Inter-faith Dialogue, Inter-cultural Dialogue: A Basis for Developing Global Security

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The paper will build on the case made by Bhikhu Parekh (2002) for the development of inter-cultural dialogue as the most strategically rational response to addressing terrorism and its underlying causes. The author relates Parekh's case to the literature on inter-faith dialogue as well as the author's own empirical involvement in a grassroots Muslim-Christian dialogue in the western suburbs of Melbourne following the events of September 11, 2001. The paper considers the nature and aims of inter-faith dialogue as well as inter-cultural dialogue, and explores how a dialogical approach to inter-group (including international) relations can assist in the development of a citizen-based, participatory and networked approach to local community development as well as global security.

1. Introduction: Responses to Global Terror

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 have been conceptualized by some scholars as a phenomenon of 'worlds in collision' (see Booth and Dunne, eds, 2002). That is, they have been understood in terms of ideas about terrorism generally – and Islamist terrorism in particular (Rushdie, 2001). Condemnation of these acts of terrorism, however, has left some fundamental questions unanswered. Two such questions, according to Noam Chomsky (2002: 128) are: "What do we mean by 'terrorism'?" and "What is the proper response to the crime?"

There is broad agreement that 'terrorism' is a method of political action rather than an ideology. (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 8) Its instruments are violent – assassination, bombing, hijacking, mass murder, kidnapping and intimidation. Terrorist methods, then, can be (and are) employed by sovereign states as well as private groups or Islamist networks like al-Qaeda. (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 8; Chomsky, 2002: 128 – 129, 131; Rogers, 2002: 215 - 216)

This politics of fear and insecurity underscores the image of 'worlds in collision'. Terrorism represents a violent collision: between **different political entities**, struggling for power and using violence to achieve specific ends; and between **different thought worlds**, composed of different beliefs about reality, the

nature of reliable knowledge and ideas about how we should behave. (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 1)

The question as to how liberal democratic states should respond to terrorism is more difficult to answer. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 the US government decided upon a **conflict** response. Liberal democratic states, including Australia, were enjoined by President Bush to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with the US government in prosecuting a 'war on terrorism'. But war, which is inherently violent, is as much a 'decivilising process' (in Elias Norbert's sense of this term) as is terrorism itself.[1] And as such, a 'war on terrorism' may serve only to deepen citizens' fears about retaliatory strikes and a spiral of violence, thereby paradoxically heightening rather than reducing people's generalised feelings of apprehension and insecurity.

The main alternative response to terrorism that has been proposed by Parekh (2002) is one focused on **dialogue**. He recognizes that 'potential terrorists and their sponsors' must be deterred by all legitimate means – including intelligence, financial pressure, domestic vigilance and (when necessary) the judicious use of force. (Parekh, 2002: 273). But he also emphasizes the need to "address the deeper roots of terrorism that drive otherwise decent men and women to build up enormous rage and hatred, and so blunt their moral sensibilities that they cannot see anything wrong in taking innocent lives." (Parekh, 2002:274)

Parekh argues that the West arouses these people's anger when, in their view, it is to some degree responsible for their predicament (by either propping up the systems of injustice that oppress and impoverish them in their own societies or inflicting additional injustices and humiliations upon them or their country). On these grounds, Parekh deduces the case for dialogue:

> If we are to tackle the roots of terrorism, we need to enter their world of thought, understand their grievances and explore why they think we bear responsibility for these. (Parekh, 2002: 274)

In a similar vein Booth and Dune (2002: 10) argue that terrorism collides with notions of politics grounded in democratic values. They maintain that in an ideal polity, political action is based on dialogue between participants who seek rationally to persuade others of the validity of their beliefs. Booth and Dunne characterise such a polity as follows:

> Those holding values and beliefs that are at odds with the majority are listened to, free of the fear of violence; questions of cultural difference are negotiated within a framework of equality. (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 10)

For Booth and Dunne, the only way to resolve the political problems which terrorists in the al-Qaeda network have exploited is "by nurturing the values that collide with fear, hatred and a willingness to commit any acts in the hope of changing the course of history." (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 10) They see this as entailing encouragement of voices of moderation, human rights and tolerance.

And this, the present author suggests (consistent with Parekh, 2002), is where the value of dialogue between Western and non-Western societies – especially Muslim societies - comes to the fore as a basis for developing global security. But whereas Parekh describes this dialogue mainly in terms of the notion of 'inter-cultural dialogue', this paper emphasizes the value of 'inter-faith dialogue' as an important part of the dialogical approach. The next part of this paper, therefore, describes what is meant by inter-cultural dialogue and inter-faith dialogue, drawing on the writings of political theorists and religious scholars and relating this to some cases of inter-faith dialogue in Melbourne – notably that which has developed in Williamstown-Newport since September 11th 2001.

Of course, dialogical approaches cannot constitute the full or indeed the only strategy for preventing future episodes of 'worlds in collision' (as noted above). But they might help to change the climate and bring about attitudinal shifts along the lines of the Palestinian journalist who, in the aftermath of September 11 said: "America, we feel your pain. Isn't it time you felt ours?" (cited in Booth and Dunne, 2002: 5). This paper argues that these climate and attitudinal changes, brought about by dialogue within and between societies, can provide a basis for (re)formulating a common approach to questions of local/global security, world citizenship and participatory governance.

2. Inter-cultural Dialogue and Inter-faith Dialogue

According to Parekh (2002) **inter-cultural dialogue** means "dialogue between Western and non-Western societies, especially Muslim societies whose sense of injustice is the most acute and from which almost all the recent terrorists have sprung." (Parekh, 2002: 274) The point of this inter-cultural dialogue is variously to: deepen mutual understanding; expand sympathy and imagination; exchange not only arguments but also sensibilities; engage in self critique; build mutual trust; and arrive at a more balanced view of particular contentious issues and the world generally. (Parekh, 2002: 274)

Parekh argues that if such dialogue is to infuse and form the consciousness of decision makers, commentators and everyday citizens, it has to take place at **multiple levels** "ranging from serious academic discussion to international conferences, the United Nations and the popular media in Western and Muslim societies." (Parekh, 2002:274)

As well, it inevitably involves **multiple strands**. That is, it concerns actual economic, political and other issues, the immediate causes of conflict and violence. Examples of such issues include the Israel-Palestine conflict, sanctions on Iraq, American support for the Saudi regime, global inequality and poverty. (Parekh, 2002: 282). As these sorts of issues are embedded in history and are bound up with people's cultural heritage and identities, the dialogue necessarily has historical and cultural dimensions.

Parekh explains how he sees this working out:

> We cannot hope to understand why Muslim societies feel strongly about certain issues or define them in certain ways unless we understand their wider systems of meaning and values or cultures. And similarly Muslim societies cannot understand the West without understanding the internal structure, dynamics and tensions of Western civilization. The dialogue between Western and Muslim societies thus moves freely between substantive issues and their historical interpretations and cultural contexts, and is necessarily complex and messy. (Parekh, 2002: 275)

Parekh develops ideal typifications of the sorts of statements a Muslim leader and Western leader might make in such an inter-cultural dialogue. He claims that these characterizations are based on published statements of intellectuals and community leaders. (Parekh, 2002: 276 – 281) Here, in the author's view, are significant weaknesses in Parekh's case. While calling for inter-cultural dialogue, Parekh gives no concrete example of how it actually is operationalised. Nor does he reference the empirical bases for his ideal typifications.

Notwithstanding these evidential absences, Parekh concludes his case by arguing that the desired outcome of inter-cultural dialogue would be that "each side better understands the concerns and constraints on the other and strives to reach a mutually acceptable compromise." Consequently, Western and Muslim societies might "avoid the interrelated vices of narcissism and demonisation" and develop "a shared global perspective in which deep differences are admitted but not allowed to get out of control". (Parekh, 2002: 282)

One methodology for achieving this sort of understanding, which is not mentioned by Parekh, but which is pertinent to the operationalisation of his strategy, is inter-faith dialogue - especially Christian-Muslim dialogue. Before describing some local-level cases of this sort of dialogue (in Melbourne, Australia), its characteristic features may first be defined.

Inter-faith dialogue represents the latest installment in the long history of Muslim-Christian 'encounter' dating from the 7th century (Pratt, 1994:10 – 11). Some religious scholars see inter-faith dialogue as "one of the more notable religious advances of the twentieth century" and an imperative in an age of religious pluralism." (Pratt, 1994: 8 – 9) Others (e.g. Baldock, 1994:21 - 22) see it motivated less by theological interests and more as a matter of practical neighbourliness in increasingly multicultural societies. Baldock suggests that inter-faith dialogue springs from matter-of-fact concerns like "how do I act", "how might I offend someone?" and "will my beliefs separate us?" (Baldock, 1994: 21 – 22). Watt (1991: 144) argues that in the contemporary pluralist world "mission is replaced by dialogue".

The aims of inter-faith dialogue seem to be similar to those of Parekh's inter-cultural dialogue. Blombery (1991: 30), for example, notes how a sub-Unit on Dialogue, established by the World Council of Churches in 1971, specified the purpose of inter-faith dialogue as the **promotion of understanding, co-operation and friendship** among people of different religions. The method envisaged

involved arranging dialogues which would respect the uniqueness of each religion while enabling them to relate in ways that **promote justice and peace**.

Similarly, Watt (1991) argues that the 'essential condition' for inter-faith dialogue is that the participants meet as equals. Each side, although committed to its own religion, should feel it has something to receive and to give. Thereby each side gains better understanding of the other's religion as well as a deeper insight into their own beliefs. In the contemporary global order, according to Watt, dialogue would result ideally in each religion seeing the other as complementary rather than as rivals. (Watt, 1991: 144 – 145)

Watt's conception draws in part upon the statement on inter-faith relations that emanated from the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which urged all faith communities to work towards 'mutual understanding', and to 'work together in protecting and promoting for the benefit of all men, social justice, good morals as well as peace and freedom.' (cited in Watt, 1991: 149)

These statements reveal how inter-faith dialogue typically is about not only exploring different faiths and thought worlds but also **addressing areas of public concern**. Baldock (1994: 24) cites the example of the Interfaith Multicultural Forum in Brisbane, Australia which regularly takes a public stand on social issues so as to promote Brisbane as a multicultural society, free from prejudice. And Baldock emphasizes that local inter-faith initiatives around Australia have been developed "in response to both the changing situation in local communities and events like the Gulf War." (Baldock, 1988: 25) Inter-faith dialogues in England display similar faith and social issue dimensions. (Wingate, 1988: 69)

Inter-faith dialogue also is **multi-stranded** and takes place at **multiple levels**. The World Conference of Religions for Peace International (WCRP International) can be seen as a demonstration of this. (WCRP Australia, 2003a: 4) Headquartered in New York, WCRP International has Chapters in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. Its Australian Chapter comprises State and Territory chapters in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT, each of which supports local, community-based interfaith dialogues. (WCRP Australia, 2003a: 4)

WCRP Chapters convene every five years for a World Assembly. In between these global meetings the Chapters also hold annual Regional Conferences. For instance, 13 out of the 16 Asia-Pacific chapters participated in the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace in Seoul on March 19th – 21st in March 2003.[2] (WCRP Australia, 2003a: 1 – 2) More recently, the Australian and Indonesian Chapters corresponded with each other to share concerns about the war on Iraq and to agree on a common approach. (WCRP Australia, 2003b: 2)

The Asian Conference this year was addressed by Dr William Vendley, Secretary-General of WCRP International, who arrived directly from Baghdad where he had been working prior to the commencement of bombing in Iraq. Vendley advised the Asian Conference that, while in Iraq, he had met with Sunni and Shia leaders as well as Christian leaders, and noted that these leaders had "asked WCRP to return when the war was over to help organise an inter-religious

council" (WCRP Australia, 2003a: 2) In the meanwhile, he said, WCRP would work on the major challenges ahead: "the humanitarian relief of innocent Iraqi people, the need to assist religious colleagues in Iraq in their tasks of healing and building the common good, and the need to ensure that there is a legal, effective, multilateral process that assists the Iraqi people in their own efforts for self-determination." (WCRP, 2003a: 3) Here, then, is a picture of an inter-faith dialogue organization that has fashioned a role for itself in conflict resolution.

WCRP's basic methodology is built around identifying the stages of a conflict and matching WCRP's roles to each of those stages. The conflict stages are 'latent conflict', 'confrontation', 'negotiation' and 'post accord'. In each of these stages WCRP project workers perform roles in education and consciousness raising, advocacy, mediation and reconciliation. (WCRP Australia, 2003a: 3) Using this methodology, WCRP works to reduce and resolve conflicts. The **potentialities** of this sort of work were well expressed by Vendley:

> Multi-religious co-operation has the capacity to break down group identity barriers, to form a moral coalition against injustice and unjust solutions, to form a complementarity of interests, to be able to provide efficient grassroots channels and to form horizontal connections within societies. (WCRP, 2003a: 3)

This is not to suggest that inter-faith dialogue is easy. There are significant **pitfalls**, not least the different ideological perspectives that participants bring to such encounters. Pratt (1991), drawing on the work of David Lochhead (1988), characterizes at least four ideological perspectives or mentalities; namely, isolation, hostility, competition and partnership.

The ideology of **isolation** entails a perspective of mutual stand-off, reciprocal indifference. It is an exclusivist position which does not allow that there might be any alternative view of reality. (Pratt, 1991: 12)

The ideology of **hostility** is the contrary position. Here the community, far from being isolated, is actively antagonistic toward perceived alternative worldviews. This ideology encompasses three features: (a) the other is seen as a threat; (b) the other is viewed as deliberately in error – is described as a 'liar', a 'deceiver'; and (c) the other is regarded as being engaged in a deliberate undermining stratagem. (Pratt, 1991: 12)

The ideology of **competition** (seen as second only to isolation in typifying the predominant mode of Christian-Muslim inter-faith relationships) is characterized by two features: (a) the competing faith communities implicitly acknowledge they have some shared similarities; and (b) the two communities place considerable stress on their differences. (Pratt, 1991: 12)

The ideology of **partnership** entails inherent values of co-operation and mutual respect. It is a more inclusivist and pluralist position, but may still involve drawing boundaries of difference.

Each of these positions can render inter-faith dialogues difficult but not impossible. Pratt concludes that the primary goal of dialogue should be understanding, not agreement. It should best be viewed, therefore, as essentially **integrative**. As Lochhead (1988: 66) says "dialogue with another tradition leads to a deeper understanding of and loyalty to our own faith traditions." (Pratt, 1991:13)

In summary, inter-faith dialogue promotes both self-reflective understanding and sympathetic awareness of 'the other'. Simultaneously, it fosters connections within and between societies, at a variety of levels, and these create channels for citizens to promote socially just and peaceful solutions to their concerns. In these ways inter-faith dialogue resembles inter-cultural dialogue – it facilitates 'climate change' and 'attitudinal shifts' (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 5) through people exchanging not only 'arguments' but also 'sympathies and sensibilities' (Parekh, 2002: 274).

The next part of this paper looks at how inter-faith dialogue operates at the local level. A concrete case of Muslim-Christian dialogue in the Williamstown-Newport communities of western Melbourne is outlined. And this is compared briefly with some other local initiatives in Melbourne. From these cases can be seen the potentialities and pitfalls of a dialogical approach to promoting local cohesion and global security.

3. A grassroots response to global terror: The case of interfaith dialogue in Williamstown and Newport, Melbourne

Williamstown and Newport are two neighbouring suburbs in western Melbourne's culturally diverse Hobson's Bay municipality. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the Muslim and Christian faith leaders in these suburbs were concerned that tolerance and understanding be promoted. The Imam of the Newport Mosque, Sheikh Abd-El Azzim Rahman, responded to an invitation by the Vicar of Holy Trinity in Williamstown, the Reverend Ron Browning, to visit the Church and sign a book of condolence provided by the US Ambassador. Out of that particular response to a global event the idea of engendering a grassroots inter-faith dialogue was born.

The process of developing this dialogue emerged from the ground up, so to speak, initially through informal gatherings of about 12 interested Muslims and Christians in the home of Holy Trinity parishioners, James and Anne Mulholland. Meetings oscillated between monthly small-scale discussions in someone's home or the Mosque or the Church and larger quarterly public gatherings, of up to 50 people, hosted by the Hobson's Bay City Council. Both the small scale and larger civic events entail hospitality as well as sharing of ideas around agreed topics identified as common to the *Bible* and the *Koran* - e.g. the image of following a spiritual path, the ethics of providing practical support to people in need or who are somehow marginalized in society, and so on.

As the dialogue developed during 2002 and into 2003, the participants discussed how their shared spiritual principles around love and compassion provide them with an ethical orientation towards practical action for social justice, peace, inter-cultural citizenship and harmony, locally and globally. Discussion topics included how Islam and Christianity can provide believers with ethical perspective on issues that affect young people – such as alcohol and drug abuse, relations between the sexes and issues around virtues of modesty (especially as regards Islamic self presentation for women) as opposed to the 'body beautiful culture' associated with Western fashion. In short, dialogue partners have explored the sometimes overlapping, sometimes different meanings of their respective faiths for their personal and social lives.

This inter-faith dialogue has not only operated at an intellectual level. There has also been a dialogue of sensibilities. For example, participants have come to address each other with terms such as 'Brother' and 'Sister' (as much a Muslim practice as a Christian one). It is common for dialogue partners to embrace each other warmly when they arrive for meetings. During dialogues people generally use the Muslim term of respect ("peace be upon him") when referring to Muhammad or Jesus. Muslims have attended Christian services at Holy Trinity, and Christians have attended Muslim prayers at the Mosque. A community barbeque was held at the Newport Lakes reserve during the Summer, which included the families of dialogue partners. In these ways, deeper levels of sympathy, friendship and respect have been established between people from the two faith communities. Believers have become friends.

Dialogue has been attuned to wider global events. The two faith communities, assisted by the Hobson's Bay City Council, hosted a civic event on September 11th 2002, under the rubric of 'Remembrance, Reflection and Renewal'. This was convened in the Hobson's Bay City Council Chambers and opened by the then Mayor, Cr Angela Altair. It was publicized through local press and radio, and attracted an audience of about 100 people, including (by invitation) the Imam of the Preston Mosque, Sheikh Fehmi, the then Mayor of the City of Moreland, and the President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, Mr Yasser Soliman. Members of the local faith communities offered personal reflections and made prepared statements acknowledging the loss of life resulting from the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, denouncing violence and extremism and supporting peaceful solutions to the historical, economic and political issues that lay behind the attacks. A similar event is being planned for 2003.

In the aftermath of the Bali bombings in October 2002, the dialogue partners convened in the Newport RSL as part of the National Day of Mourning. Prayers were shared and statements were made by faith leaders about the importance of tolerance and the peaceful resolution of differences between people.

And in the months leading up to the War on Iraq in May 2003, Christian and Muslim members of the inter-faith group were invited by the Islamic Council of Victoria to participate in the work of a Sub-Committee on Safety and Security.

This also involved representatives of the Federal Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Victoria Police and community legal and welfare organizations. The aim of the Sub-Committee was to develop an Islamic Help Line number which Victorian Muslims could ring if they experienced vilification or harassment from people because of their religion in the pre-war period and once hostilities were under way.

Finally, the inter-faith dialogue partners recently have established an Organizing Committee, comprised of representatives of the Holy Trinity Church and the Newport Mosque.[3] This Committee is responsible for organizing the calendar of monthly meetings as well as planning for the larger civic gatherings hosted by the Hobson's Bay City Council.

The Committee has developed submissions to State and Federal authorities for community development projects, aimed at facilitating the role of the two faith communities in building a culturally harmonious society in the Williamstown-Newport region. In this context, Committee members have met with the Federal Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Garry Hardwicke MP and with the Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police, Ms Christine Nixon.[4] The Committee is also working on a project to document the stories of people's experiences of inter-faith dialogue and community building. Story telling gatherings will be facilitated by a convener skilled in using psycho-drama and story-as-theatre for community development. Most recently, the Committee has discussed the possibility of arranging a dialogue in the Lebanese village from which most of the Newport Mosque's Lebanese members originate. In these different ways, the Williamstown-Newport Inter-faith Group is helping to build better understanding between diverse cultural groups as well as address local and global issues.

This experience of dialogue in Williamstown-Newport has not been without its difficulties. During the planning sessions for the September 11th remembrance event, for instance, a Christian participant suggested lighting a candle during the ceremony to represent hope and seeing light emerge from the darkness of the events in New York and Washington. This suggestion was resisted by the Muslim participants, who explained that the lighting of candles (in their liturgical context) is associated mainly with sadness and death during funeral ceremonies. Similar points of difference were discovered during discussions about whether or not it would be appropriate to include singing in the public event. Issues like these were indicative of a more general ignorance of each other's faith traditions, liturgy and symbolism.

This case of inter-faith dialogue in Williamstown-Newport is by no means unique to Melbourne. Bouma et al (2001: 62), in a study of Muslims in Melbourne, notes how "Australian Muslims appear to handle well their relations with different religions, participating in inter-faith networks and inter-religious dialogue." Evidence he cites to support this claim includes: that the Islamic Council of Victoria meets quarterly with the Victorian Council of Churches for joint symposia

on issues of faith, religion and society; that the Victorian Board of Imams participates in the meetings of the Heads of Faiths Committee; and that mosques in the Springvale-Dandenong area (in Melbourne's south-east) feature on the itinerary of tours organized by the Greater Dandenong Inter-Faith Network. (Bouma et al., 2001: 62)

Representatives of local inter-faith bodies in Melbourne's cities of Greater Dandenong (represented by Mr Gurdashan Singh Gill), Hume (represented by Rev Malcolm Homes), Moreland (represented by Fr Michael Casey) and Hobsons Bay (represented by the author) gave presentations on their activities at the Annual General Meeting of WCRP Australia this year. (WCRP, 2003c: 1) The presentations revealed how each group is involved in promoting dialogue and community harmony – including in the light of international terrorism.

For example, the Inter-faith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong, established in 1989, is comprised of diverse religious faiths, whose leaders work together with the Greater Dandenong Council to promote peace and harmony within the municipality. The network consists of leaders of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh faiths and their communities. (City of Greater Dandenong, n.d: 4) Their activities include: an Annual Gathering of Faith Communities, held in October during the World Week of Prayer; tours of the various places of worship in the municipality; faith-to-faith study days; informal get-togethers; an involvement in the induction of the Mayor and in fortnightly Council meetings. (City of Greater Dandenong, n.d: 4)

Following the events of September 11th, 2001, the Greater Dandenong Inter-Faith Network organized a venue and a press conference to launch a statement prepared by the local Arabic communities with the assistance of the local Federal Member of Parliament, Anthony Byrne MP. The statement, which denounced terrorism and highlighted Islam's focus on peace, was assured wide publicity as a result of the press launch organized by the inter-faith network. (Stewart, personal communication 2003). Similarly, in the aftermath of the Bali bombings in October 2002, the Greater Dandenong Inter-Faith Network joined with the City of Greater Dandenong and the Ethnic Communities Council of the South East to issue a joint statement, expressing sympathy for the victims, abhorring violence as a means to resolve conflict and supporting efforts to promote peace and understanding between all people. (Stewart, personal communication 2003)

Another example is provided by the City of Moreland's inter-faith network, which includes faith leaders of the Baha'i, Buddhist Christian, Muslim and Sikh communities. Supported by the Moreland City Council, it organises inter-faith forums and dinners. And the network responds to local and international events. For example, during the *Tampa* crisis in 2002, when asylum seekers were rescued from a sinking boat by the Norwegian ship, the *Tampa*, and subsequently located in refugee detention centres outside Australia, the network undertook advocacy on behalf of the asylum seekers' human rights. More generally, the network provides press releases to local media on key issues of concern – especially with respect to

tolerance and community cohesion. (Grammatikakis, personal communication 2003)

These examples illustrate how grassroots inter-faith dialogue networks serve to organise practical actions which involve citizens directly in building trust and co-operation among people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. These forms of civil action engender new forms of active citizenship. Participation in inter-faith dialogue groups effectively engages people in constructing local, regional and international partnerships for peaceful conflict resolution. And the more outward looking people become through inter-faith dialogue, the more they come to see themselves and others less as national citizens (defined in terms of belonging to some homogenous community) and more as citizens of the world (defined in relation to a pluralistic and inter-religiously diverse global community). (Lohr, 2000)

4. Conclusion

This paper has taken a close look at the case for inter-cultural dialogue as a response to global terror. In unpacking the elements of inter-**cultural** dialogue it has highlighted the key objectives of promoting better understanding between different cultural groups, and creating channels through which people can work together to further social justice, development and peace. These objectives have been shown to be at the heart of inter-**faith** dialogue as well.

And just as inter-cultural dialogue has been described as multi-stranded and happening at multiple levels, so inter-faith dialogue has been shown to be similarly structured. In essence, inter-cultural dialogue and inter-faith dialogue might be seen as two sides of the same coin. That is the coin of **dialogical approaches** to achieving a sense of common security rather than national security. (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 17) Dialogue, as a pragmatic **means** for promoting better understanding and co-operation between different religious and cultural communities, helps to shape the **end** being sought – namely, peace, equity and the non-violent resolution of conflict between different groups. Booth and Dunne (2002) see value in this **'means-as-ends' approach** in combating terrorism. They explain:

> Rather than letting terrorism win, by allowing fear to be sovereign, terrorism can be defeated today (if not yet eradicated) by employing the means, however imperfectly, that are the moral equivalents of the ends we seek. (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 21)

Among other things, this would entail a steady commitment on behalf of the world's dominant states to behave "as if the humanizing of globalization is a priority, and as if the creation of a global human rights culture will be the consequence of dialogue not diktat." (Booth and Dunne, 2002: 21)

What this paper has shown is how inter-**faith** dialogue, whether convened through international frameworks such as the World Conference of Religions for

Peace or through local-level initiatives such as those in Williamstown-Newport, provides practical methodologies and vehicles for putting inter-**cultural** dialogue into practice. Not that there is any single, one-size-fits-all approach to inter-faith dialogue. Each community develops its own set of strategies.

However, in as much as the cases examined in Melbourne usually involve citizens participating in partnerships with other faith communities and with local government bodies, a form of 'participatory governance' can be seen to be taking shape. Participatory governance has been described by, among others, Meredith Edwards (2002) as being about collaborative relationships, specifically about the role of non-government players in shaping policies and change agendas. Edwards predicts that the public sector in countries like Australia will become increasingly more citizen-centred and networked - including through information and communications technology. (Edward, 2002: 60) But the participatory governance literature tends to focus on partnerships between governments and community- as well as private- sector service providers. (Success Works/IPAA, 2002) A full theory of participatory governance would need to be extended to highlight the role that faith communities can play in shaping not only partnerships but the attitudes and sensibilities that help make these sorts of collaborative arrangements feasible in the first place.

As nations, regions and the world come to terms with being intrinsically multi-faith and pluralist realities, in which faith issues are not easily separable from social, economic, cultural and political concerns, the potentiality as well as the pitfalls of multi-religious co-operation (including inter-faith dialogue) will need to be better understood. For it is this sort of activity which can contribute to overcoming stereotypes, shaping moral alliances for conflict resolution and providing efficient grassroots channels for post-conflict renewal and reconciliation work. The challenge is to understand the basic principles and structures that underlie multi-religious co-operation, and to build relationships between dialogue partners at all levels - locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

By doing so, different voices for moderation, tolerance and social justice can help to inform and shape the consciousness and policy agendas of decision makers now and into the future. The more that people make peace with each other, the less likely it will be that governments can justify prosecuting wars on terrorism. And the more that we opt for engaging in dialogue, the more our **different stories** become part of the **same story**: the story of seeking a shared global perspective on our common humanity.

Endnotes

[1]. Norbert Elias sees 'civilising processes' as being about placing limits on violence and how these restraints are internalised by people, whereas 'decivilising processes' are about lifting these restraints on the use of violence. For a fuller discussion of Norbert Elias's work and its relevance to understanding terrorism and responses to it, see A. Linklater (2002).

[2]. The thirteen chapters represented were: Australia, Bangladesh, China, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The three chapters not represented were Cambodia, Mongolia and New Zealand.

[3]. The committee includes, from the Newport Mosque community, Sheikh Abd-El Azzim, Dr Abdullah Hassna and Mr Dmitri Avgoulis, and, from the Holy Trinity Church, Rev Ron Browning and Dr Scott Phillips.

[4]. On occasions such as these the group has, among other things, played an advocacy role – expressing concerns to the Minister on behalf of a Migrant Resource Centre in western Melbourne which had been de-funded by the Commonwealth government because of cost over-runs, and briefing the Chief Commissioner on the value of co-operation with the local police to help young people from Muslim backgrounds in Newport maintain positive relations with the police.

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