

Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

Three Faiths Forum

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Shipton, Sidney L.
Publisher	Globalization for the Common Good Initiative
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-07-04 11:58:38
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/173667

ISSN 1931-8138 | [Contact](#) | [Search](#) | [Home](#)

[Home](#)
[About JGCG](#)
[Vision & Mission](#)
[Advisory Board](#)
[Editors](#)
[Contact Us](#)

[Current Issue](#)
[Archives](#)
[Book Reviews](#)
[Bookshelf](#)
[Commentaries](#)

GCGI:
 - [Arabic](#)
 - [Chinese](#)
[Mainland](#)
 - [Chinese](#)
[Traditional](#)
 - [English](#)
 - [German](#)
 - [Japanese](#)
 - [Persian](#)
 - [Turkish](#)
[Common Good](#)
 - [Conferences](#)
 - [Future & Past](#)
[Conferences](#)

[Call for Papers](#)
[Submission](#)
[Guidelines](#)
[Paper Review](#)
[Form](#)
[Future Issues](#)

[Related Links](#)
[Site Search](#)

Three Faiths Forum: A Path to Peace Building

Sidney L Shipton
[Three Faiths Forum](#)

Firstly let me thank you for inviting me once again to take part in an important conference on Globalisation for the Common Good. I had the privilege of participating in the first conference in Oxford and the second conference in St Petersburg and regretfully was not able to be with you again until now.

I am not an academic but a lawyer by profession and as Co-ordinator of the Three Faiths Forum (Muslim-Christian-Jewish dialogue) I am pleased to have the opportunity of discussing a non violent path to conflict resolution and peace building.

Today, more than ever and in spite of the great strides that have been made in science and technology and in achievements in so many fields of endeavour we live in a violent age, an age of violence growing year by year in intensity.

It may well be that the age of world wars is over. No great power it seems wishes to use such fearful weapons of war that have been developed in recent years since the first atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima which let it be said brought the second world war to an end but at a terrible cost.

Today we find what I would call mini-wars taking place world wide where the weapons used are misguided individuals who become suicide bombers believing they are giving their lives for a cause and that they will end up in heavenly paradise as the consequence of their naïve actions. Terrorists (I decline to call those who kill civilians, young and old, indiscriminately, freedom fighters) terrorists wage such wars which are in effect often civil wars and this is the order of the day.

The civilised world still hesitates to rid the world of terrorists and insurgencies grow – so what is the answer? What is the non-violent path to be?

To me from a practical point of view there are 5 major ways of tackling terrorism and these in fact precede defence and security consideration.

First, it is essential to cut off at source the fuelling of terrorists by preventing them receiving the necessary funding and financial support in many cases from countries in the area or on the borders since no terrorist organisation can exist without fund fuelling their activities.

Secondly it is essential to cut off the supply of explosives, munitions, weapons, uniforms, bomb making equipment and all the trappings of a secret army.

Thirdly it follows that it is essential to eradicate these countries and people who train and teach would be terrorists often in terrorist training camps set up in other

countries.

These ways of tackling terrorism are self evident and obvious but I make no apology for mentioning them.

Action should and must be taken by international bodies such as the United Nations, NATO and the European Union against countries who feed and fuel terrorism. They must be ostracised and become the pariahs of the world. Sanctions must be effective and forthright.

However the fourth and fifth ways of tackling terrorism are the non-violent paths we must take to resolve conflict (usually in the nature of civil war) to lead to peace.

Fourthly, from a long term point of view it is necessary in many cases of providing work and job opportunities in deprived areas. The seeds of dissention find fertile soil in the unemployed giving the backroom organisers of terrorism the opportunity of turning them into terrorist and suicide bombers.

Fifthly, and this the way forward I wish to concentrate on and it is necessary indeed essential to promote dialogue or as the late Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain put it it is better to have Jaw Jaw than War War!

Dialogue and the educational processes which go with them are the paths that lead to conflict resolution and peace building nationally and internationally.

Regretfully the media and press do not usually publicise the "moderate". Religious texts regretfully are open to different interpretations, for example, the wonders of paradise instilled in to suicide bombers are really fragments of imagination. (It was the late Sheikh Dr MA Zaki Badawi KBE, Co-founder of the Three Faiths Forum and my mentor for some 10 years in the principles and practices of Islam, who told me categorically that a Muslim committing suicide is committing a sin and is not a martyr).

With the above in mind and understanding particularly in the UK it was necessary to assist the growing Muslim community in integrating and fighting Islamophobia that the Three Faiths Forum came into existence. My work in the Forum I feel may be used as an example and model in our discussions at this conference.

The Three Faiths forum was founded by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, Revd. Dr Marcus Braybrooke and the late Sheikh Dr M.A Zaki Badawi. I became the Co-ordinator and this year we are celebrating 10 years of activities endeavouring to bring Muslims, Christians, and Jews (the three Abrahamic monotheistic faiths) together by dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. Regretfully there is still a long way to go. Although we work at different levels including the leadership level through our Advisory Board which acts as a think tank and sounding board for our ideas and projects, the major thrust of our work is at grass roots level. Let it be made quite clear that Muslims Christians and Jews are not monolithic faiths. There are different types of Muslims, different types of Jews and different types of Christians. Our Advisory Board endeavours to be comprehensive and representative but I cannot say with hand on heart this it represents 100% of all of the 3 Abrahamic faiths.

We set up Medical and Lawyers groups and we form local and regional groups particularly which are of major importance. In addition as from last year having received a grant from the Home Office we are now working in schools, colleges

and universities. Also we endeavour to work jointly with active Muslim groups such as City Circle (young professionals and business people) and Muslims in Dialogue, The Ismaili Centre and many other Muslim organisations which because they have a positive approach do not make the head lines.

Let me elaborate on how we try to achieve our objectives as a long term non violent response to overcome the domestic threat and lead to peace building. I have already referred to our Advisory Board but probably the real work is done within smaller groups. Our Medical group works on the basis of Chatham House rules. A paper is prepared on a particular subject alternatively by a Muslim, Christian or Jew and is then discussed. Through the subjects of genetic engineering, abortion, mental health etc those present find much upon which they can agree and probably more that they can agree than they thought before coming to such a discussion. Similarly so far as the Lawyers group is concerned (which has been recognised by the Law Society) we have discussed subjects such as the blasphemy laws. All these discussions are open ended but the real purpose of the meetings dare I say it are to get Muslims, Christians and Jews talking to each other and getting to know each other.

Our Three Faiths forum local groups once they have been set up work on their own initiative and as long as they bring together their members in a spirit of understanding we leave the subject matter to them. Some do what I call a 'religious pub crawl' which means usually that on a Sunday, the groups visit a local Church then a local Mosque and then a local Synagogue, and in each place they learn a little of what goes on on Friday, Saturday or Sunday, (that is to say the appropriate Sabbath of each of the 3 faiths). Here let me say that as a matter of principle all our meetings take place not in a fixed venue but alternate between a Mosque, a Church and a Synagogue and this includes our local and our specialist groups as well as our Advisory Board.

Our work with schools and colleges in addition is based on the Tools 4 Dialogue, that is to say discussing texts and looking for similarities and differences.

Our work does not end there as we carry out joint activities with who ever wants to work with us. Let me give you some recent examples; The Three Faiths Forum held a joint seminar with the Institute of Education and Muslims, Christians and Jews discussed faith schools and whether they were good or bad.

A three day consultation was held on the subjects of Christian, Muslim and Jewish music, this took place in St Georges House, Windsor Castle under the auspices of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, the Festival of Muslim Culture, the Jewish Music Institute and the Three Faiths Forum. The high light of the conference was a unique concert in the chapel were for the first time a Jewish Choir and a Muslim Music group performed as well as the Christian Chapel Choir itself.

Recently the Three Faiths Forum held the 4th Annual meeting of the Three Faiths Forum with all the ambassadors and heads of mission in London called together on our behalf by Sir Anthony Figgis (HM Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps) where in addition to speakers from the World Economic Forum and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office presentations on the work of the Three Faiths Forum are given to the participants (which incidentally has led to interfaith contacts in Bulgaria and Romania and indeed the setting up of a Forum Abraamico in Lisbon last year).

From what I have said I hope it is quite clear that we believe the long term non violent path to conflict resolutions and peace building is to get people to know each other and to understand each other and to respect each other and particularly to realise that the stereo types that exists (particularly when you have never met a Muslim or indeed a Christian or a Jew) are generalisations which do not relate to the majority of Muslims, Christians and Jews.

Let me conclude with a short experience I had once on holiday with my wife some time ago. We met a young couple of people and got to know them and towards the end of the holiday when I was alone with my newly acquainted friend he said to me "Sidney when did you convert to Judaism?" It surprised me at first and then I realised that he lived in a rural environment, in the UK he had never met or befriended a Jew before. Because I spoke reasonable unaccented English I did not fit his stereotype of what a Jew should look like. (Perhaps like someone with a beard and an accent and out of "Fiddler on the Roof"?) The story has a happy ending I am the godfather of his son Thomas, (the couple got married on the Island of St Thomas, my wife and I were on a cruise) and he is now at Oxford University.

The Three Faiths Forum is playing a significant role not only in the UK but also internationally as an affiliate of the Abrahamic Forum of the International Council of Christian and Jews and through its contacts with the Ambassadors and Heads of Mission based in London where, as I have said, we meet with every year. The Foreign and Commonwealth office send delegations to us to listen to presentations similar to this one and interfaith conferences have taken place in several countries as a result of the above. Indeed as I have already said we have a Forum Abraamico in Lisbon, Portugal and groups being formed in Bulgaria and Romania. I hope what I have said will provide some food for thought at this important 6th Annual Conference in the City of Istanbul.

[Return to Home](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#) | [Return to Top](#)

Copyright 2006 - Journal of Globalization for the Common Good - www.commongoodjournal.com

Copyright 2006 - Journal of Globalization for the Common Good - www.commongoodjournal.com