," where an assumed identity fails to meet the needs of its adherents. The acknowledgment of the potential for shifts in identity makes constructivism uniquely able to evaluate identity interests and interactions in Jordan, which has had several such identity conflicts since its creation. Rationalism, however, effectively demonstrates the disconnect that often exists between the strategic actions of Jordan's political leaders and the preferences of its constituents. This study's discussion of Jordanian identity will therefore utilize a rationalist-constructivist model to examine the relationship between state actions, the preferences of their constituents, and the role this plays in shaping perceptions of the "other."

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[9] Lynch, Marc. 2002.
[10] Ibid.

The theoretical framework for the Student-Led Trialogue borrows heavily from the

concept of andragogic learning, as argued initially by Malcolm Knowles and synthesized

by R. Hiemstra and B. Sisco.[11] Instructional theory is currently viewed through two

lenses: pedagogy and andragogy. Traditional pedagogic teaching methods stress the

importance of the instructor in selecting "what will be learned, how it will be learned,

when it will be learned, and if the material has been learned… The result is a teaching

and learning situation that actively promotes dependency on the instructor."[12]

Andragogic theory, however, is predicated on four basic assumptions about learners,

which applies more directly to an adult learning audience:

- "Their self-concept moves from dependency to independency or self-directedness.
- They accumulate a reservoir of experiences that can be used as a basis on which to build learning.
- Their readiness to learn becomes increasingly associated with the developmental tasks of social roles.
- Their time and curricular perspectives change from postponed to immediacy of application and from subject-centeredness to performance-centeredness."[13]

The andragogic theoretical model therefore aims to effectively utilize self-

direction, personal experiences, and immediate application during the learning process.

Perhaps more importantly, the andragogic learning model more effectively encourages

learning to continue after the actual activity is completed.[14] In the context of the Student-

Led Trialogue, I believe this will most effectively create a self-directed learning

experience in which participants are responsible for formulating, researching, and

presenting dialogue topics. It is hoped that participation in the Trialogue will continue

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[11] Hiemstra, R., & Sisco, B., 1990.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Knowles 1980.
[14] Hiemstra, R., & Sisco, B., 1990.

after the conclusion of the case study, and engender a desire for positive discourse among members. With the inability to procure theologians and scholars in all three faiths (discussed further in the Methodology), this theoretical construct best enables informed discourse of all three faiths.

The Student-Led Trialogue will utilize the design theory proposed by Mohammed Abu-Nimer in his article entitled, "Conflict, Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding," which advocates a five-step approach to achieving andragogic learning in interreligious dialogue. The five steps—Getting Started, Situating Our Work, Know Where You Stand, Meet the Other, and What Can We Do Together?—allow for participants to situate the trialogue within the current cultural and political environment; identify their own faith-based beliefs; discuss their faith with others, and in turn learn of others' faith traditions; and begin to deal with contemporary issues from a collaborative, faith-based perspective. This design theory, as studied in numerous case studies, facilitates interreligious sensitivity as measured by the model advanced within the article, and has proven practical in high-tension areas.

Additional design theories are based upon a case study of the Teen Trialogue and Interfaith Trialogue Series programs offered by Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice (OCCJ) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, through observation and discussion with Sheryl Siddiqui, coordinator. Theory for the "Resolutions for Interfaith Trialogue" (see Appendix II) draws from the "Dialogue Decalogue" formulated by Leonard Swidler.[15]

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[15] Swidler 1984.

My research and methodology presume these theories to be most in line with, and most effective in, achieving the goals of the study.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is designed to test the hypothesis that interfaith trialogue between young adult participants offers an effective means to achieve religious tolerance and understanding in Jordan through multi-track diplomacy approach. Participants in the interfaith trialogue were between the ages of 18 and 25, and all currently enrolled in a university-level program. All lived in Amman, Jordan, or the surrounding area. Of 15 participants, 14 were female and one male. 7 were Muslim, 4 Christian, and 4 Jewish. The Muslim and Christian participants were exclusively Jordanian/Palestinian, the Jewish participants exclusively American. The dialogue was held in English to accommodate the American students. Analysis throughout the study is wholly qualitative, with conclusions drawn from interviews with participants and observations of the trialogue.

The trialogue was specifically faith-based: prior to each session, participants researched two questions from their faith tradition that highlighted areas where stereotypes were present, or where a lack of knowledge prevented understanding. Questions were formulated with input from participants, and were designed to provide information applicable to stereotypes present, areas of confusion, or issues pertinent to current events, discovered in pre-trialogue interviews. Answers were to be drawn from religious texts or dominant theological thought. An initial meeting was held in which

participants met one another, debated and agreed upon parameters for the trialogue, signed a declaration of principles for discourse (see Appendix II), and signed informed consent forms (see Appendix I).

Each trialogue session had three subdivisions: the initial period allowed participants to discuss the questions with members from their own faith perspective to both reach consensus and develop a more complex understanding of their faith's perspective. In the second period, participants were split into two interfaith groups to discuss the questions. In this session, heavy emphasis was placed upon owning your personal faith perspective (using statements such as "in my faith" or "from my religion's perspective") with a focus on dialogue rather than debate—defined as advocating your faith not as "right" or "best," but seeking to facilitate learning of all three faiths. In the third period participants debriefed and synthesized the small group sessions, shared experiences and thoughts, and discussed current events and issues from a religious perspective. This structure, as advanced over three sessions, assimilated the five steps[16] outlined for effective interreligious dialogue.

Qualitative research into the effects of dialogue upon participants' views was conducted through pre-trialogue interviews, observation during the trialogue, and a survey following the final session (see Appendix IV). Questions focused upon the opinions held both about their own faith and the faiths of others, shifts in perspective due to the trialogue, and reasons for participation. This research allowed for an analysis of progression in interreligious sensitivity based upon the model advocated by Mohammed Abu-Nimer.[17]

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[16] Abu-Nimer 2001.
[17] Abu-Nimer 2001.

This study faced numerous restrictions on research, which may limit the universality of its conclusions. A significant limitation to this study was time available for research and trialogue sessions. This constraint permitted only three trialogue sessions, which did not allow for the complete progression of questions into more self-critical, issues-based questions. The lack of a Jewish presence in Jordan, and an inability to create interaction between Israeli and Jordanian citizens, created another significant limitation. I believe this connection is ultimately crucial to deconstructing the barriers to dialogue between the two states and religions, but this study lacked funding for transportation and housing for non-resident participants.

Limitations of participants included: an overwhelming majority of women, resulting in an inability to test the role gender plays; a difficulty by some members to communicate at the interfaith level in English; and a lack of religious knowledge in some individuals. The English language requirement to facilitate the American student participants, and myself as moderator, unfortunately limited some responses, and when dialogue turned to Arabic, excluded the American students. In the original proposal, a theological scholar panel was suggested as a means of resolving the lack of religious knowledge among participants, and to allow for clarification of trialogue topics. An inability to pay for accommodations for a rabbi made this impossible, as I was unwilling to proceed without all three faiths represented. Contacts were made with the Rabbis for Human Rights organization in Israel, who may serve as a source of information and participation in the future.

Research in regard to progression upon the interreligious sensitivity model would have been strengthened by additional interviews prior to participation, but time limitations and the schedules of participants and me as researcher made this difficult. However, many of the initial feelings in regard to members of other faiths, and to other faiths themselves, surfaced during the first trialogue session.

NEED FOR INTERRELIGIOUS TRIALOGUE IN JORDAN

I. Religious Identity in Jordan: "Re-Islamization" and Its Impact

"Re-Islamization," as it has been defined, constitutes a turn to Islam in search of a common, unifying identity in the wake of the collapse of Pan-Arabism and nationalist movements; an attempt to solidify the region against Western incursions; a source of pride and dignity for individuals of all social and economic classes; and as an attempt to reform and revive what is seen as a corrupted practice of a devout religion.[18] Islamic revival has found its greatest supporters within the young adult demographic: "The young are turning to religion for solace and purpose, pulling their parents and their governments along with them."[19] A significant number are unemployed, stunting their ascension to adulthood; they feel the affront of Western incursion and Israeli injustice just as strongly, if not more so, than their parents; and many—in Jordan especially—are highly educated, which heightens the sense of moral outrage and perceived injustice.[20]

The re-Islamization effect is a relatively new phenomenon in Jordan; prior to 2001, many individuals would have been closely linked to tribal identities or to the Jordan nationalism promoted by the Monarchy.[21] But a survey conducted by the Jordan Center for Social Research in 2006 concluded that 55.5% of Muslim respondents within the Hashemite Kingdom identified as Muslim first; only 17.1% saw themselves as Jordanian, 10.8% as Palestinian, 8% as Arabs, and 2.4% as tribal. [22] And this trend is growing. "Historically, Arabs have had three political options: Islam, pan-Arabism, or

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[18] Michel, Thomas. 2004.
[19] Slackman, "Stifled…"
[20] Tarawnah, Naseem. April 2008.
[21] Dr. Mousa Shteiwi, 3-24-2008.
[22] Dr. Mousa Shteiwi, 3-24-2008.

nationalism linked to individual states… More and more Arabs identify themselves as Muslims first."[23]

A side effect of the re-Islamization of Jordan is a mirroring of this religious perspective upon other groups. As individuals begin to self-identify more strongly with their own religion, their perceptions of others become further tied to perceptions of their religious doctrine. Stereotypes and misperceptions of other religious beliefs and bodies of believers play an increasingly critical role in how individuals view the 'other'—groups different from them in religious affiliation—creating a groupthink mentality that may become pervasive within the Islamic movement. 'Groupthink' is the mob mentality, the pressure placed on individuals to act according to the will of the majority. While this can have positive consequences—such as adherence to the law, loyalty to one's state—this also has plenty of negative historical consequences: mass genocides; cultural, societal, or racial xenophobia, etc.

Re-Islamization is placing increasing pressure on the individuals in Islamic states to adopt this more traditional view of Islam. "The pressure is growing, as religion becomes the focus of individual identity, and the most accessible source of pride and dignity for all social and economic classes."[24] As Islam becomes increasingly important to an individual's sense of self-worth and identity, this places greater pressure on society to follow suit, and creates a marginalizing of those who don't adopt this stance or are outside of the Muslim faith.

In interviews with Jordanian students prior to the trialogue, many of them identified largely through their religious affiliation and saw their religion as perfect,

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[23] Telhami, "A Growing Muslim Identity"
[24] Slackman, "Fashion…"

although recognizing the imperfect actions of its followers. However, individuals outside

of their faith—whether individuals or political actors—were commonly referred to by

their perceived religious affiliation. In one interview with Muslim Palestinian Male, he

expressed deep-seeded resentment and mistrust toward an American student who was

Jewish, despite the fact that the individual did not support, and actively spoke out against,

the state of Israel.[25] The linking of political entities with a particular religion allows for

the sins of the former to be applied writ large to the latter.[26] This creates a dangerous

situation: religious affiliation is one construct that is often considered monolithic by

external observers, and this leads to a universal application of stereotypes and incorrect

understandings to all believers of that faith, regardless of cultural, social, or religious

differences.[27] It blinds individuals to differences between these mass religious identities,

and allows the actions of an individual, of a group, of a government within that identity to

shape their perception of all who adhere to it.

As concluded in another paper,[28] many of the stereotypes and misunderstandings

arise from a lack of contact, and a lack of knowledge about other faiths. This holds

enormous potential for the impact of interreligious dialogue as outlined in the

methodology. Increased dialogue between religious groups allows for a humanizing of

the "other," and a focus on religious doctrine itself will allow for participants to learn of

other faiths without the negative addition of political influence.

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[25] Muslim Palestinian Male, 3-27-2008.
[26] Doctor 2008.
[27] Doctor 2008.
[28] Doctor 2008.

II. Jordan's International Relations: Strategic Rationalism Confronted by Preferential Constructivism

"Foreign policy serves as a particularly potent symbolic battlefield for state identity," often revealing disconnects between the strategic decisions of the government and the identity-based preferences of the people.[29] Therefore, a look at a few of Jordan's foreign policy decisions and their reception by the public reveals both the true preferences of Jordanians, and also the ineffectiveness of the "trickle-down model" of preferences. The government of Jordan has historically acted within a rationalist model, evaluating strategic situations and the probable behavior of the other and then acting to promote its best interests. On the contrary, the people of Jordan have proven to be resistant to governmental policies when they confront the identity preferences of the population, adopting a preferential constructivist model. Marc Lynch defines it this way: "Viewed from a traditional, rationalist approach, state policy is *constrained* by institutionalized conceptions of identity… From a constructivist approach, state preferences are *constructed* through public struggles over identity."[30]

While Lynch takes a constructivist approach to Jordanian identity, I argue that it is a combination of both rationalism on the role of the government and king, and constructivism by the polity. Both Kings Hussein and Abdullah II have often acted outside of public opinion,[31] and while this occasionally works, there have been numerous occasions where public preferences have rendered these diplomatic decisions ineffective or minimized their potential. As an example in which religious identity plays a role, the 1994 Jordan-Israeli Peace Treaty trade agreements were stunted largely by reactionary

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[29] Lynch 2002.
[30] Lynch 2002.
[31] Lynch 2002.

backlash in Jordan: a significant portion of the working elite began a popular blacklisting against those instigating business connections with Israel, publishing a list of those who did so online.[32] This unwillingness demonstrates the gap which has historically existed in Jordan. "Publicly articulated norms, identity, and interests of Jordan… have proven to be quite resistant to arbitrary redefinition from above; Jordanian popular resistance to the regime's conception of peace with Israel demonstrates the stickiness of these publicly secured collective identities."[33] This demonstrates the constraint placed upon governmental policy by Jordanian identity, specifically in a religious context, and marks identity as a weakness in Jordanian international diplomacy which needs to be addressed.

III. Muslim-Christian Relations: "Model of Coexistence" or Constrained Minority?

There is a pervasive sense within the Jordanian government and academic community that Muslim-Christian relations within the Hashemite Kingdom are a "model of coexistence."[34] In speaking with previous United Nations Ambassador Hasan Abu-Numah, Director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, he commented that, "We don't address the local market, because we don't have any problems in Jordan, in Jordanian society, between the two main religious components in society, the Muslims and the Christians. We are not addressing Jordanian social problems or religious problems, because they don't exist." And there seems to be agreement among the historic Christian communities in Jordan. Many actively supported the recent deportation of 27 Christian missionaries from Jordan. Raouf Abu Jaber, the head of Jordan and Palestine's lay Orthodox council, stated, "Arab Christians reject these Western

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[32] Caplan 2003.
[33] Lynch 2002.
[34] Dr. Mousa Shteiwi, 3-24-2008.

missionary groups, or the so-called 'Zionist Christians,' who want to tear apart traditions that have protected societal peace and harmony, public order, and freedom of religion."[35]

The Islamic religion is deeply ingrained within Jordan's legal and social institutions. With over 94% of Jordan's population practicing Sunni Islam, the religion plays a dominant role within society. Religion has been dually codified into the state's Constitution, simultaneously permitting religious freedom while making Islam the state religion. This guarantees not only that Islamic religious identity plays a prominent role in Jordanian national identity but—significantly—that Jordan continues to maintain this religious identity.

This plays a critical role in the life of the individual Jordanian: their religious affiliation is stated on their national identification card; conversion from Islam is legally forbidden, although conversion to Islam is welcomed; Christian evangelism is not allowed, and "converts to either religion could become social pariahs or face legal discrimination."[36] Mosque construction is funded by the state, imams are paid by the state, and construction permits are easily acquired; churches receive no such funding, and although being recognized as the state as legitimate religious institutions (for most denominations) and being tax-free organizations, they sometimes find it difficult to acquire building permits.[37] The support for Islam has become socially expected. In the words of Dr. Al-Masri, a professor of political Islam at the University of Jordan,

> You have to deal with the fact that these religious rules are taking hold. No one is questioning the building of mosques everywhere, no one is questioning the wearing of hijabs, and if you question them, they will question your motivation. It took a revolution to change ideas in Iran, but these ideas are changing in Jordan without a revolution, without killing in the streets. There is a transformation in

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[35] Sabbagh-Gargour, Rana. April 2008.
[36] Sabbagh-Gargour, Rana, April 2008.
[37] Imam Jamal Shaker, 5-1-2008.

the streets… I think the Islamic movement played a role, I think they managed to get to the social fabric and impact the rules of society.[38]

Within Jordan, there is growing recognition of a developing gap between Muslim and Christian communities. The Christian population in Jordan is shrinking, due to a lack of growth and to a growing exodus from Jordan. "There have been Christian departures from the region for various reasons," acknowledged Ambassador Abu-Nimah.[39] Dr. Mousa Shteiwi stated that the overall decrease of Jordan's Christian population led to the development of stereotypes between the two communities. "There has been a recent decline in the Christian communities. This body is very small, and often people go through their lives without meeting other Christians and develop stereotypes from a lack of communication… People often identify [Jordanian] Christians with Western Christians."[40]

The end result of these effects is a static, shrinking Christian minority, while the Muslim population thrives and becomes further linked to its religious identity as a source of superiority, comfort, and pride. The fact that a majority of Muslims in Jordan identify primarily in religious terms means that Christians are religiously excluded from a predominantly Muslim Jordanian society in which Muslim identity is playing a larger role; they become an "other" by default. The primacy of religion in identity means that the Christian population will continue to be excluded as an "other," and will continue to face state and personal discrimination. Contrary to the beliefs of many academics and governmental officials, a lack of visible tension does not imply a lack of a problem.

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[38] Dr. Mohammed Masri, 4-17-2008.
[39] Ambassador Hasan Abu-Nimah, 5-1-2008.
[40] Dr. Mousa Shteiwi, 3-24-2008.

"MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY" AND POTENTIAL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS IMPLEMENTATION IN JORDAN

I. Interpreting Interreligious Dialogue through the Lens of "Multi-Track Diplomacy"

"Multi-track diplomacy" is an organic conceptual model to international peacemaking, and stresses the role of various actors in contributing to sustainable conflict resolution.[41] As presented by Diamond and McDonald, "Multi-Track Diplomacy consists of nine tracks in a conceptual and practical framework for understanding this complex system of peacemaking activities,"[42] distinguished by the civil and political role of participants, the medium used in dialogue, and the ultimate goal of diplomatic efforts. Most academic discussion on multi-track diplomacy has focused upon Track I and Track II diplomacy in a "trickle-down diplomacy," utilizing political and non-governmental leaders to reach immediate solutions. [43]

Multi-track diplomacy addresses the fact that discourse constrained to these upper echelons is often not enough. This can be especially true in the Middle East, where there is a significant disconnect between the strategic decisions of political actors, and the preferences of their constituents.[44] In order for conflict resolution to be sustainable, you must change the underlying mindset that enabled the conflict to begin with. The various tracks of diplomacy, operating through different participants and different means, are capable of addressing social tension from multiple perspectives, thus contributing to a collaborative solution.

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[41] Diamond, Dr. Louise and John McDonald 1996.
[42] Diamond, Dr. Louise and John McDonald 1996.
[43] For in-depth reading on multi-track diplomacy, see Diamond and McDonald (1996), Chataway (1998), Boyadjieva and Grozev (2004), Kaye (2007).
[44] Prime Minister Dr. Jawad Anani, 4-10-2008.

Interreligious dialogue, when facilitating "a change from the participants' narrow, exclusionist, antagonistic, or prejudiced attitudes and perspectives to a more tolerant and open-minded attitude,"[45] can best be viewed as an extension of diplomacy in conflict resolution. Its importance is recognized by Diamond and McDonald as Track VII, "Religion, or Peacemaking through Faith in Action."[46] This track is becoming greatly important in the increasingly religion-defined identity of Jordan. Institutes such as the Royal Institute of Interfaith Studies (RIIFS), the Amman Center for Peace and Development (ACPD), and the Jordan Interfaith Coexistence Research Center (JICRC) have all been developed in the past 14 years, designed to exploit the role of religion in promoting tolerance and understanding.

One of the weaknesses of the multi-track diplomacy theory is that it views the tracks as nine distinct realms, each operating independent of the other, but working toward a shared outcome. This need not be the case. Interreligious dialogue is a unique field within the theoretical construct of multi-track diplomacy because it has the capacity to combine multiple tracks simultaneously: it utilizes Religion, or Peacemaking through Faith in Action (Track VII); it aims to educate participants about the beliefs of other faiths, thus incorporating Research, Training, and Education, or Peacemaking through Learning (Track V); and also has the ability to combine another track based upon the demographic it draws participants from.

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[45] Abu-Nimer, 2001.
[46] Diamond and McDonald, 2007.

II. Current Interfaith Efforts and Shortcomings in Jordan

Since its inception within Jordan with the founding of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, interreligious dialogue has operated within the first three tracks of diplomacy: Government, Nongovernmental/ Professional, and Business. Nearly all events, panels, and writings under the auspices of the RIIFS and other interreligious organizations focus on dialogue between political, religious, and academic leaders.

But in doing so, they are ignoring the rationalist-constructivist dichotomy of identity between government and citizens. Given the trends in Jordanian identity and politics discussed above, this is becoming less effective. Interreligious dialogue between governmental officials failed in the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty because governmental policies were not in line with the preferences of Jordanians. Additionally, dialogue between non-governmental officials and professionals—often utilizing the participation of religious scholars and theologians—are becoming increasingly ineffective in communicating their message. As discussed in the introduction, while re-Islamization has created a dependence upon *fatwa* edicts from religious scholars, this has also had the negative effect of encouraging "the informalization of *fatwa*-seeking and *fatwa*-giving."[47] This informalization implies that *fatāwā* (plural) may be issued by those who lack religious training, but nonetheless garner significant public support. Individuals who attempt to exert their influence through religion to promote conflict and discord are often excluded from interreligious dialogue efforts.

The trialogue model put forward in the methodology is uniquely constructed to operate as an amalgamation of three different diplomacy tracks: Private Citizen;

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[47] Ismail 2007.

Research, Training, and Education; and Religion. Given the current identity of

Jordanians, and the disconnect between governmental officials and the public, the Private

Citizen track is perhaps the most necessary demographic to pull into conflict resolution

efforts, and offer a route to grassroots diplomacy with demonstrated success. "Changes

at the level of individuals can then be fed back into the political debate and the decision-

making in the two communities, thus becoming vehicles for change at the macro level."[48]

The Research, Training and Education Diplomacy Track mandates active, participatory

learning to dispel misunderstandings, stereotypes, and unsubstantiated animosity. And

third, the Religion Track offers an approach for accommodating the rising Islamic

identity in Jordan, focusing upon its strongest demographic, and incorporating it into

productive, beneficial dialogue.

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[48] Rouhana & Kelman 1994.

CASE STUDY: ABRAHAMIC FAITH-BASED TRIALOGUE

I. Observations of the Trialogue and Their Implications

To the extent that the methodology, structure, and intent behind the Trialogue have

already been established, this section will focus upon observations of the Trialogue and

their implications.

Reasons for Participation

Participant responses to this question fell into two categories: either a defense or their

own faith, or a desire to learn more about the other two religions. An overwhelming

majority of those who cited a need to defend their religion came were Muslim. This

supports the theory that re-Islamization is caused in part by a feeling of misrepresentation

of the Islamic faith, and an attack upon the faith and its believers by outsiders.

Benefits of Participation

Most participants cited learning about other faiths, and about their own, as the primary

benefit they received from participating in the trialogue. For almost all participants,

engaging in religious discourse strengthened their personal religious convictions. A

characteristic comment was, "I got to be more understanding for other practices of other

religions, and open my eyes to issues I was not aware of in my religion."

Increase in Knowledge and Understanding

Misunderstandings of the three faiths abound and, as the trialogue demonstrated, a large

majority of this rose from a lack of knowledge of other religions; little contact with those

of other faiths; and an absence of engagement in intra- or interreligious dialogue. The

primary goal of the trialogue was to provide the opportunity for members of different

faith communities to dispel stereotypes or misperceptions of their faith. For many of the

Jordanian participants, this was their first introduction to Judaism as a faith. "This was

probably the first official time we got introduced to the Jewish faith. Before that I

personally barely knew anything about it."

One of the most cited examples of a preconception that was broken by the

trialogue came from the Muslim participants, who were constantly surprised by just how

similar their faith and their practices were to those of Judaism. One Muslim participant

commented,

> "[A Jewish participant] shocked me, like, five times. She was like, 'We pray five
> times a day,' and I was like '[Gasp!]' And she said, 'We do the washing before
> the praying,' and I was like [Gasp!]'… When we started talking about war laws,
> she [Jewish participant] started talking about specific laws we have. Our Book
> [Qur'an] talks details about marriage and wars, and really gets into details. So it,
> like, shows that it's from the same God!'"

Another Muslim participant who, prior to the trialogue had voiced harsh criticisms of

"Jews" and "Judaism" stated, "The Jewish belief is closer to our belief, to Muslims'

belief, than Christians. That was really different."

Potential of Interreligious Trialogue in Reversing the "Mirroring Effect"

One of my discoveries from pre-trialogue interviews revealed that a large amount of

animosity toward religious groups formed from a lack of knowledge of these faiths'

beliefs and practices, and a blending of political action by those actors who appropriated the faith, with the faith itself. This was revealed through comments such as, "The Jews do not want a place to live, they want Palestine. They have their own place to live right now, so why are they killing?"[49] This wording—"Israel" replaced by "Jew"—is a perfect demonstration of the "mirroring effect" where, due to the significance of religion in Jordan, other groups are viewed through this same lens.

The interreligious trialogue provided a unique capability to confront ignorance about the other faiths, and to demonstrate where states have incorrectly appropriated religion to serve their political ends. Being specifically interreligious, and requiring an emphasis on the teachings of each faith rather than historical action, the trialogue served to not only educate participants in the beliefs and practices of the other two Abrahamic faiths but was also able to confront actions by political actors which are contrary to religious teaching.

Separation of Religion and Politics Through Discourse

Participants engaged in several discussions throughout the trialogue which challenged the assumption that religion and politics were necessarily linked. The goal in this was to demonstrate where religion had been appropriated by political actors and agendas, demonstrate how these actions differed from the religion they promoted, and highlight the ability of religion to both condemn harmful actions and bring both parties together.

One of the primary challenges in this lay with the state of Israel and the Jewish faith. The two terms were synonymous for the non-Jewish participants during the first session of the trialogue. But in the second session, when discussing violence in the three

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[49] Interview 1, 3-12-2008, page 3.

faiths, this distinction between the Jewish religion and the state of Israel was stressed by

the Jewish participants, and widely accepted by the non-Jewish members. A large reason

for this linking Judaism with Israel arose from a lack of knowledge of the Jewish faith.

As one Christian participant put it,

> It's not about stereotyping, it's about not knowing, and not being able to
> comprehend that they're like us. Because they're in their own world, they're so
> far away—they're really near, but so far away as a religion. They're only known
> as Zionists… Jewish are almost equal, to Arabs now, to Zionists. But right now
> we're seeing differences.

This understanding was increased in the third session, where participants were

asked to cite historical or contemporary examples where their own faith had been

misappropriated, and to explain how it was wrong in their religion. Tellingly, by

separating religion from politics, the "mirroring effect" of viewing others from a religion-

based perspective was effectively combated. A Palestinian Muslim noted the lack of

Jewish religion in Israel's actions when she stated,

> We have to agree, that even though there are fights between Palestinians and
> Israelis… there is no way that these fights are Islam fighting Jewish. We all know
> that there is nothing written that you should kill innocent people and babies in
> your book, and there's nothing written that we should kill civilians in our book.
> So we all agree that politics get into this stuff.

Also, by recognizing where religion had been misused within their own faiths,

participants were able to better accept the faults of others. "It's the same in Israel now,

they're using the cover of Jewish… In their religion what they're doing is not allowed.

And we clarified that what's named under Muslim terrorism is not really from Islam."

Ultimately, all parties advocated a separation of their religion, and what their

religion teaches, from how it has been appropriated by political parties and agendas. But

what proved to be one of the greatest benefits to come from the trialogue was that, once

this separation was recognized, participants ceased to apply the condemnations of the political group to the religious group, and made a noted effort throughout the rest of the discussions to separate the terms: where "Jewish" and "Israeli" had once been synonymous, participants now intentionally separated the two.

Discussing Political Situations

Most participants throughout the trialogue attempted to avoid discussion of contentious subjects in an effort to focus on positive similarities. However, I believe that this fault line is precisely where the dialogue must occur, and formulated questions to direct participants toward these issues. During the debriefing period of the second session, the subject of violence in religion led to the discussion of "terrorism" and suicide bombings in Palestine. By forcing discussion of perhaps the most charged topic relevant to Jordan, this exchange revealed several important characteristics about the group and about the effectiveness of the trialogue.

Through the discussion, participants addressed the beliefs of the other, and numerous political situations from both a religious and political perspective. Suicide bombings were discussed from a religious perspective – striving for freedom from oppression, the definition of *jihad*, etc. – and also from a political sphere, as the only means available to a people suppressed by a much more powerful enemy.

Several conclusions were reached by the group:

- Participants made statements on the sanctity of human life, especially the lives of non-combatants, women, and children. All faith traditions agreed that these were

individuals not to be harmed according to their personal beliefs and their religious
doctrines in regard to war and violence.

- Participants came to a deeper level of understanding of the nature of Israeli
citizenship. Many had, in the first session, been able to make the separation
between Israelis and Jewish individuals. But this discussion pressed that issue.
One of the points reiterated by the Jewish participants, and ultimately accepted by
the other participants, was that the Israeli society was pluralistic, and that not all
citizens supported the Israeli government, nor were all soldiers willing conscripts
who supported the occupation of Arab-Palestinian lands. This led to the
recognition of a three-tiered understanding of the Jewish body: those of Jewish
faith and ethnicity; Israeli citizens who did not actively or passively support the
occupation of Arab-Palestinian lands and peoples; and those Israeli citizens and
international individuals who do support the occupation of Arab Palestine and the
Zionist mandate.

- While recognizing the distinctions in intent that existed within Israeli society, the
group discussed theories of Just War Doctrine, and the validity in attacking
soldiers who were conscripted into the army, perhaps against their will.

- Participants discussed the complexities inherent in the system, and came to a
deeper understanding of how convoluted the concept of violence had become, and
the difficulty in defining parameters for accepted warfare in their religions,
specifically in this situation.

This conversation also demonstrated the ability of a group, after agreeing upon common principles for discourse and developing a level of trust and respect, to self-moderate. During this discussion, I stepped in and calmed the conversation only once, reminding them of the need for personal respect and civility in positive discourse. After this, individuals from all three faith traditions immediately brought a level of focus back to the conversation and sought to accommodate the needs and emotions of each other. As an incredible example of this, when the conversation was tense between Muslim and Jewish participants, a Christian participant stepped in and acted as a mediator to both parties.

> We have an impression about people, a certain kind of people, and that impression won't change until somebody does something about it. And I think right now, at this table, you just gave us an impression that not all Israelis, not everyone that is dying, is armed. Not everyone wants to kill, not everyone wants to hurt. And I think the impression they want to give you is that not all Palestinians always want to kill, they just want to show the world that we're being oppressed, and somebody do something about it.

The path of this conversation and the conclusions reached by the group has significant implications for the future application of interreligious trialogue in Jordan. This demonstrates not only a competence to deal rationally with difficult subjects, but a willingness to learn, to discuss, and to bridge gaps in understanding about these subjects.

Humanizing Members of the Faiths

Similarities between the faiths were highlighted throughout the trialogue, and for many participants the sheer number of them was very surprising. But it was in the recognition of these similarities that a level of closeness developed. A theme that was touched upon repeatedly by Muslim participants throughout the trialogue was just how similar the Jewish and Muslim faiths were. These shared religious practices and beliefs helped

humanize both the Jewish and Muslim participants to one another. At the conclusion of the discussion on Palestine and Israel addressed above, one of the Palestinian participants stated, "To some extent I knew, in the back of my mind, that there are soldiers in the Israeli army who are forced to join the army. But I thank you for telling that to my face, because I promise you that is something I am going to consider every time I watch the news." That shift in thought from a monolithic Jewish body to a diverse group that holds compassionate people was an amazing transformation in only three sessions.

Differences Between the Faiths

At the conclusion of the third trialogue, participants discussed that, while there were an incredible amount of similarities between the faiths, there was ultimately a line where each religion became necessarily independent. But one of the results the trialogue brought about was viewing these differences in a positive light. One Muslim participant commented that the differences between faiths are important because "it makes us more understanding and allows us to see things from others' perspective. This is how we are special. Imagine all people are Jews or Christians or even Muslims. I think God has a purpose in making us different even in the way we express our faith. It's all about learning how to live together and accept each other the way we are." Another individual noted that "Knowing about these differences just showed how many stereotypes there are."

A significant factor in these differences being viewed positively came from an understanding on the part of all participants that the focus of the trialogue was to learn about the other faiths and to teach of your own, but not to proselytize. In concluding

discussions, several participants talked about how this lack of pressure created an environment which enabled everyone to talk about their faiths openly, recognize areas of incompatibility, but view them as a feature unique to that person and to that faith.

Charge for the Future

Perhaps the greatest charge of the trialogue was to encourage interreligious dialogue and learning after the trialogue had finished. In post-trialogue interviews and discussions, a passion for learning more about the other faiths and in promoting the lessons taken from the trialogue demonstrated an ability for this form of discourse to have long-term effects in its participants. One participant commented on how he had already purchased books on the other faiths, and wanted to learn as much as possible to increase his understanding of the practices of other religions. Another participant discussed her desire to spread what she had learned to others. "When we had that wake-up call, and we saw the distinction between Jewish people, and Israeli people, and people supporting the Israeli government, ever since we felt responsible to actually tell that to the people, to people around us. There are a lot of people still who hate Jewish people in general, and they wish them bad things, and they do not differentiate."

II. Discussion of Group Dynamics and Session Format

Pre-Trialogue Session

Prior to actually engaging in interreligious trialogue, a pre-trialogue session was held to meet each other, clarify concerns, discuss the format proposed by myself as moderator, and to agree upon a "Resolution for Interfaith Trialogue" (Appendix II). Religion played

a central role from the beginning of the meeting as participants introduced themselves, announced what faith they were affiliated with, and also stated what they viewed as the most positive element of their faith. Interestingly, for this session participants from the three faiths segregated themselves on religious lines, despite the fact that some intrafaith individuals had not met previously.

One of the more contested elements of the trialogue format was the separation of religion from cultural or historical issues, and a focus specifically on religious tenets and doctrine in answering questions posed throughout the trialogue. Concerns included: the trialogue being unproductive without addressing historical issues of tension; diversity within faith doctrines, and a tendency to lump the three Abrahamic faiths into an inaccurate monolithic group; and a lack of knowledge by the participants. These concerns were largely addressed in the "Resolutions for Interfaith Trialogue," in which participants agreed to address questions from solely a religious perspective, with the understanding that each individual was representing only his/her own faith tradition; and with cultural, societal, or historical issues being confronted from a religious perspective.

At the end of the session, participants collectively signed a "Resolutions for Interfaith Trialogue" (Appendix II). Question topics were discussed for the following session, with a majority of the input coming from the Muslim participants.

Session I

Questions:
1. From your faith perspective: what are the religious texts? How were they given from God to humans, or how do they get their authority from God? If there are different versions or translations, how are they different, if at all? Which do you follow, and why?
2. From your faith perspective: what is the nature of God? What are his characteristics? How does he interact with humans? What are his requirements of humans?

3. From your faith perspective: how are other religions, and other religious followers, viewed? How are they to be treated? What is their status according to your faith — legally, socially, etc.? Remember to separate religious ideals from historical practice.

The first session began by splitting into intrafaith groups to discuss the questions, refine individual perspectives, and create a complex, multi-faceted view of the questions from each faith. During this session, the Muslim participants—despite being the largest group— moved, isolating themselves from the other two groups of participants. Because of this, there was much more casual conversation between the Christian and Jewish participants, whereas the Muslim group focused specifically on the questions and in formulating answers.

One of the more instructive elements in group dynamics came in the session period of the trialogue, in which participants were split into two interfaith groups to discuss the questions posed from all three faith perspectives. Group A was composed of four Muslims, two Christians, and one Jewish participant. Within this group, two of the Muslim participants quickly took a dominant role in the dialogue and, while focusing upon the questions, initiated dialogue through asking questions often directed toward a specific faith group. This had two limiting effects: first, it inhibited dialogue and prevented it from being a dynamic, equal conversation between the three faiths. This directed questioning placed the other two faith groups on the defensive and limited their responses, as well as their ability to ask questions of the Muslim faith. Second, many of the questions were not universally applicable to all three faiths present, and this limited the information presented. When questions digressed from the three posed for the session, participants felt uncomfortable providing responses on topics they had not researched, and information given was limited.

Group B consisted of three Muslims, two Christians, and two Jewish participants. In contrast to Group A, Group B's trialogue was far more structured: one individual would ask a question in relation to those posed for the session, and then the group would take turns discussing the question from all three faith perspectives. Rather than asking direct questions, as Group A did, questions from Group B were intentionally universal in nature and all three faiths were given the opportunity to provide perspective from their faith.

In the debriefing session following, comments from Group B were overwhelmingly positive: they focused upon the similarities they had found between the three faiths, and demonstrated a significant level of respect for those within the group, referring to each other by name. Group A, during this portion, was silent. After hearing the positive comments from Group B, we discussed the differences in dialogue structure between the two groups, and areas for improvement in the following session.

Session II

Questions:
1. From your faith perspective: how are other religions, and other religious followers, viewed? How are they to be treated? What is their status according to your faith — legally, socially, etc.? Remember to separate religious ideals from historical practice.
2. From your faith perspective, when is violence allowed? When is it okay to wage war? Is war defensive, or offensive as well? What are some examples of war from your religious texts? Why did they happen? What are the punishments for those who kill or wage war outside of these conditions?

The second session's intrafaith period mirrored that of the first session, with the Muslim participants removing themselves to discuss the questions.

The interfaith period in the second session reflected a growing amount of trust, comfort, and friendship between the members of Group B. Where they had been formally structured during the first session, this soon evolved into a far more organic, flowing conversation in which all participants provided input. Interestingly, while dialogue remained faith-based, it often segued into theological philosophical discussions: one notable topic discussed dealt with how, while all three religions had a set doctrine for when war was permissible, none dictated when violence should stop. Conversation also became far more personal: in discussing how other faiths were viewed from their faith tradition, one participant asked another, "Would you ever marry a Muslim?" This marked a huge departure from the very formal, doctrine-specific dialogue of the first session, and demonstrated that the group felt comfortable enough with each other to delve into the questions from a very personal perspective as well.

In the second session, Group A was a unique case study in the reformulation of their structure. Pulling from the debriefing period of the first trialogue session, the group operated exclusively as Group B had during the first session: universally-applicable questions were asked, and the three faiths took turns answering from their faith perspective.

Because of this revision, Group A made several positive comments during the debriefing session about what they had learned, and commented positively on the effect of their structural revision. Group B was overwhelmingly positive, often laughing when discussing how personal their conversation had gotten. Overall, this interfaith period of the second session demonstrated the positive effects of the humanization of individuals of

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other faith, and the potential that this had for constructive dialogue and bridging the gap between individuals of different faiths.

While the conversation regarding Palestine and Israel during the debriefing period was not in line with the Resolutions for Interfaith Trialogue agreed upon by the group, it did represent a progression of the group in being able to discuss incredibly sensitive issues. Interestingly, the group self-moderated itself; several participants from all three faith backgrounds were able to bring the focus back around to commonalities between the three faiths in the sanctity of human life and civilian life; discuss the issues that convolute current debate about violence in Palestine and Israel; and arrive at productive conclusions. While the topic itself was very political, the role that religion was able to play in focusing upon similarities, defining parameters for warfare, and in discrediting those who operate outside of these parameters demonstrated the versatility of interfaith dialogue, and its immense utility in the Jordanian context.

Session III

Questions:
1. From your faith perspective, what is the role of Jerusalem? Why is it a holy city for you? What are some of the major holy sites present in Jerusalem for your faith? What role does Jerusalem play in future events in your religion?
2. What are some historical examples where your faith was misrepresented, and used to justify actions that ran contrary to what your faith teaches? If historical, how were these examples confronted, from a religious perspective, by those within your faith? If contemporary, how can your faith be used to de-legitimate these movements?

Session III demonstrated both a progression of dialogue and roadblocks to dialogue. In the interfaith sessions, both Groups A and B reached a level where dialogue was far more organic and fluid, with both groups able to engage in open discourse about the questions posed, and often branching off to discuss other pertinent topics.

However, weaknesses that emerged in this session were a lack of knowledge, and an odd insertion of conspiracy theories in the absence of personal experience. Comments made by Muslim participants in Group B occasionally focused upon information that they had "heard," and or that had been discussed among Jordanian society. This occurred several times: one mention was of the discovery of a Dead Sea Scroll that discredited the Jewish claim to the Holy Land, and the subsequent cover-up by the Israeli government; second, the attempts by the Israeli government to remove the supports from under the Al-Aqsa Mosque so that it will fall; and third, that Osama bin Laden may not have been responsible for the attacks of 9/11.

These theories arose largely due to the group's straying from religious evidence and information, but demonstrated a difficult roadblock to overcome in interreligious dialogue: misinformation—intentional or otherwise—about current events that are difficult—if not impossible—to disprove. When this information is disseminated through the school system, as participants claimed the Dead Sea Scroll information was, this makes challenging its legitimacy even more complicated. This stunted the discussion Group B was able to have, as participants of other faiths felt an unwillingness from the Muslim participants for honest, sincere dialogue; Jewish participants in particular felt personally affronted by the discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the destruction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which they felt invalidated their faith tradition.

The debriefing period included discussion and a final survey, aimed at measuring progression of participants along the interreligious sensitivity model discussed below.

**QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: PROGRESSION ALONG THE
INTERRELIGIOUS SENSITIVITY MODEL**

In a recent article, Mohammed Abu-Nimer outlines a model for measuring interreligious

sensitivity based upon Milton Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.

The interreligious model, as in the intercultural model, has six stages of interreligious

sensitivity, distinguished by the stance individuals take toward their own religion and the

religion of others. A participant is evaluated based upon statements he or she makes in

regard to other faiths; each stage is appropriately defined by the statements that are

typical of someone at that particular stage.

The six stages are divided into two categories: religiocentric and religiorelative.

The first three religiocentric stages include: Denial, in which religious teachings deny the

existence or humanity of those outside of the faith; Defense, where differences are

viewed as a threat to one's own reality; and Minimization, marked be religiocentrism

where the rituals of different faiths are viewed as analogous. The three religiorelative

stages are: Acceptance, where participants accepted and respected the rights of people of

other faiths to believe and practice differently; Adaptation, viewing others' religion

through a lens of empathy or pluralism; and Integration, in which participants live in a

multiplicity of realities adapted into their own lives.[50]

Many individuals prior to participation in the trialogue fell into the Denial or

Defense stages. Denial of the humanity of the Jewish faith was a common reaction.

Statements such as, "Since he's a Jew, I don't feel comfortable with him… Not the kind

of people I like to deal with;" or "I hate the Jews; I hate them. I don't like what they do."

A majority of the Christian/Muslim relations fell into the defense category: both groups

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[50] Abu Nimer 2001.

spoke highly of their religion as "prefect," "all-encompassing," "beautiful." Muslims viewed the Christian faith as "incomplete," "imperfect," or "manipulated." Christians spoke about the Muslim faith as oppressive to women, and "not open-minded."

After the trialogue, participants were asked to fill out a survey designed to elicit responses that would allow placement within the interreligious sensitivity model. One participant, in the post-trialogue survey, continued to hold superior views of her own faith and belittle the other two, characteristic of the Defense stage. But all other participants showed demonstrable growth from pre-trialogue interviews. For many Jewish and Muslim participants, the shared ritual practices between the two faiths were one of the most significant discoveries of the trialogue. Seven participants commented that the most important similarity between the faiths is their belief in one God, while five others cited shared morals and values as a unifying tie. These comments marked a rise to the Minimalist stage.

In the debriefing period of the final trialogue session, participants spoke about the differences between the faiths, and the role that these differences played in interreligious relations. Two participants expressed these differences beautifully: one comment, already stated within this paper, bears repeating:

> [Religious differences] make us more understanding and allow us to see things from others' perspective. This is how we are special. Imagine all people are Jews or Christians or even Muslims. I think God has a purpose in making us different even in the way we express our faith. It's all about learning how to live together and accept each other the way we are.

This sentiment was accepted and echoed by a large part of the group in the following discussion; many commented how the religions all had similarities, but that there was ultimately a wall at which the similarities stopped and each religion had its own unique

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beliefs and tenets. A majority of participants voiced a belief that these differences need to be respected and understood properly to avoid the creation of stereotypes and misperceptions. This level of understanding and respect for the three faiths represented growth to the Acceptance stage of interreligious sensitivity.

For three interreligious trialogue sessions, this marks an incredible transformation. One of the most noteworthy parallels between this study and other interfaith dialogues between Track I, II, and III participants is that the results found within this trialogue mirror those found within Abu-Nimer's study, in which he also measures participants according to the interreligious sensitivity model. This implies that this interreligious trialogue methodology is equally effective in combating stereotypes and engendering interreligious sensitivity as the more common dialogues involving religious scholars and theologians.

CONCLUSION

The interreligious trialogue held between Jordanian and American students demonstrated an incredible capacity for multi-track diplomacy within a Jordanian context. Through the trialogue, participants expanded their knowledge of other faiths, had the opportunity to accurately and positively portray their own, bonded over similarities between the faiths, and came to an appreciation of differences. Utilizing religion as a tool for dialogue enabled participants to learn of similarities between groups, which allowed for the humanization of the "other" and an increase in tolerance and understanding. It also

engendered a level of respect throughout the dialogue, which allowed participants to confront challenging social issues from a constructive perspective.

This study demonstrates a great need for this particular method of interreligious dialogue in Jordan. Given the rise in religious identity, the problems discussed in this paper will continue to increase unless conscious efforts are made to turn religious fervor into an appreciation of other religious groups, and to demonstrate where the actions of political actors deviate from religious precepts. The disconnect which often exists between governmental rationalist strategy and Jordanian constructivist preferences in international policy can be effectively bridged by creating a recognition of the diversity of other groups, and an appreciation for those who are increasingly viewed through a religious lens.

The methodology used in this study demonstrates an effective break from traditional interfaith methods. The andragogic learning model applied in this study led to personal investment in the interreligious process by the participants, which creates the potential for continuing dialogue and research after the end of the program. Unsolicited participant comments about continuing to research other faiths and promoting an accurate and tolerant view to others within their religious community marked an ideological shift in perspective, and demonstrated promise for the "trickle-up" theory to have a larger effect on society. Using exclusively young adults revealed an identical potential for engendering religious tolerance, when judged according to the interreligious sensitivity model, as traditional models using participants from diplomatic tracks I and II. Moreover, this model can assist in the long-term progression in interreligious sensitivity through continuous meetings between participants. As opposed to interreligious

conferences, which often lack follow-through, the interreligious model proposed in this study will create lasting effects through repeated interreligious growth.

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Appendices

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA

INTRODUCTION: This study is entitled "Enhancing Interreligious Understanding: A Case Study in Abrahamic Trialogue Between Jordanian and American Students". The person directing this project is Nicholas Doctor, University of Tulsa Student; and Kalpana Misra, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. This document defines the terms and conditions for consenting to participate in this study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY: Creating a faith-based discussion group with young adult participants representing all three Abrahamic faith perspectives, to answer the following research questions:
- To what extent is faith-based dialogue between the three Abrahamic faiths beneficial, or even practical, given Jordan's political and ethnic situation?
- To what extent can faith-based dialogue resolve some of the national, ethnic, and religious tensions present in and surrounding Jordan?
- Which key misperceptions can be alleviated through education and discourse?
- Can educating individuals on religion lessen social preconceptions and engender tolerance?

I aim to test the hypothesis that discourse breeds tolerance, and examine its feasibility within Jordan and in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli issue specifically.

The study will involve three meetings of the Faith-Based Trialogue group between the period of 23 April 2008 and 10 May 2008.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: No foreseeable risks.

Participants will have the opportunity to strengthen their personal knowledge of their own faith through guided research. They will also have the opportunity to advocate a correct religious understanding of their faith, while learning of the religious tenets of the other participating faiths. In society at large, this aims to provide a model of engendering tolerance for individuals of other religious groups.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. Furthermore, the participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Findings will be presented in aggregate form with no identifying information to ensure confidentiality.

AUDIO TAPING OF STUDY ACTIVITIES: To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device.   Participants have the right to refuse to allow such taping without penalty.   Please select one of the following options.
    [ ] I consent to the use of audio recording.
    [ ] I do not consent to the use of audio recording.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY: Participants may contact Nick Doctor via telephone at: 077 603 8254; or via email at: nicholas.doctor@gmail.com with questions about the study.

For inquires about rights as a research participant, contact Dawnett Watkins, Office of Research, The University of Tulsa at 918-631-3310 or vie e-mail at dawnett-watkins@utulsa.edu.

PARTICIPANT ASSURANCE: I have read and understand the terms and conditions of this study and I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research study. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Resolutions for Interfaith Dialogue

1. We commit ourselves to a dialogue, not debate, in which the primary purpose is to learn, to change, to grow in our perception and understanding of reality, and then act accordingly. There are no right answers, no ultimate conclusions. We are not seeking to win or to convert, but to understand each other and our faiths.

2. We commit ourselves to make every effort to focus upon faith alone during our discussions, and to refrain from any personal attacks or judgments about another person's faith. This implies recognizing that the actions of governments or organizations do not necessarily represent the faith of their followers, even when they speak in religious language.

3. We commit ourselves to respect each other in our discussions. Dialogue can only take place between equals: we come to learn from each other.

4. We commit ourselves to come to each dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity, and to expect the same from each of the other participants. This implies that what each person is saying is valid, and is an attempt to further knowledge of their faith among participants. Without this trust, true dialogue is impossible.

5. We commit ourselves to listen to other partners with openness and sympathy, and attempt to agree with them as far as is possible while still maintaining integrity with our own faith tradition.

6. We commit ourselves not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice.

7. We commit ourselves to educate people about respect and mutual esteem — present in all three of our religions — in order to achieve peaceful coexistence and solidarity among members of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

8. We commit ourselves to pardon each other's errors and prejudices, past and present; and to support one another in the common struggle against egoism and abuses, hatred and violence.

FAITH-BASED TRIALOGUE GROUP
Discussing the Three Abrahamic Faiths

April 30, 2007

QUESTIONS
3. From your faith perspective: what are the religious texts? How were they given from God to humans, or how do they get their authority from God? If there are different versions or translations, how are they different, if at all? Which do you follow, and why?
4. From your faith perspective: what is the nature of God? What are his characteristics? How does he interact with humans? What are his requirements of humans?
5. From your faith perspective: how are other religions, and other religious followers, viewed? How are they to be treated? What is their status according to your faith — legally, socially, etc.? Remember to separate religious ideals from historical practice.

SESSION I: Perspectives Within Your Own Faith Community
Discuss your answers to the above questions with those in your personal faith community. Focus upon answers that are different from yours, offer a different perspective on the questions, or add additional information to what you found.

SESSION II: Sharing Your Perspectives
In smaller groups, discuss the answers to this session's questions from your faith perspective with those of other faiths. Look for answers to questions you had about the other faiths, similarities and differences between your faith and those of others, and answers that challenge your previous assumptions.

SESSION III: Session Debrief
What did you learn that surprised you? About your own faith? About the faiths of others? What differences did you notice between members of your own faith? Did you feel your personal beliefs confronted at any point, about your own faith or about the faith of others? Any questions you had that were unresolved?

FAITH-BASED TRIALOGUE GROUP
Discussing the Three Abrahamic Faiths

May 3, 2008

QUESTIONS

1. From your faith perspective: how are other religions, and other religious followers, viewed? How are they to be treated? What is their status according to your faith — legally, socially, etc.? Remember to separate religious ideals from historical practice.
2. From your faith perspective, when is violence allowed? When is it okay to wage war? Is war defensive, or offensive as well? What are some examples of war from your religious texts? Why did they happen? What are the punishments for those who kill or wage war outside of these conditions?

SESSION I: Perspectives Within Your Own Faith Community
Discuss your answers to the above questions with those in your personal faith community. Focus upon answers that are different from yours, offer a different perspective on the questions, or add additional information to what you found.

SESSION II: Sharing Your Perspectives
In smaller groups, discuss the answers to this session's questions from your faith perspective with those of other faiths. Look for answers to questions you had about the other faiths, similarities and differences between your faith and those of others, and answers that challenge your previous assumptions.

SESSION III: Session Debrief
What did you learn that surprised you? About your own faith? About the faiths of others?
What stereotypes did you recognize you held during this discussion? What views did you hold about other faiths in regard to this question? Have those views changed? How?

FAITH-BASED TRIALOGUE GROUP
Discussing the Three Abrahamic Faiths

May 7, 2008

QUESTIONS

3. From your faith perspective, what is the role of Jerusalem? Why is it a holy city for you? What are some of the major holy sites present in Jerusalem for your faith? What role does Jerusalem play in future events in your religion?
4. What are some historical examples where your faith was misrepresented, and used to justify actions that ran contrary to what your faith teaches? If historical, how were these examples confronted, from a religious perspective, by those within your faith? If contemporary, how can your faith be used to de-legitimate these movements?

SESSION I: Perspectives Within Your Own Faith Community
Discuss your answers to the above questions with those in your personal faith community. Focus upon answers that are different from yours, offer a different perspective on the questions, or add additional information to what you found.

SESSION II: Sharing Your Perspectives
In smaller groups, discuss the answers to this session's questions from your faith perspective with those of other faiths. Look for answers to questions you had about the other faiths, similarities and differences between your faith and those of others, and answers that challenge your previous assumptions.

SESSION III: Session Debrief
What did you learn that surprised you? About your own faith? About the faiths of others? How productive do you think religion is in resolving faith-based or faith-supported conflict?

SESSION IV: Trialogue Conclusion
Fill out the Trialogue Survey and discuss the Trialogue's positive and negative elements.

Trialogue Survey

Name: _____   **Faith Tradition:** _____

Age: _____   **University Subject:** _____

Gender (Circle One):   Male   Female   **Ethnicity/Nationality**:_____

1. What were your reasons for participating in the Trialogue?

2. What benefits did you receive personally from the Trialogue?

3. What are some things you learned about the Jewish faith?

4. What are some things you learned about the Christian faith?

5. What are some things you learned about the Muslim faith?

6. Is religion useful in helping different groups of believers come together? Why?

7. What are your views of the other faiths?

8. What are your views of your own faith?

9. What are your views of individuals of other faiths?

10. How important are the differences you've discovered between the faiths to you?

11. What differences between the faiths are most important to you?

12. What similarities between the faiths are most important to you?