

Edited by
Timothy Samuel Shah
Alfred Stepan
Monica Duffy Toft

RETHINKING RELIGION AND WORLD AFFAIRS

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Rethinking Religion and World Affairs

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Introduction

RELIGION AND WORLD AFFAIRS: BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES

Timothy Samuel Shah

I.

Four guided missiles packed with explosive material hurtled into the morning sky. Though the day was brilliant blue and cloudless, no one saw them coming. They were aimed at a nation that did not see itself at war. Moreover, it was a nation convinced that missiles fired in anger no longer posed a serious threat to its security. The weapons were conventional in the strict sense: they did not carry nuclear warheads.

But the weapons and the attackers who launched them were anything but conventional. The 19 hijackers who commandeered four civilian jetliners on the morning of September 11, 2001, were not sent by a state or nation. They were not motivated by any purely secular or political cause. Born of religious zeal, they sought to strike a blow against a power they believed was in thrall to Satan. Motivated by faith, they wanted to strike a blow for Allah.

Religion, which was supposed to have been permanently sidelined by secularization, suddenly appeared to be at the center of world affairs. Seemingly without warning, faith had transgressed the neat boundaries that organized the thinking and planning of our best and brightest policy makers, policy analysts, and scholars. Religious believers were supposed to stay confined to one side of the boundary that sealed private faith off from global public affairs—a boundary that separated the irrational from the rational, the mystical from the purposeful. However, guided by an astonishing combination of zealous faith and coolly calculating rationality, September 11 showed that organized religious believers could act with purpose, power, and public consequence.

And we—not only America, but the whole world of professional policy making and analysis—were unprepared. As Robert Keohane, a leading international relations scholar, had the humility to admit shortly afterward:

The attacks of September 11 reveal that *all mainstream theories of world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation*. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fueled by religious fervor. None of them takes very seriously the human

desire to dominate or to hate—both so strong in history and in classical realist thought. [emphasis added]

In his own post-9/11 analysis, however, Keohane also had the honesty to say: “Since I have few insights into religious motivations in world politics, I will leave this subject to those who are more qualified to address it.”

This edited volume picks up where Keohane left off. In the light of religion’s global resurgence, most dramatized by 9/11, it attempts a radical rethinking of the relationship between religion and world affairs, hence the title. It brings together scholars who are eminently qualified to analyze how and why religious motivations, actors, ideas, and organizations matter for contemporary world affairs. It addresses some of the reasons that theories of world politics and world affairs have been slow to address religious factors, how and why religious factors are influencing important global dynamics, and how we need to adapt our theories of world affairs to the realities and implications of this resurgence.

II.

There was once a virtually unbroken consensus in the foundational works of social science about modernization and religion. One part of this consensus was empirical or factual. The other was normative or ethical. The empirical assumption was that with economic modernization or “development,” religion *would* decline. The ethical assumption was that with political modernization and its attendant “democratization,” religion *should* be confined to the private sphere. Description and prescription went happily together.

Both parts of this consensus are now in question. The September 11 attacks clearly demonstrated that the consensus was wrong. Well before and apart from September 11, however, the consensus was increasingly difficult to sustain. A multitude of simultaneously developed and vibrantly religious societies—starting with the United States—explodes the empirical assumption. A multitude of simultaneously democratic and luxuriantly faith-saturated societies—including India, Turkey, and Indonesia—explodes the ethical assumption. And ten years after September 11, 2001, religious militancy remains a powerful force—in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and numerous other locales—that individual governments and the international community have proven unable to defeat or even contain.

This old consensus is nevertheless stubborn. It still structures much of our study and understanding of the role of religion in world affairs. It does so because many of the concepts and conceptual distinctions on which it was founded remain firmly lodged in the minds of international relations scholars, as Bryan Hehir describes in chapter 1 of this book. The meaning of concepts such as “secularism,” “modernity,” “power,” and “public life” is assumed without hesitation or complication. With equal confidence, a sharp boundary is drawn between these

concepts and phenomena assumed to be their polar opposites: “religion,” “tradition,” “theology,” “faith,” and “private worship.”

Much classical thinking and practice in world affairs is thus a form of border patrol. It is concerned with policing and strengthening the fence between two worlds. The first world is the “secular” and “public” world in which international actors—nation-states and the multilateral organizations that bind them together—are presumed to make rational choices in the pursuit of political and economic power. The second world is the “spiritual” and “private” world in which religious actors—everything from church hierarchies to clerical councils to violent organizations such as Al Qaeda and Hizbollah—are presumed to make faith-based choices in the pursuit of nonrational or irrational goals. As with the empirical assumption about religion and economic development, the factual assumption about these two worlds is that they are two separate universes, with little to no mutual contact or interaction. As with the ethical or normative assumption about religion and political democratization, the ethical or moral assumption about these two worlds is that they should be kept as far apart as possible.

However, it is true that what could be called classical secularization theory recognized the reality and legitimacy of some traffic between these two universes. Classical secularization theory assumed the descriptive and prescriptive forms noted at the beginning: it expected the automatic decline of religion in the face of development and required the hermetic isolation of religion in the face of democracy. On one hand, the forces of development and progress would so impinge on the world of religion that religion would have little to do and less space in which to do it. Modern progress would make the security and comfort offered by religion increasingly unnecessary. Modernization, in other words, would infiltrate, occupy, and diminish the world of the spirit, fostering the “disenchantment” that Max Weber made central to his understanding of modernity. On the other hand, secularization theory held that the forces of democracy should reform and regulate religion to make it compatible with freedom—to inculcate habits of autonomy and rational reflection and encourage individuals to forge new identities as democratic citizens. On closer inspection, in other words, classical secularization theory imagined that the religious and political worlds would and should interrelate to a significant extent.

The crucial point, however, is that the secularization theorists who assigned themselves the task of managing the points of contact between the public “secular” world and the private “spiritual” world *allowed—and expected—traffic to flow in only one direction.*

The result of this stringent and one-way boundary maintenance has been the long-standing exclusion of religion and religious actors from the systematic study of world politics in general and international relations in particular. This has created a paradoxical situation: religion has become one of the most influential factors in world affairs in the last generation but remains one of the least examined factors in the professional study and practice of world affairs.

For example, the lead journal for political science in the United States is the *American Political Science Review* (APSR). In its 100th anniversary issue, an article concluded that “prior to 1960 only a single APSR article sought to use religion as a variable to explain empirical phenomena” and that in APSR “from 1980 on, just one article in American Government put religious factors at the center of analysis; and just two in Comparative Politics.”¹ A similar neglect marked the international relations literature. Daniel Philpott, a contributor to this book, judged that in his survey of leading journals of international relations from 1980 to 1999, “only six or so out of a total of about sixteen hundred featured religion as an important influence.”² This neglect of religion in research is echoed in teaching. One of the coeditors of this volume, Alfred Stepan, teaches at one of America’s largest and oldest schools dedicated to training graduate students for international careers in government, political analysis, international organizations, the media, human rights, the private sector, and academia: the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. He is currently teaching the first general course on the role of religion in world affairs in the school’s fifty-year history.

III.

Rethinking Religion and World Affairs represents a collective effort to rethink religion and world affairs by questioning the sharp empirical and ethical boundaries that have separated the two. A working group of leading scholars and policy practitioners concerned with religion in the contemporary world was convened by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in New York, with the generous support of the Henry Luce Foundation, to devise strategies to transcend this state of affairs. It soon became apparent that thousands of professors never trained in religion and world affairs would be asked to design and teach new courses, media newsrooms to report on religion in greater depth, and legislators, foreign policy makers, humanitarian organizations, development agencies, and feminist and human rights groups to devise new and more appropriate approaches to religion.

This book has chapters on all these areas and more. Each chapter has a guide to additional literature and resources. Furthermore, perhaps one of the book’s more innovative and valuable features is an “Internet Resource Guide,” included as an Appendix. Led by M. Christian Green and Nicole Greenfield, this guide was compiled in consultation with the SSRC Advisory Committee on Religion and International Affairs, many of whose members have contributed articles to this book. In addition, Green and Greenfield consulted with other scholars and practitioners active in this nascent field. Because much information in this field is being conveyed, interpreted, and driven by the Internet, we present a selection of the significant Web sites that have been compiled and present them in the appendix. This appendix serves as a guide that will help readers navigate this new and complex terrain by means of a regularly updated directory of Internet materials on religion.

This book contains six parts. Part I, “Religion, Secularism, and Secularization,” addresses one of the major debates of our time: do the classical empirical and ethical assumptions about the relationship between religion and modernization noted earlier have any meaning and validity today? Empirically, *do* the dynamics of the modern world force religion into a private sphere with little to no public voice? In other words, is some process of *secularization* occurring in modern societies? Ethically, *should* religion be restricted to a private sphere to help make democracy more durable and robust? Is some doctrine of *secularism* that limits the role of religion in public life necessary to build free and healthy societies? To launch this volume’s rethinking of the relationship between religion and world affairs, we could not be more fortunate than to have a contribution from J. Bryan Hehir. As Professor of the Practice of Religion and Public Life at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and Secretary for Health and Social Services for the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, Hehir embodies the robust and creative interplay between faith and public life. As a scholar, Hehir began to reflect deeply on the necessary nexus of religion and international affairs long before it was fashionable to do so; as a practitioner, he helped to shape the thinking of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on issues of war and peace. Here he offers a magisterial (a word even more appropriate here than in most cases) account of the reasons for the stubborn hold of secularism on both the theory and practice of international affairs. Yet he also provides an exploration—as comprehensive as it is concise—of the ongoing shift in favor of greater scholarly and policy attention to religious factors in world politics. According to Hehir, this shift has been prompted more by events than ideas; it began in earnest in the 1970s; and it has accelerated since that time, particularly in the 1990s and after September 11, 2001. Though events led the way, he concludes, new and creative ways of integrating religion into the study of world affairs are rapidly catching up to reality.

The second contributor to our book, Georgetown University sociologist José Casanova, formulated singularly illuminating and influential answers to basic questions about secularism and secularization in his modern classic, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994). On the empirical question, Casanova displayed nuance on the fierce debate about secularization. On one hand, he argued that modernization has entailed secularization in one sense: it has fostered functional and institutional differentiation in societies, in which distinct social institutions such as governments and churches increasingly assume independent roles and functions, as well as assume discrete institutional forms. Religious institutions no longer help prop up overarching “sacred canopies” that envelop entire societies in systems of religious meaning but instead come to serve specialized religious functions and conduct specifically religious activities. On the other hand, however, Casanova argues that this differentiation of spheres has not entailed the privatization of religion. Functionally differentiated religious actors still shape civil society and political society—by delivering social services or organizing grassroots campaigns to influence legislation—even when they are no longer fused with the state or with other societal institutions.

In Casanova's contribution to this book, he refines and expands this pathbreaking argument, here outlining even more forcefully that the only aspect of the secular model that remains valid is that there must be an element of institutional differentiation between elected democratic authorities and religious authorities. In terms of privatization, he now argues that his initial argument was not strong enough. Fifteen years ago, he argued that religion, religious arguments, and participants played a legitimate role in civil society but not political society. As an ethical or normative matter, he now argues how and why religious actors have the right to shape political society. In particular, he makes three provocative self-criticisms about his concept of "public religions." First, he now argues that his attempt to restrict—at least normatively—modern public religions to the public sphere of civil society was a mistake. Second, he believes his original argument suffered from an "empirical framing of the study as church-state-nation-civil society from a comparative national perspective, neglecting the transnational dimensions" of religion so apparent today. Third, he moves away from his original focus on secularism as a Western Christian concept to look at its quite diverse manifestations in an increasingly "deterritorialized" world.

Our third article, "The Politics of Secularism," is by a rising scholar of international relations theory, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd. As Bryan Hehir demonstrated, both the international relations literature and diplomatic history neglect religion in international affairs. Author of a recent groundbreaking monograph, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, Hurd takes on the task of unearthing the deep conceptual roots of this neglect, calling for a thorough reappraisal of the category of the "secular" as it has been used, understood, and applied in the study of international relations.³ Secularisms (in the plural) are not fixed and final achievements of European-inspired modernity, she argues, but a series of social constructs and patterns of political rule that are contested and contestable. Failure to see this has led to a selective blindness in the study of world politics, as the blanket usage of the categories of the secular and the religious masks the diversity, history, and politics surrounding claims to secularism, secular democracy, and related concepts. In a powerful analysis of core assumptions held by the three major schools of international relations—realist, liberal, and constructivist—Hurd explores the different ways in which religion is understood and managed in secularist international relations theory and practice.

Part II, "Religion, Democracy, and Human Rights," turns to questions of democracy, human rights, and international law. Virtually all the religions of the world are considered. In chapter 4, Alfred Stepan advances his theory of the "twin tolerations." He argues that "secularism" is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for democracy. What is a necessary condition is that democratic political authorities have a sufficient degree of autonomy from religious authorities to be able to execute their legitimate democratic functions and that religions in the polity be given sufficient toleration, not only to privately exercise religious freedom of worship and to participate in public debates in civil society but also to organize in political society. Such religious freedoms may violate doctrinaire

French secularism but they do not violate democracy. In this and other works, Stepan develops the theory and practice of what he calls the “multiple secularisms of modern democratic and non-democratic regimes.” He shows that many completely different state-religion-society models, and all major world religions, can conceivably be democratically contained within the twin tolerations.

One of the most novel and effective of these nonclassic but democratic secularisms is found in India. Rajeev Bhargava is the major theorist of this model. In his article “How Should States Deal with Deep Religious Diversity? Can Anything Be Learned from the Indian Model of Secularism?” he shows that the answer is clearly yes. Unlike the “wall of separation between church and state” found in the U.S. and enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, the Indian democratic state financially supports *all* religions. Also, unlike the U.S. idea of the state maintaining “equidistance” from all religions, the Indian model calls for “principled distance” from all religions. Principled distance allows the democratic state to act against a religion if it is violating other citizens’ rights.

Robert Hefner explores the relationship between Islam and democracy. Using standard rankings of world polities concerning democracy and drawing on his expertise on non-Arab Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim country, his article “Rethinking Islam and Democracy” shows that there are important differences in political culture and performance across Muslim countries. Taken as a whole, non-Arab Muslim-majority countries are, given their socioeconomic conditions, “democratically overachieving,” while Arab-majority countries are “democratically underachieving.” In one sense, this bodes well for the Muslim world’s democratic prospects, since only about 22 percent of the world’s Muslims live in Arab states. This is so despite the fact that support for democracy is roughly as high in Arab as in non-Arab-majority countries. However, just as there are some differences in Europe between Social Democratic and Christian Democratic polities, Hefner argues that emerging democracies in Muslim-majority countries may well be characterized by distinctive qualities and public-cultural concerns, owing to their ethico-legal and organizational legacies. In particular, even as democracy takes hold, religion is not likely to be privatized, and questions surrounding the status of women, non-Muslims, and Muslim nonconformists—and thus questions of religious freedom—may well continue to figure in public arguments over politics and the common good. Notwithstanding these dynamics, democracy is alive and well in parts of the Muslim world, and it will probably continue to expand and improve in quality.

The final article in this section is by John Witte Jr. and M. Christian Green of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University. Their chapter outlines the importance of religious freedom for questions of human rights and democracy. They review the major international covenants concerning religious freedom and describe and analyze their evolution. They also analyze a “new alphabet” of religious freedom violation that has made the international headlines in recent years, concerning charges of apostasy, blasphemy, conversion,

and defamation. Their argument, overall, is that human rights needs religion and religion needs human rights, and that conscience and freedom are essential to religion, human rights, and democracy.

The ambivalence of religion is reflected in the two essays that make up Part III, “Religion, Conflict, and Peacemaking.” Although the essayists, Monica Duffy Toft of Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and Daniel Philpott of the University of Notre Dame, are careful not to cast religion as intrinsically violence-prone or intrinsically peaceful, they nevertheless agree that religion is a force with serious political implications. Toft, for instance, provides a critical examination of the motivations religious actors have used to justify their use of violence. When violence takes a religious turn, it is often more deadly and intractable than other sorts of violence. Nevertheless, religious actors are not irrational. In fact, Toft shows that the ways in which religious actors reason and calculate can be understood, even when their calculations lead them to adopt violent courses of action. She also shows that it is vital for scholars and practitioners to consider the different forms and foundations of rationality that religious actors employ in the political arena, with or without accompanying violence.

While Toft’s essay examines religion and violence, Philpott turns our attention to reconciliation efforts by religious actors following civil wars, genocide, and dictatorship. He first explains the paradigm of reconciliation that religious theologians and leaders have developed, one that poses an alternative to the liberal peace, now the globally dominant paradigm among the world’s most powerful institutions. In the second half of the piece, he offers a comparative analysis that shows where and under what conditions religious actors have drawn on reconciliation to shape institutions of transitional justice.

In Part IV, “Religion, Humanitarianism, and Civil Society,” the contributors address major global dynamics that often proceed under the radar of international politics and diplomacy—namely, the role of religion in humanitarianism, development, gender relations, and interreligious dialogue. These dynamics do not normally grab headlines quite the way suicide bombings do. But they are an increasingly salient issue in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, numerous international organizations devote enormous time and resources to addressing them, and they have an enormous and direct impact on the quality of life of most of the world’s people. What is more, they are all issues in which religious discourse and religious institutions play a large and increasing role.

Opening this section is a rich contribution by political scientist Michael Barnett, a senior scholar of international relations and of the history and role of humanitarianism in shaping global affairs. He explores the profound complexities and developments that characterize the relationship between religion and humanitarianism, both today and in history. Though much academic and policy discussion takes for granted an unproblematic distinction between secular and faith-based social service organizations operating in the humanitarian field at home and abroad, Barnett shows that the history and contemporary reality

of humanitarian practice forces us to blur this presumed conceptual boundary. For one thing, many formally secular humanitarian workers and aid agencies are demonstrably motivated by a great deal of faith and drive to connect with the transcendent. In addition, evangelical Protestants pioneered the formation of voluntary societies that specialized in meeting humanitarian goals, such as abolishing slavery. At the same time, many officially faith-based organizations operate programs and follow procedures that are virtually indistinguishable from those of secular aid organizations. His essay demonstrates that the neat distinctions we take for granted in scholarship and policy debates should be interrogated, not assumed.

Development expert Katherine Marshall of Georgetown University treats a contentious relationship in the next chapter, “Faith, Gender, and International Affairs.” Marshall focuses on the respects in which religion is both a major vehicle of women’s empowerment in the developing world and a frequent barrier to women’s emancipation. To advance cooperation and partnership between women and mostly male religious hierarchies, Marshall urges greater dialogue and efforts at mutual understanding. But she also urges that the two sides focus on shared concerns on which they can undertake practical partnership—in areas such as sanitation, for example.

To open up the many-sided relationship between religion and development, Marshall, in a separate contribution, also explores numerous cases in which religious actors cooperated and clashed with the activities of multilateral development organizations including the World Bank. Marshall knows this fraught relationship well: for four decades, she served at the World Bank and helped launch an effort to establish a formal initiative there to strengthen dialogue and partnership between it and religious leaders and institutions. Her chapter documents the skepticism about religion’s role in development she encountered firsthand during her tenure at the bank. But it also documents how the goals of both religious organizations and development institutions like the World Bank can be advanced through improved mutual understanding and practical partnerships.

If dialogue is a persistent subtheme in this section’s chapters, it moves to center stage in the contribution by Thomas Banchoff, the director of the Berkley Center on Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University. Banchoff examines the evolution of interreligious dialogue over the last century, its intensification after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and its interaction with politics across societies and in interstate relations.

Part V, “Religion and the Media,” turns to the role of the media and how religion is covered. Both chapters in this section reveal that new media and technologies have challenged fundamental understandings about what exactly religion is and its impact in global politics. The first chapter, by Mehrzad Boroujerdi and Nichole J. Allem, takes the reader through media in the Muslim world. What we discover is how the Muslim and Arab worlds have taken hold of media to challenge Western conceptions of how the world works, as well as to challenge domestic regimes.

Diane Winston's essay is complementary, showing the interplay between journalists, religion, and foreign policy and how the relationship has changed. Although religion has played a role in the coverage of some events, the quality of that coverage has shifted over time as new technologies and journalistic methods such as the Internet and blogging, for instance, have allowed a multitude of different perspectives to be heard in corners of the world that receive little to no coverage. Using the case of the Saffron Revolution, a series of demonstrations that involved monks in Burma protesting the policies of the country's oppressive junta, she argues that mainstream media outlets would not only have failed to cover the demonstrations but also have probably misinterpreted them. The ability of citizen journalists to post online their videos, photographs, and reporting about what is happening has transformed reporting in general and, in Winston's view, the reporting of religion. Moreover, by subjecting the political system to more scrutiny, it has helped to transform Burma's/Myanmar's politics in a positive direction through elections, freeing of dissidents and civilian rule.

Part VI, "Religion and American Foreign Policy," explores the relationship between religion and American foreign policy from diverse perspectives. Numerous difficult questions underpin this relationship. Do some religious groups have a dangerous influence on American foreign policy? Have efforts by the U.S. foreign policy apparatus to engage religious dynamics borne any policy fruit? Can U.S. foreign policy makers learn to engage religious dynamics more nimbly and effectively to advance not only the interests of the United States but also the global common good? Does it make sense for a country with a constitutional separation of church and state to do so?

The essay by Walter Russell Mead, reprinted from the September 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, tackles the first of these nettlesome issues head-on: do some religious groups have a dangerous influence on American foreign policy? As a leading analyst of the history of American foreign policy and strategic thinker at the Council on Foreign Relations, Mead has had a sustained interest in the interplay of religious ideas and America's conception of its global role and interests. He brings the weight of his historical expertise and strategic acumen to the issue of how American evangelical Protestants are shaping American foreign policy. Though the influence of conservative Protestants on American foreign policy worries some and terrifies others, Mead observes that missionary Protestantism has been an almost constant shaper of American self-understanding and contributor to American perceptions of the world. This is sometimes for ill, Mead finds, but often for good. Mead concludes that evangelical Protestants are already showing signs of maturing in their thinking about foreign policy, though they still have a way to go. The more evangelicals can become conversant with the concepts and debates that shape American foreign policy, the better off both evangelicals and the United States will be. This is true, Mead argues, not least because evangelicals have the potential to play a positive and strategic role in helping American foreign policy elites to grasp the importance of global religious dynamics.

One area where the activism of American religious communities made a concrete difference in the crafting of American foreign policy is international religious freedom. Not only evangelical Protestants but also a broad coalition of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and others mobilized between 1996 and 1998 to push for the passage of congressional legislation on international religious freedom. When the International Religious Freedom Act passed Congress by unanimous votes in the House and Senate and was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in October 1998, it mandated the systematic integration of religious freedom into the priorities and structures of American foreign policy.

But more than ten years later, Thomas Farr asks in this book, how well has America's new religious freedom policy really worked? Farr's long experience as a diplomat and, in particular, as the first director of the International Religious Freedom office at the State Department gives him a unique ability to deliver an authoritative assessment. As implemented, Farr argues, the policy has fallen far short of its promise. It has focused too much on the narrow and short-term goal of rescuing particular victims of religious persecution in a relatively small number of countries. Instead, Farr argues, America's religious freedom policy could and should be tasked with advancing the "twin tolerations" Alfred Stepan articulates in his contribution to this book: liberty for religious organizations to express themselves fully and freely in public life, along with freedom for states to formulate laws democratically without being trumped by religious authorities. This kind of robust freedom for religious communities would not only secure their basic civil and political rights, Farr explains, but also advance U.S. strategic interests, such as countering extremism and stabilizing religiously divided societies.

In many ways, any book on rethinking religion would not be complete without the final chapter in this section, contributed by three senior fellows at one of Washington's most respected and influential think tanks. Karin von Hippel, Frederick Barton, and Shannon Hayden, the former codirectors and project coordinator, respectively, of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, provide a practical, how-to user's manual for advancing the integration of religion into American foreign policy. They note the parts of the U.S. government that have been most open to integrating religion—mostly in the Pentagon, it turns out—and why most other parts of America's foreign policy apparatus have proven relatively resistant. More than this, they specify a series of doable steps forward that American government officials can take to make progress in this neglected area. With these steps, U.S. policy makers will not only be smarter about religion but also better equipped to negotiate the challenges and opportunities the blurring of the boundaries between religion and world affairs poses for American interests.

A final word is in order about "religion," perhaps the most important concept explored in this book. Since it is of such obvious importance in a book about "religion and world affairs," it is reasonable to ask: What is it exactly? How do we define it? The answer is: We don't. Or, more accurately, we do not impose a single definition

on the diverse authors and perspectives represented in this volume. The reason is not that we consider “religion” a meaningless category, as some suggest. Nor is the reason that we must simply throw our hands up in despair because there are just too many ways to define it. William Cavanaugh’s profound and perceptive recent book, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, cites a 1912 psychology of religion textbook that lists more than fifty different definitions of religion.⁴ The increasing self-criticism and self-consciousness of religion scholars in the hundred years since that textbook was published has no doubt doubled or tripled the available definitions.

Aware of the proper complexity, capaciousness, and multivalence of “religion” as a concept, we invited the scholars and practitioners selected to contribute to this book to adopt and apply their own definitions and methods to the task of rethinking the place and influence of religion in world affairs. We encouraged each contributor to approach religion from within his or her own disciplinary framework in order to enrich our understanding of the variety of ways in which religion interacts with global affairs.

As this book makes clear, religion cannot and should not be confined to a narrow category of scholarship or thought. Rethinking religion properly, therefore, requires that we encourage multiple strands of scholarship and practical insight. In any case, if history and prior scholarship are any guide, no matter what we do, religious phenomena will sooner or later “trespass” almost any boundary, conceptual or practical, we seek to impose.

Notes

1. Kenneth D. Wald and Clyde Wilcox, “Getting Religion: Has Political Science Rediscovered the Faith Factor?” *American Political Science Review* 100:4 (November 2006), 525.

2. Daniel Philpott, “The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations,” *World Politics* 55:1 (October 2002), 69.

3. See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

4. William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 119.

PART } I

Religion, Secularism, and Secularization

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Why Religion? Why Now?

J. Bryan Hehir

The theme of this book of essays, religion and world politics, embodies a paradox. The authors, explicitly or implicitly, will refer to the emergence or resurgence of religion in international affairs. But religion has never been absent from the international arena or the reality of world politics. Rooted as it is in the deepest dimension of human personality and societal life, religion has been entwined with the basic dynamics of men and women, states and nations for millennia. Religious beliefs and convictions have moved societies to cooperate and to collide, to seek understanding of each other and to plan domination of others. The role of religion has never been one-dimensional: it has fostered the search for peace, and it has intensified the motives for war; it has united some at the price of dividing others. The narrative of religion in world politics cannot be conceived or written parsimoniously; the story, like the reality, covers a broad canvas.

Yet, the paradox is that the scholars in this book and in other sources who speak of a return or a resurgence of religion have a valid point.¹ In reality, religion has never been absent from international affairs. But the study of world politics, particularly the formal discipline of international relations, and the practice of world politics, particularly formal interstate diplomacy, have both treated religion as inconsequential, a reality that could be ignored by scholars or diplomats without any diminishment of their understanding of the world.² The claim here is not that there has been, in the academy or diplomacy, a widespread animus against religion, much less systematic efforts to persecute it. Part of the narrative does include persecution: sometimes states persecuting believers, sometimes one faith against another. But at the level that concerns this book—the level of scholarship and the quest for understanding, the level of how states and global institutions actually practice diplomacy, make war, or make peace—at those levels, the dominant reality has not been active opposition to religion but benign disregard of it. Religion has effectively been treated as a black box. In other words, the operative assumption has been that the influence of religious beliefs and communities on “high politics” is so marginal—and so opaque—that one can safely ignore religion altogether and still successfully interpret the international system and the policies of states.

Sorting out the paradox of this book, therefore, requires a determination of why religion has been marginalized in the past, what factors have brought about its “resurgence” in fact and in theory, and how the relationship of religion and international affairs should be pursued in theory and practice.

The Past: Why the Absence?

The absence of serious attention to the role of religion in world politics has a remote cause and an immediate cause. Locating the remote cause requires retelling the modern history of the state system, a story that runs from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century. In his widely respected work, *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger charts the emergence of the modern era of international relations in terms of the collapse of universalist values and the rise of state-centric conceptions of national interest.³ Universalism had a clear religious component and realization in the role and teaching of the Catholic Church. This universalism had a secular counterpart in the aspirations of the Holy Roman Empire. The secular decline of both parties involved a process of evolution; it was not the product of a single event. Kissinger, along with many other analysts, identifies the principal historical divide as the rise of the Westphalian order of politics in the seventeenth century.

The transition across the divide from medieval universalism to modern states involved three major changes stretching from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. The first was the gradual emergence and spread of state sovereignty, the consolidation of state power within a defined territory in a style distinctly different from the medieval pluralist structure of overlapping powers and conflicting loyalties. The second was the decisive event of the Protestant Reformation. While sovereignty challenged political universalism, the Reformation challenged religious universalism, thus weakening the Catholic Church as a transnational political actor and strengthening emerging nation-states. Due to the Reformation, a unified church under a single papal authority gave way in many parts of northern Europe to divided, territorialized churches under a multitude of princely authorities. The third factor was the substantial erosion of a unified conception of moral norms to direct and restrain politics and war.⁴ Each of these transitions was a complex process, better recognized in retrospect than in the midst of their evolution.

The Westphalian order, symbolically tied to the Treaty of Westphalia (but not exhausted by it) had a double meaning. The treaty itself ended the Thirty Years’ War, in which confessional divisions played a crucial role, and in a wider sense attempted to contain the political-military consequences of the religious divide in Europe. Beyond these immediate purposes, however, the Westphalian order had a broader and more lasting impact on the modern era of statecraft. It produced a conception of international order that was sovereign and secular in character, committed to a conception of state interests as the best guide to understanding international relations. This

whole narrative of the transition from medieval universalism to modern sovereignty has a distinctively Western character that should be explicitly acknowledged. But its Western roots did not prevent the Westphalian order from extending its ideas and influence across the expanding area of international relations over the next three centuries. The expansion of Westphalia—to some degree, a universalism of a different kind—has been embodied in the United Nations, an institution that exemplifies the sovereign and secular elements of the new order.

One of these elements of the new international order—the emphasis on states as autonomous and sovereign political entities—has attracted the lion's share of attention. The sovereignty theme of the Westphalian-UN order has been the subject of endless analysis and commentary. This critical attention has been merited insofar as a state-centric view of world politics provided a powerful (if not fully comprehensive) understanding of the world through the first half of the twentieth century.

While sovereignty was the subject of extensive attention and analysis, the secular character of the modern era was taken for granted in the study and practice of world politics. Certainly, in much of the twentieth century, there were no more than a few glancing references to the transition to a secular conception of politics. That world politics is and ought to be secular was presumably a truth so clear it needed neither explanation nor commentary. Secularity, the assertion of a political order (within states and among them) that stood beyond the range of religious authority, control, or even influence, was a purposeful result of Westphalia, but its status seemed so certain that it has not been an object of inquiry or analysis. In a sense, Dr. Kissinger is an exemplary representative of this view. He acknowledges a past when religion was an essential element of politics, but the recognition is retrospective, a historical note about a world that has been surmounted by secularity. In this view, discussion of a return of religion to a significant role in world politics is likely to be seen as a regression, more of a threat to order than a contribution to it—which may be why *religion* doesn't even make it into the index of Kissinger's 900-page *Diplomacy*.⁵ The threat arises from the potential impact religious conviction can have on politics. The word *potential* is critical in the previous sentence; there are examples—past and present—of religion enhancing political relationships and contributing to justice and peace. But the more powerful lasting memory for most analysts of world politics, as well as statesmen, seems to be the way religion can deepen and intensify political competition and military conflict. Holy war always sounds more ominous than simply war. Echoing this prevailing sentiment, President Barack Obama pithily observed in his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 2009, that “no holy war can ever be a just war.”

In brief, at the level of schools and theories of international relations, the proposal to create greater space for religious ideas, convictions, and institutions has been considered more a threat than a promise. The unfortunate legacy of this diffidence about religion is impoverished theorizing about world politics. As Professor Robert Keohane, one of America's preeminent scholars of international relations, observed: “The attacks of September 11 reveal that all mainstream theories of

world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fuelled by religious fervor.”⁶

If anything, the diplomats and statesmen who practice world politics are even more nervous about religion than the international relations scholars who study it. The past—including the very recent past—manifests a spectrum from skepticism to opposition when the theme of religion arises in foreign ministries, among professional diplomats, and in the halls of international institutions. This is the immediate cause of the absence of religion. Thomas Farr, a career U.S. Foreign Service officer and contributor to this book, recounts his experience within the State Department bureaucracy.⁷ At one level, he observed a presumptive doubt that knowledge of religious dynamics could contribute useful insight to foreign policy analysis. Beyond intellectual doubt, there looms the assumption that including religious ideas or religious actors in U.S. foreign policy may lead to constitutional issues concerning the First Amendment. Finally, the religious pluralism of the world in which the United States must function shapes the cost-benefit calculus among professionals that far more cost—and controversy—is likely if one engages with religion. As former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said, “Diplomats trained in my era were taught not to invite trouble. And no subject seemed more inherently treacherous than religion.”⁸

The combination of doubts in the academy and skittishness among diplomats about the dangers of addressing religion in world politics has been reinforced—at least in the West—by one other assumption. The assumption is rooted in the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century. Their influence in the West has been virtually equal to the power of the Westphalian conception of politics, precisely in terms of the conviction that freedom of religion is a basic human right. The correlative idea has been that a democratic polity that guarantees religious freedom for all citizens should regard religion as a private reality, not a public influence on society. The correlative concept is not universally shared in democratic societies, and its meaning is often assumed but not articulated. Its influence on diplomacy and international relations, however, has been pervasive. It undergirds the idea that religion need not be addressed in understanding the public nature of world politics. This reinforces the notion, identified earlier, that religion can safely be treated as a black box—inscrutable and irrelevant—without detriment to policy analysis. The legacy of Westphalia and the democratic era go some distance in explaining the absence of religion in international relations for much of the last four centuries. But the picture is now changing. That changing picture is our next topic.

The Present: Describing the Return

If change is occurring, what accounts for it? The change is clearer in the study of world politics than in the policy arena. But both show signs of a necessity and/or a willingness to rethink the relationship of religion and international relations.

The primary catalyst for change was concrete events; events preceded ideas. In the study of international relations, scholars and analysts were confronted with facts that cried out for explanation. The events began in the 1970s and continued throughout the last century. In Latin America, beginning in Brazil, then Chile, and on to Central America in the 1980s, religious leaders and communities confronted the power of authoritarian regimes (usually military) in the name of protecting human rights and in support of the struggle of peasants and workers for social justice. In these cases, it was not surprising that the dominant religious voice was the Catholic Church. In the 1980s in South Africa, it was the South African Council of Churches, led by Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, that was in the forefront of the antiapartheid movement. In the Philippines and South Korea, local religious leaders and their communities clashed with authoritarian regimes allied with the United States. In all of these cases, the religious community in the United States provided a complementary voice within the U.S. political process through public campaigns, congressional testimony, and other forms of support to coreligionists abroad. In the late eighties, the focus of attention shifted to the very center of the Cold War competition, as Lutherans in Berlin and a Polish pope allied with Solidarity helped erode the power of the communist states in Central and Eastern Europe. In none of these instances was the role of religion the sole cause of change; each case was unique, and in all cases religious communities worked with other groups and nongovernmental organizations to oppose state power and/or work for basic changes in society.

The relevant point for this book is that religious convictions, institutions, and ideas demonstrated a growing ability to play a significant role in highly complex and often dangerous political situations. That ability in turn attracted the attention of governments, scholars, and other key players in international relations seeking to determine the kind and degree of influence religion actually was exercising in these conflicted cases.

The broad theme of religion and world politics attracted new visibility with the publication of Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs*;⁹ Huntington's reputation for making numerous and decisive contributions to the field of international relations and American foreign policy immediately drew attention to his argument "that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural."¹⁰ Huntington then went on to specify his view of civilization: "Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion."¹¹ The argument he made was characteristically about large ideas and a capacious theme; it left much room for commendation and critique, and plenty of both followed. In terms of this book, the most important fact about the article was its existence. For forty years, Sam Huntington had been a major voice in the academy and the policy world; to have him address religion and world politics signified to many a legitimization of the theme.

It is to stress the obvious to say that the events of 9/11, with their transnational destructive consequences, their explicit religious references, and their threat to combine religion and war in new ways did nothing but intensify the drive to understand factors that, as Keohane asserted, had been ignored or undervalued in mainline political analysis. The research and debate about 9/11 moved in different directions: some sought to establish a barrier between religion and politics; others sought deeper analysis of how religious traditions interpret the world, who speaks for the authentic tradition, and how traditions can be manipulated or distorted from within and without.

In retrospect, looking back on world politics as it took shape in the last half of the twentieth century, it is possible to identify substantial forces that emerged and created open space for the religious voice to be heard in new ways. The rise and recognition of transnationality, a reality that found expression in the work of Bob Keohane and Joe Nye in the 1970s and was carried forward on multiple fronts drew from scholars analogies between religious communities and other transnational actors as they interacted with states and international institutions. Transnationality as a theme pointed to transnational actors and transnational problems (food, population, environment, economics), both of which were reshaping the international agenda. A broader theme than transnationality was the growing fabric of interdependence, not a new reality in world politics, but one that moved rapidly toward ever greater integration of nations and states. The conceptual and factual journey from interdependence to globalization offered topics that drew religious voices and analysis closer to mainline analysis of international relations. This linkage was expanded and intensified as normative themes captured the attention of governments and scholars: the ethics of war was revisited in light of nuclear weapons and then terrorism; the role of human rights in an interdependent globe engaged both religious ethics and religious institutions; questions of international economic justice, including the visible campaign about Third World debt, drew on religious resources for intellectual and organizational support.

These secular changes in world politics, grounded independently from religion, converged with aspects of religious analysis and activity. This book, in terms of its authors and its themes, testifies to the change that has occurred on the religion–world politics frontier. There is a body of solid scholarship arising from students of international relations and comparative government on one hand and theologians and social scientists interested in religion on the other. Professor Eva Bellin has provided an illuminating review of this literature in *World Politics*. She assesses the past in terms similar to this chapter and then pushes on to a literature review probing distinct areas in political science, where she charts an impressive array of basic works on which broader theoretical contributions to religion and politics, particularly world politics, can be made. Bellin acknowledges that her review article builds on other solid surveys in the field of religion and politics, and she usefully reminds all that this is a journey with many miles to go.

She focuses on international relations theory and comparative politics. Although this introduction has a much more limited scope than Bellin's essay, its purpose is similar. It is to point toward the connections being made in this text with mainstream conceptions of world politics. Making these connections is still a major challenge, but two recent examples of a similar nature do exist and provide resources for reflection.

The first is the post–World War II narrative concerning ethics and international relations (IR). All too often, the study of religion and the study of ethics are conflated. While it is clear that religious traditions are a source for ethics, practically and theoretically, they are distinct sources of normative wisdom. Hence the relationship of ethics and international relations has its own story. The modern version begins with the triumph of realist theory in IR in the 1940s and 1950s; the perspective coincided with the main lines of the Westphalian order: realism had a well-known skepticism about ethical reflection. Although prominent realists, like Morgenthau, Kennan, and Niebuhr, did grapple with the questions, realist skepticism was rooted in three concerns: complexity, consequences, and crusades. Realism is famous for parsimonious explanations of the world; in line with this preference, realists typically concluded that foreign policy problems were sufficiently complex in themselves (i.e., in their secular, empirical characteristics) that expanding these questions to include their ethical dimensions would only increase the likelihood of mistaken analysis and faulty decisions. The early Morgenthau famously argued that a precise, enlightened view of national interest would simultaneously coincide with the best ethical answers to a policy problem. Beyond complexity, realists feared the multiplication of unintended consequences if ethical reflection played a major role in policy; students of history as they were, realists could cite multiple cases where good moral intentions had produced bad moral consequences. The argument, of course, is joined with the concerns about complexity. Finding one's way through both the fact of complexity and the possibility of unintended consequences diminished the realist's interest in addressing the ethics of policy. More precisely, those realists who were interested in this move always stressed how difficult the task would be. The final realist hesitation was crusades; here the argument was that a concern for the morally right course of action can easily decline into a simplistic conception of good and bad and right and wrong in the world, which in turn can produce a sense that pursuing the good and the right is so clearly one's obligation that restraint on means is overridden and ends are pursued without a sense of limits and prudence.

There were responses to all these questions and concerns, but the immediate postwar triumph of realism overwhelmed arguments that ethics could be systematically addressed in policy analysis while taking into account the realist's cautions. The three most visible postwar realists—Morgenthau, Kennan, and Niebuhr—later gave increasing scope to moral arguments in the policy process. Their evolution reflected the broader movement over the next forty years to incorporate systematic, sophisticated moral arguments in the field of international relations. It is possible to trace the evolution in terms of specific issues and broader thematic developments.

Here again, issues led the way, beginning with the postwar debates about the ethics of war. A leading voice in this area, John Courtney Murray, S.J., lamented in 1960 the absence of serious moral debate during World War II, when obliteration bombing directly contradicted core principles of the traditional ethics of war. But the next thirty years saw a revival of the ancient ethic and its development—in method and content—to address nuclear weapons, counterinsurgency warfare, and humanitarian intervention. The theologians led the way—Murray, joined by Paul Ramsey and Niebuhr—but the broader development involved historians and philosophers (Michael Walzer and James Johnson) and, particularly important for our purposes, international relations scholars like Stanley Hoffmann, Joseph Nye, and Bruce Russett.¹²

By the 1970s, these developments in the area of human rights required explicit and systematic ethical reflection on the nature of rights, their role in the UN system, their inclusion in foreign policy making, and their standing in debates about sovereignty and intervention. From the 1970s onward, a virtual cottage industry developed that simply assumed that normative considerations about human rights must be part of the policy equation and part of international regimes. The assumption itself constituted a major shift from the realist arguments of the 1950s and drew strong critique from George Kennan, whether the human rights debate was about the Soviet Union or South Africa. But the pattern set by policy debates about war was repeated on human rights. Not only the moralists and the theologians but also IR scholars, foreign policy analysts, and diplomatic debates were filled with human rights arguments.

Finally, a third stage in the ethics and international relations narrative has been the normative questions raised as the international system moved from early analysis about interdependence through the increasingly dense arguments about globalization. Classical questions about distributive justice, the role of markets, and the responsibilities of states for basic human rights and the satisfaction of human needs have been played out at the macrolevel of systemic relations. The issues of trade, debt, and foreign aid are regularly cast in normative terms.

Each of these cases—war, human rights, social justice—could be developed in detail, but the broader point relevant to this book is that the subfield of ethics and international relations today has substantial standing in terms of how world politics is studied in the academy, debated in international forums, and decided in policy bureaucracies. Examples abound: the recent *Oxford Handbook of International Relations* pairs each chapter describing schools of international theory with a chapter on the ethical vision embedded in each theory;¹³ the UN Millennium Summit had pervasive normative themes in its debates and its declarations; U.S. policy engaging the use of force from Kosovo to Iraq to Afghanistan is simultaneously debated in strategic and normative terms. It may be an overstatement to describe the journey of ethics and IR over the last fifty years as one of movement from isolation to integration, but an approximation of this description is sustainable.