Religion and International Relations Theory

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Since September 11, 2001, religion has become a central topic in discussions about international politics. Once Islamic terrorism put religion in the international spotlight, this realm suddenly seemed to teem with lively issues: the foreign policy predilections of the Christian Right towards Israel and Southern Sudan, the complications of faith-based Western activism abroad, the Dalai Lama and the Falun Gong as potential destabilizers of officially atheist but increasingly neo-Confucian China, and the Myanmar military regime's fear of a potential alliance of Burmese monks and international refugee organizations. Perhaps religious international politics had been there all along, but it suddenly became harder to ignore.

And yet the main canonical works of international relations theory, which continue to shape much empirical academic work, hardly mention religion. A handful of new works, most of them by the contributors to this volume, have begun to show how international relations scholarship can be turned to face this new issue, but most commentary about religion and international affairs remains in the realm of current events talk, area studies, or comparative domestic politics.[1]

One reason for this neglect is that mainstream international relations scholars find it difficult to integrate religious subject matter into their normal conceptual frameworks. The foundational statements of the three leading paradigms—by Kenneth Waltz for realism, Michael Doyle and Robert Keohane for liberalism, and Alexander Wendt for constructivism—offer no explicit guidance on how to do this, and in some cases imply that a role for religion may not be allowable within the logics of their paradigms.

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[1] Eva Bellin, "Faith in Politics: New Trends in the Study of Religion and Politics," *World Politics* 60:2 (January 2008), 315-347; Kenneth D. Wald and Clyde Wilcox, "Getting Religion: Has Political Science Rediscovered the Faith Factor?" *American Political Science Review* 100:4 (November 2006), 523-529.

Realists ask "how many divisions has the Pope?" Liberals tend to accept the secular modernist presumption that religion is an atavism to be superseded. Constructivism, with its central role for identity, norms, and culture, has provided more natural intellectual terrain on which to integrate religion into international relations theory, and yet the index of Wendt's field-defining book does not have a single entry for religion.[2]

How then should international relations scholars conceptualize the role of religion in their work? Four approaches merit particular consideration. The first is to work within the traditional paradigms, exploring the ways in which religion has sometimes decisively shaped the states system, defined its constitutive units, and animated their interests and outlooks. I elaborate on this approach below.

A second approach, most nearly represented by Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, holds that religion has become so central that it should supplant existing paradigms and become the main prism for thinking about international politics. None of the contributors to this volume takes this view.[3]

However, they do argue that the role of religion in international politics has never been small and has been rising in recent decades as a form of populist politics in the developing world following the discrediting of secular political ideologies. Several contributors, especially Elizabeth Hurd, also argue that even secularism can usefully be conceived not as the opposite of religion but as a comparable type of worldview that draws on and competes with religious views.[4] Seen in this light, the subject of religion is sufficiently pervasive and distinctive that it requires adjusting our basic conceptual lenses to view international relations properly, while not abandoning insights from the traditional paradigms. An example of this third approach is Daniel Nexon's call for a "relational-institutional" theory that draws on both realism and constructivism in thinking

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[2] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[3] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (Summer 1993), 22-49.Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 1-2, 9-33, 166-172, discuss the resistance of traditional international relations paradigms to religion, arguing that religion should be taken into account, while admitting that "religion is not the main driving force behind international relations" (p. 7).

[4] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

about the competitive interplay of discursive frames and transnational networks in an anarchical setting.[5]

Finally, a fourth approach sidesteps paradigmatic commitments to look at more focused hypotheses in which religion is a causal variable. For example, Monica Toft's chapter in this volume examines how the characteristics of different religions affect the likelihood of war.

Whichever of these approaches is adopted, international relations specialists working on religion would do well to pay attention to the potential contributions of scholarship on comparative political development. Several of the contributors to this volume argue that the prime cause of the global resurgence of religion in politics is rising demand for mass political participation. In the face of a perceived failure of the secular state to address popular needs, especially in the developing world, religion has become a banner for movements demanding more responsive government, whose effects have dramatically spilled over into international politics.

I will begin with a discussion of what is distinctive about religious subject matter in international relations and the implications of this for the kinds of theories and methods that are needed to study it. Then I will discuss the role that the paradigms, both traditional and innovative, might play in studying religion in international politics. Emily Bech and I will revisit the theme of rising demand for mass political participation in the concluding chapter.

Religion and politics: implications for concepts and methods

Religion is one of the basic forces of the social universe, not just an "omitted variable." Religions have special potential for engendering system-wide change because they transcend unit boundaries, have implications for the full range of society's institutions and ideas, and compellingly motivate individuals who are in their thrall. It is not an accident that the origin of the sovereign states system was catalyzed by a religious

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[5] Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*: *Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), and his chapter below.

upheaval, the Protestant Reformation. This raises the possibility that comparable new upheavals could once again produce far-reaching changes in the international system.[6]

Religion has distinctive features that fit uncomfortably within the concepts that are conventionally deployed to study international politics. Monica Toft's chapter usefully defines religion as a system of practices and beliefs that includes most of the following elements: belief in a supernatural being, prayers, transcendent realities such as heaven or enlightenment, a distinction between the sacred and the profane, a view of the world and humanity's relation to it, a code of conduct, and "a temporal community bound by its adherence to these elements."[7] Daniel Philpott and Timothy Shah point out that religion is older than the state, and its aims encompass not just politics but all of life. Religious actors in politics may sometimes support the state, sometimes work for their own ends through the state, but sometimes radically challenge states and the state system. Religion is often transnational, they note, but its ambit is far broader than that of single-issue transnational activist networks.[8] Like nationalism, Toft says, religion is an imagined community that rationalizes self-sacrifice across space and time, but unlike nationalism, religion holds out the prospect of individual salvation and is less tied to territory. Religious norms set standards of appropriate behavior, as do norms that originate from non-religious sources, but as Toft's chapter on war shows, norms with divine authority may produce different kinds of commitment. For these reasons, a conventional theoretical tool kit that is limited to the mundane politics of states and nations may struggle to comprehend the role of religion in international relations.

Though broader than politics, let alone international politics, religion has implications for virtually every basic concept in those fields. Religion may affect, for example, who the actors in world politics are, what they want, what resources they bring to the tasks of mobilizing support and making allies, and what rules they follow. Religion may shore up the state-centered international order as it is conventionally understood and help to explain it, but it may also work at cross-purposes to that order. Religion helped to forge the system of sovereign states, yet cuts across it. Religion can

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[6] John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity," *World Politics* 34:2 (January 1983), 261-285; Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics* 55:1 (October 2002), 66-95.

[7] Toft, this volume.

[8] Philpott and Shah, this volume.

help to legitimate state authority, yet may also undermine it. Religion may help to delimit the territorial boundaries of a state, yet also creates loyalties and networks that cross boundaries. Religion may reinforce ethnonational identity, bridge the gap between national identities, or divide a nation. Religion may facilitate otherwise improbable coalitions or wreck otherwise obvious ones. Religion may affect politics by shaping its organizational and network structures and by affecting its values and motives.

Some of these diverse and pervasive effects of religion might be grasped within conventional frameworks for studying international politics, but the contributors to this volume warn that a too literal application of routine methods can yield cartoonish, distorted interpretations. Religion straddles our usual methodological divides. It plays a role in constituting actors and systems of action, and it also constrains or enables actors' behavior. Religious actors can be strategic and calculating, and at the same time influenced in politics by their conception of the divine and the sacred. Conventional power calculations and religious purpose may simultaneously play a role in judgments about alliance and enmity.[9]   Whichever approach a scholar chooses to conceptualize religion's place in international politics, it needs to be fully sensitive to these distinctive characteristics.

Religion and paradigms of international relations

Religion has unquestionably been among the most fundamental phenomena structuring human relations throughout history, so it is reasonable to ask whether religion itself might serve as a point of departure for a new paradigm of international relations. The category of religion, especially if it is defined to encompass the varieties of secularism (as some authors do in this volume), is more broadly applicable across time and space than liberalism. At the same time, it has more empirical content than the primarily ontological category of constructivism. Both points speak in favor of religion's utility as a substantively interesting, wide-angle prism for theorizing about international relations. Despite this, religion per se cannot succeed as the core of such a paradigm.

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[9] See especially Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, and below.

The closest attempt to enthrone religion as the central category for understanding international relations is Samuel Huntington's thesis of a clash of civilizations.[10] Huntington defines the fault lines of civilizations substantially in religious terms and argues that these boundaries will mark the main lines of contention in international relations in the coming era. Arguably, that's a paradigm, and no more time-bound than liberalism.

The problem, though, is empirical. Huntington himself admits that lines of conflict and cleavage are typically more intense between political and cultural groups within civilizations (states and nations) than they are between civilizations. States, which are organizations that seek to monopolize violence and make public rules within a specific territory, have for some centuries shown themselves to be the indispensable units for organizing security and public administration. Recently, scholars and public commentators have debated whether "globalization" and other transnational processes, including religious ones, are altering the dominant position of the state in the international system. The predominant view in this debate is that, while transnational actors and processes may now loom larger in states' calculations and in shaping the environment in which states act, states continue to "set the basic rules and define the environment within which transnationals must function," as Stephen Krasner has argued.[11] Most of our contributors proceed from this assumption.

Nations, whether based on ethnicity or on common historical and institutional experiences, are the cultural units that link people to states. Religions, in contrast, are cultural units that are typically mismatched with states because they are usually non-territorial, often too large in scale, normally lacking congruity with the boundaries of a state, and ideologically aimed at goals other than state sovereignty. Religion may matter a great deal for some processes and outcomes in world politics, but as long as nation-states are the main units of territorial security and administration, religions will exert an effect on world politics mainly through the preferences, power, perceptions, and policies

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[10] Fox and Sandler, 15. See also Hurd in this volume.

[11] Stephen D. Krasner, "Power Politics, Institutions, and Transnational Relations," in Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed., *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 257-279, at 279. See also Jeff Haynes, "Transnational religious actors and international politics," *Third World Quarterly* 22:2 (2001), 143-158, and Sidney Tarrow. *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

of states and state-seeking nations. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, like any paradigm of world politics that would be centered on religion, is unsatisfying empirically for that reason.

A more productive approach will be to explore the ways in which religion may constitute and influence the state in world politics. Religion has shaped the formation of the system of states, sometimes informs the cultural self-conception that makes a nation distinctive, influences what the nation-state wants, and generates subnational and transnational actors that occupy part of the landscape in which states operate. In these ways, religion shapes processes that are close to the hard core of existing paradigms of international relations that have the state as their basic unit.

Consequently, it will be worthwhile to consider how religion can be integrated into these existing paradigms without violating their essential assumptions. In developing scientific theories, there are moments when an effective strategy requires keeping the core assumptions of the theory few in number and homogeneous in kind in order to focus on deducing general conjectures about a small number of foundational questions. However, in applying the insights of the theory to a diverse range of empirically specific circumstances, it is necessary to relax this vigilance and introduce complementary elements so long as they meet three basic standards of progressive extension of a theoretical paradigm: namely, the added elements do not contradict the core assumptions and logic of the theory; the extensions are not loosely connected to the core but grow directly out of core questions; and new conceptual elements explain many new facts while adding only a little complexity to the theory. I want to explore whether religion meets those criteria as a complementary element in existing paradigms of international relations.

It may seem a procrustean exercise to force religion to fit into paradigms that have resolutely ignored or rejected a role for it. Upon closer inspection, however, each of the three reigning paradigms offers solid bedrock on which to build a framework for studying religion and international relations. The best point of departure is in accounts of the origins of the interstate system. The realist Stephen Krasner writes, for example, about the aftermath of Europe's wars of religion and the emergence of rules of state sovereignty regarding the regulation of religion. Constructivist John Ruggie writes about the central

role of the Catholic church and monasteries in the "heteronymous" international system of the late Middle Ages, a system that was in his view neither a monolithic hierarchy nor an anarchy of disconnected territorial units. Constructivist Daniel Philpott explains the role of the Protestant Reformation in the transformation of that order into the Westphalian sovereignty system. Even liberals could look to the Reformation period as a precursor to the politics of popular accountability in government: the rising political role of literate urban middle classes,[12] the "priesthood of all believers" as a precursor to the Enlightenment and human rights thinking,[13] and the wars of religion as precursors to the formation of national identities and the idea of popular national self-determination.[14]

As these examples show, adding religion to mainstream international relations theory should be neither a matter of merely adding an explanatory variable to the existing list nor of adding the niche topic of transnational religion as an additional outcome to be explained, but of asking how religion helps to constitute the core assumptions in each of the major disciplinary paradigms. What is at stake is nothing less than the way international relations scholars conceptualize continuity and change in the international system. I want to undertake this task here not because I think that international relations theory must necessarily be contained within the three conventional paradigms, or indeed any set paradigms. Instead, I do this because many scholars gain inspiration from the paradigms and use them to structure their research on questions large and small, including issues of war, peace, cooperation, economic integration and autarky, alliances, and governance that have been central to all the paradigms. For those scholars, I want to explore how a more explicit focus on religion can enrich their paradigmatic insights, starting with the particularly hard case of realism.

Religion and realist theory

Kenneth Waltz says that he leaves culture (and therefore religion) out of his structural theory of international politics not because it is substantively unimportant but because building a parsimonious theory requires focusing only on core assumptions about

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[12] Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[13] Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chapter 2.
[14] Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

the relationship of "structure" to "process".[15] However, even by this stringent criterion, a case can be made that realists should pay closer attention to religion's role in constituting the international system's structure and shaping action within it. To show this, I will begin with the checklist of central elements that Waltz says structures politics in any international system.

I start here because the parsimonious hard core of structural realism stands out most starkly in Waltz, whose writings therefore constitute the most difficult test for the integration of religion into the semi-core layer of realist theory directly adjacent to the hard core. Although such moves have sometimes been criticized as theoretically degenerative, they have been made by almost everyone who has tried to adapt structural realism for use as a theory of foreign policy in specific situations, including Robert Jervis (who added offensive and defensive military technology to the concept of the security dilemma in anarchy),[16] Stephen Walt (who added perception of threat to balance of power theory),[17] Randall Schweller (who allows for theoretically exogenous variations in state goals),[18] defensive realists (who bring in ideology and domestic politics to explain anomalies that diverge from sound realist strategy),[19] and neoclassical realists (who show how domestic political and ideological mobilization to face international challenges can divert foreign policy from the expectations of more parsimonious realist theory).[20] These elaborations on core realist theory are theoretically progressive insofar as they are parsimonious and shed light on realism's core causal mechanisms, such as the security dilemma in anarchy and the balance of power. Some of these contribute by explaining how the anarchical system gets structured, whereas others contribute by exploring the effect of actors' preferences and perceptions on their choice of strategies under anarchy.

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[15] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 82.

[16] Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 30:2 (January 1978), 167-214.

[17] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1987).

[18] Randall Schweller, "Neorealism's Status Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *Security Studies* 5:3 (Spring 1996), 90-121.

[19] Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[20] Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-195*8 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

By these standards, religion, too, can successfully contribute to elaborating realism's core insights.

Waltz defines a system's structure in terms of the principle by which its parts are ordered or organized, the functional differentiation of the units, and the distribution of power across the units. Religion matters for all three. For good measure, I add a discussion of religion and "the national interest," a quintessential realist lodestar.

THE ORDERING PRINCIPLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Waltz begins with the basic principle that orders the political system—how the units are arranged relative to each other. He offers two possibilities: hierarchy, a system of rule-governed authority relations between units, and anarchy, a system in which units seeking to survive lack any authority above them to set and enforce rules or guarantee agreements between them. Empirically he notes that politics within states is normally hierarchical, whereas politics between states is normally anarchical.

Realists typically hold that international politics has been anarchical since time immemorial. All the basics are already in Thucydides. Even in the Middle Ages, when lip service was paid to the Pope and wars were sometimes justified as crusades, realists typically argue that all the key players in the international system—whether principalities, city-states, knightly orders, or monasteries—behaved like self-help units using force opportunistically to survive and prosper in the absence of reliable rules enforced by a system-level sovereign.[21] While the size and internal organization of units has varied over time, states, empires, castellated manors, fortified abbeys, and ethnic groups in failed states all remain in the grip of the basic ordering principle of international anarchy.[22] In principle, realists admit that anarchy could give way to hierarchy—for example, if a single unit, such as the ancient state of Chin, should conquer the rest of the relevant actors in an interacting system[23]—but they find this empirically

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[21] Markus Fischer, "Feudal Europe, 800-1300: Communal Discourse and Conflictual Practices," *International Organization* 46:2 (spring 1992), 427-466; Rodney Hall and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Medieval Tales: Neorealist 'Science' and the Abuse of History," and Fischer, "On Context, Facts, and Norms," *International Organization* 47:3 (summer 1993), 479-500.
[22] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1981); Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict, *Survival* 35:1 (Spring 1993), 27-47.
[23]. Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

rare and logically unlikely because the basic ordering principle of anarchy tends to be self-perpetuating through the mechanism of unit self-help and the balance of power.

Realists tend to treat religions as hypocritical, marginal, or irrelevant to politics insofar as units of all kinds, whether secular or religious, must act the same way if they are to play an effective role in international politics. Such a dismissive view is unwarranted. Religion may play a decisive role in determining the ordering principle of the system in the first place, as well as significantly influencing the behavior of units in the system once it is constituted.

This should not be surprising for realists, given their emphasis on the state as the central unit of international politics. From a Weberian standpoint, states are organizations that monopolize legitimate violence within a territory, and religion is often the trump card in claims to social legitimacy. How those trumps are dealt out and reshuffled can profoundly shape the nature of the international system.

It is true that most of history has been ordered as anarchy, but not all of it. Hierarchically structured empires like Rome and ancient China have sometimes subordinated entire regions, interacting strategically only with isolated, peripheral barbarians incapable of coordinating a policy of balance of power.[24] Macrohistorical sociologists Michael Mann and Rodney Stark show how religions facilitated the collective action and legitimacy that such civilization-sized, multi-linguistic empires needed to survive and prosper.[25] The size and shape of the empire could depend heavily on which social networks were amenable to penetration by the empire's religious ideology. The rise of a new religion, such as Islam, could directly give rise to a new empire, and a schism within religion, such as the Protestant Reformation, could break down imperial hierarchy and return it to anarchy. Materialists may try to reduce these dynamics to some underlying military or economic determinant, but it is not clear that such historical reductionism is empirically convincing.[26]

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[24] Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
[25] Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chapters 9-10; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
[26] See discussions in Nexon, Philpott, and Spruyt.

Moreover, not all anarchies are systems of sovereign states. John Ruggie identifies a distinct pattern of international order, which he follows the historian Friedrich Meinecke in calling heteronymy, a system of multiple relationships of normative obligation that cut across territorial boundaries. In this system, hierarchical ties of religious and feudal obligation to persons and organizations co-existed with simultaneous obligations to a territorial authority in anarchy. Wars occur, and the goals of security and domination motivate action, but who is on what side, and what they are fighting for, cannot be fully understood without appreciating the intricate web of religious and social obligations.

Religion helps to order the system. Moreover, change in religion can disorder and reorder the international system. The Reformation touched off civil wars within the Habsburg Empire and within other territorial jurisdictions, which spread through transnational networks linking like-minded actors with common strategic concerns in different territorial entities.[27] Territorial leaders prospered when they could harness popular religious enthusiasms to their purposes, and conversely religious groups survived only if they received backing from a territorial unit. This dovetailing of strategic and religious logic, combined with the military and ideological stalemate between Catholicism and Protestantism, led to the Westphalian sovereignty system. In this sense, the anarchical European states system enshrined in realist balance of power theory was constituted in part through the dynamic of religious schism.

Religion not only plays a central role in constituting the basic ordering principle of the system, but it can also shape specific behavioral choices and patterns within an ordered system. This is most obvious in a system like Ruggie's heteronymy, where lines of transnational religious authority directly shape the allegiances and goals of armed actors, but religion can also shape behavior in pure anarchies. For example, offensive and defensive realists disagree at the margins about the relative merits of more and less aggressive tactics under strategic uncertainty. Consequently, it seems highly possible— and completely compatible with realism—that different religious cultures might develop different strategic cultures that shape choices within this band of ambiguity. Indeed,

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[27] Nexon in this volume.

Monica Toft shows that Islamic strategic culture, when confronting contemporary processes such as popular self-determination, is measurably more bellicist than average.[28]

On the other hand, religious affinity need not always trump realist strategic calculation when they are in direct conflict. Shi'a militias sometimes help each other against Sunnis and Americans, but sometimes work with Sunnis or Americans against rival co-sectarians. Sometimes birds of a feather flock together, but when co-sectarians are the most urgent threat, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, no matter what his religion. This realist dynamic should not be confused, however, with the tendency for fraternal competitors to "fly apart" in ideological movements that can inherently have only one authority, such as the Soviet Union and China under Communism and the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath socialists.[29] These communities of belief and legitimacy fight because they share a common culture, not because culture is hypocrisy.

DIFFERENTIATION OF UNITS

Waltz uses the concept of differentiation in a limited way, focusing only on the question of whether the units in the system have specialized functions. In hierarchies, the units do participate in a functionally differentiated division of labor; in anarchies, they do not, because a substantial degree of self-sufficiency of the territorial state improves its chance of survival. Functional differentiation means interdependence and therefore vulnerability, which states in anarchy seek to minimize.

Ruggie's critique of Waltz pushes toward a deeper conception of differentiation, based on Durkheim's distinction between primitive, functionally identical units, differentiated only by territory, and more advanced, functionally differentiated units participating in an interdependent division of labor within a larger territory. This echoes the distinction in modernization theory between undifferentiated Gemeinschaft (or traditional society) and differentiated Gesellschaft (or modern market society). Following Durkheim, Ruggie says that the increasing "dynamic density" of growing population and economic activity in late medieval society broke down political and

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[28] Toft in this volume.
[29] Richard Lowenthal, *World Communism: The Disintegration of a Secular Faith* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1964).

economic barriers between small, undifferentiated local units and led to the creation of modern states with an interdependent division of labor on a larger territorial scale.[30]

Before modernization, political authority was not as sharply differentiated from religious authority. Kings ruled by divine right and wielded religious authority over their subjects, and Popes and abbots did have their own military "divisions". After modernization, secular political authority became more differentiated from religious authority organizationally and conceptually. Legitimacy of rule emanated from the self-determining people or nation, or at any rate from the claim to rule on their behalf. The state often stripped religious organizations of their temporal powers. In some countries such as France and Turkey, differentiation took the form of laïcism—opposition between state and church. In others such as the United States, differentiation took the form of the appropriation of a least-common-denominator generic religiosity by the state and even-handed toleration of religions, which were pushed into the private sphere.[31]

This secular differentiation of politics from religion has had profound consequences for international politics. As Anthony Marx has argued, the wars of religion following the Protestant Reformation were simply a transitional stage on the way to the wars of secular nationalism that began with the French Revolution and continue down to the present.[32] Gellner remarked that for Durkheim society worshipped itself covertly through its religion, whereas under secular nationalism society dropped all pretense of the sacred and began to worship itself "brazenly and openly."[33] Most realists accept that nationalism is a supercharger of international competition, though they see it as heightened in states that occupy a particularly vulnerable position in the international system.[34] The new scholarship of secularism, including secular nationalism, emphasizes that secularism is defined through its stance toward religion and is best understood as a type of belief system falling in the same category as religion.[35]

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[30] Also relevant is the very Durkheimian book of Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), with its central distinction between Agraria and Industria.

[31] Hurd in this volume.

[32] Marx, *Fate of Nations*.

[33] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 56.

[34] John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15:1 (summer 1990), 21, 25.

[35] Hurd.

More specifically, secular nationalism is also important to contemporary international politics because of the backlash against it in many developing societies, whether Islamic or Hindu, which see secular nationalism as a European import that failed to create a working state and instead brought a corrupt, alien form of rule. In its place, religious nationalists, sometimes mislabeled religious fundamentalists, are seeking to replace it with a more authentic, more effective state building ideology. This contributes to the zeitgeist of a clash of civilizations that has so marked international politics over the past decade or more.[36]

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Waltz's third defining element of an international system is the distribution of power across its units, in particular the number of great powers. Waltz's view of power tends to be quite materialist, but there is no reason that it has to be. Any sociologically sophisticated theory of social power has to recognize that power, including material power, rests on some combination of coercion, legitimate authority, persuasion, and mobilization of support. Religion might be central to generating power by almost any of these means. Most obviously, religious enthusiasm has been an effective motivator of military rebellion in times and places as diverse as the phenomenally deadly millenarian Christian Tai-ping Rebellion in nineteenth-century China, Europe's devastating wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, as well as Islamic jihadi fighting today.

Religious actors might deploy their own distinctive instruments of power to try to accomplish the same objectives that secular actors might seek through different means. Democratic regime change, for example, has been a goal sought in different settings over the past two decades by means of military intervention, economic sanctions, secular persuasion, and liberation theology. According to Samuel Huntington's list of causes of the "third wave" of democratization in the 1980s, transnational religious trends, especially in the Catholic Church, were among the most central and efficacious.[37]

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[36] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[37] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

Religion may delimit the scope of an actor's power or influence which tools can be deployed in which social settings. NGO campaigns against female genital cutting, for example, have found that the same techniques that work in Christian communities get nowhere in otherwise similar Muslim communities unless the local imam agrees to tell his followers that cutting is not required by the Koran. Likewise, military occupation may produce worse outcomes in alien religious communities.[38] Furthermore, power may be used less discriminately across religious lines. Suicide terrorists seem more willing to use deadly force against civilian targets of a different religion, for example, because they are more likely to see the victims as less than fully human.[39] However, Alexander Downes's study concludes that targeting of civilians is not more likely across civilizational divides, which he codes largely by religion.[40]

INTERESTS

Unit interests are not explicitly listed as a system-defining element in Waltz's theory, in part because the overriding interest in survival through self-help is seen as a direct implication of anarchy as the system's ordering principle. However, Waltz acknowledges that states can and do seek a range of goals from mere survival to system-wide domination.

Waltz does not attempt to subsume variation in goals under his structural theory, leaving open the possibility that interests might vary with unit characteristics such as religion. However, variation in interests is a more central problem for Waltz's structural theory than he admits. A state's drive for hegemony is the mainspring that animates the balance of power dynamic at the heart of Waltz's theory, and religion could be one possible motivation for such expansion. In this sense, religion could be one of the stimuli that sets his systemic processes in motion.

Other realists, most notably offensive realist John Mearsheimer, try to explain this variation in goals based on the state's position in the international system. For example, does the state have a chance to solve its security problems by becoming a regional

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[38] Michael Hechter, "Alien Rule and Its Discontents," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal, 2006.
[39] Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2006).
[40] Alexander B. Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

hegemon? But if regional homogeneity of religion affects the feasibility of achieving such hegemony, because people may not balance as hard against culturally similar conquerors whose rule they might be willing to accept, then religion would be a strategically significant structural property of the system.

Moreover, survival-seeking behavior in the international system will depend on the actors' theories of what it takes to survive. Religion (or secularism) can affect this in diverse and significant ways: which allies can be trusted; is international rivalry a Manichaean identity struggle or a limited Lockean competition; what kinds of actors should be acknowledged as having the standing to participate in international relations? Waltz says that the population of states adapts to the systemic requirements for survival through a combination of natural selection and socialization to the system by experiencing rewards and punishments for behavior. However, he admits that selection is the less common mechanism, since states rarely die. Insofar as socialization is the more prevalent, though more ambiguous mechanism of adaptation, this leaves considerable latitude for interpretation of rewards and punishments through the prism of culture, including religion. Some of Toft's arguments about the greater war-proneness of Islamic societies may operate through this mechanism.

Finally, Waltz writes as if the national interest of a state in survival in its existing form can be taken for granted. But empirically, we know that the nation-state is not an unproblematic billiard ball. The interest of the state as a territorial administrative unit is often in a vexed relationship with the interest of the nation as a cultural (sometimes religious-cultural) unit. As Ernest Gellner has discussed, when administrative boundaries are mismatched with ethnic or religious boundaries that define political identities, all hell breaks loose—viz., the Thirty Years War, pan-Arabism between 1947 and 1973, and political Islam more recently.[41]

In sum, religion has played a central role in processes that lie at the core of the realist conception of international politics: the ordering of system itself, the nature of its units, their power and interests, and the strategies through which they seek to achieve those interests.

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[41] Benjamin Miller, *States, Nations, and the Great Powers: The Sources of Regional War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Religion and constructivist theory

Constructivist international relations theory would seem to provide friendly terrain for the role of religion in international politics, because of its emphasis on ideas, norms, identity, and culture. Although no single work captures constructivism's full intellectual diversity, Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* comes closest to being its canonical text. Neither the term religion nor any specific religions appear in the book's index. This is not accidental. While Wendt notes that the domestic-level cultures that units bring to the international situation matter for the development of international-level culture, his main interest lies in the way that units create international-level "cultures of anarchy" through their interactions. His prominent version of constructivist theory is therefore not the most religion-friendly statement of this approach. Even so, his widely-used categories do seem to offer a role to religion in thinking about international culture.

Wendt distinguishes three cultures of anarchy: the Hobbesian war of all against all; Lockean self-interested competition restrained by the recognition of sovereign units' right to exist; and Kantian friendship expressed as the expectation of mutual non-violence. It is easy to imagine how different expressions of religion could have an elective affinity with these different cultures of anarchy (setting aside the question of causal direction): Hobbesian enmity coinciding with Manichaean religion; Lockean restrained competition coinciding with religion-based rules of restraint in warfare; and Kantian friendship based in religious (or secular) tenets of common identity or altruism. This kind of hypothesis might not hold up under serious empirical scrutiny, but at least superficially it seems loosely consistent with Toft's findings about the Hobbesian war-proneness of transitional Islamic societies, the historical link between the Catholic just war tradition and the development of Lockean international laws of war, and the role of religious Dissenters in the development of Kantian international ethics. Another hypothesis might be that Hobbesian cultures of anarchy spread during the early mobilization phase of a proselytizing religion (early Islam or the Protestant Reformation), Lockean cultures emerge in the wake of their routinization, and Kantian ones are associated with the differentiation of state power and religious authority.

Within each of the three cultures, Wendt discusses three successively deeper degrees of the internalization of culture based in turn on force, price, and legitimacy. Each of these might have its expression in terms of religion (again setting aside of the question of which is cause and which is effect). Thus, a shallow internalization of a culture of anarchy based on the recognition of force would fit with an Augustinian-style religious doctrine of the "two kingdoms" of the sacred and of the mundane. A somewhat more internalized culture of anarchy based on the costs and benefits of self-restraint would fit with the acceptance of rules based on religion (or on secular philosophy) that regulate in-group/out-group comity, hospitality, and conflict. Both Islam and secular international law have such rules. A more deeply internalized culture of anarchy legitimated by the sacred would fit with religions or secular philosophies that merge morality, identity, and cosmology with war, peace, or global human rights. Examples of the latter could include Hobbesian warrior cults or Kantian Mennonite pacifist humanitarians.

Wendt's final theoretical move is to posit four "master variables" that may change the culture of anarchy by undermining egoistic identities and promoting collective ones: namely, interdependence, common fate, homogeneity, and self-restraint. Religion might be relevant to all four. Cultural interdependence might be enhanced by networks of theological diffusion, persuasion, and emulation. An example would be the role of networks of transnational diffusion in creating Protestant collective identities that led to the Lockean Westphalian culture of anarchy. A sense of common fate might arise from being attacked by a powerful religion-based aggressor. Homogeneity may be enhanced by the emergence of a common religious identity. Finally, self-restraint could be enhanced by religious rules of behavior toward in-group members or toward all humans. In contrast, self-restraint might be lessened in periods of mass religious mobilization, such as the Protestant Reformation or the recent surge in political Islamism. These of course are all empirical conjectures, which might be wrong. Buddhist philosophy emphasizes generalized self-restraint, for example, but Theraveda Buddhist-dominated societies such as Sri Lanka and Thailand have behaved coercively toward religious minorities.

In short, a prism that focuses on religion might add a great deal to constructivist theorizing about international relations despite the lack of an explicit discussion of anything religious in that approach's most prominent theoretical text. If Wendt's state-centric approach has room for religion, other constructivist approaches that focus on transnational processes or domestic sources of foreign policy can accommodate religion even more easily by tracing the impact of religious norms, identities, and principled networks. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink note the role of missionaries as the "norms entrepreneurs" of the nineteenth century, for example, in the anti-footbinding campaign in China.[42] (In our own volume, Michael Barnett examines the religious ideas that underpin contemporary secular humanitarianism.) Martha Finnemore and Gary Bass are debating the extent to which the impulse for humanitarian intervention was limited to sympathy for co-religionists in the nineteenth century, and consequently whether today's more universalistic humanitarian discourse constitutes a fundamental change in norms.[43] Neta Crawford notes the role of religious arguments in changing norms regarding colonialism and slavery.[44] Iain Johnston and David Kang note the role of Confucian ideas in Chinese military strategy and in the exercise of regional Chinese political hegemony.[45] Thus, a constructivist look at religion and international relations encompasses not only those obviously norm-infused issues such as human rights but also military relations between the great powers.

Daniel Nexon's chapter below, however, warns against a simplistic treatment of religion as a pat identity furnished with essentialized norms and values. Instead, he uses the example of the politics of the Reformation to show how religion works as a complex discursive field in which political claims play out in a process that involves religious conviction and strategic calculation in a shifting configuration of transnational alliances. His approach draws on constructivism--indeed it would not be possible without the notion of the social construction of political reality through discourse--but it cannot be

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[42] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 63.

[43] Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Gary J. Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

[44] Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 138-149, 174-5, 180, 198-99.

[45] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*; David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

reduced to reified norms, identities, ideas, and symbols. In a sense, Nexon is being truer to the original insights of constructivism than are such reifiers when he points out that wine in transubstantiation was not just a *symbol* of Christ's blood for the religious state-builders; their belief that it really *was* his blood affected the political implications of the Reformation.

This raises important substantive questions for research on religion and international politics. Does the divine character of norms in religion-based transnational advocacy networks, for example, make them work differently from superficially analogous secular norms? How is social construction different when it ascends to the plane of the sacred? All of the following chapters engage this question.[46]

Religion and liberalism

Like Wendt's paradigmatic statement of constructivist international relations theory, Michael Doyle's foundational articles on the democratic peace and liberal international relations theory make no mention of religion except for a throwaway remark about the elected "theocratic" regime of the Boers.[47] This might not surprise those who see liberalism as a thoroughly secular ideology and thus antithetical to religion. However, the equal and opposite cliché may be more compelling: liberalism arose in the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the Protestant ethic of the capitalist middle class. As Hurd points out in this volume, much liberal Enlightenment thought was grounded in a Christian form of secularism. In international affairs, Protestant dissenters operating in the conducive environment of Protestant-dominated liberal democratic hegemonic states were in the vanguard of the peace and free trade movements and the movement to suppress slavery.[48] Hence, in this view: no Reformation, no liberal peace. The liberalism of revolutionary France is the exception that proves the rule: a Catholic society that

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[46] See also Aaron P. Bosenecker and Leslie Vinjamuri, "Religious and Secular Actors, the 'Doers' of Transitional Justice," presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, New York, NY, February 15-18, 2009.

[47] Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12:3 (Summer 1983), 205-223, and "Part II" (Fall 1983).

[48] Chaim D Kaufmann and Robert A. Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade," *International Organization* 53:4 (Fall 1999), 631-668.

undergoes a laïcist rejection of religion fails to institutionalize liberal democracy, turns instead to populist nationalism, and tries to conquer the world.

What are the implications for liberal international relations theory of the view that liberal secularism has strong religious roots? Liberalism's trademark claim, that liberal democracies do not fight wars against each other, has various explanations, most of them traceable back to Kant. Democracies are prudent because the average citizen who bears the cost of war constrains the government. Democracies are free-trading, so have incentives not to disrupt beneficial commerce. Democracies have an open marketplace of ideas, so they make better-informed choices and are easier for outsiders to understand and trust. Finally, democracies share a common identity and sense of political legitimacy, so they do not consider each other to be a threat. Insofar as we agree with Hurd that Kant is a forerunner what she calls "Judeo-Christian secularism," this might strengthen the genealogical claim that the democratic peace should mainly be understood in terms of its liberalism's normative roots in religion rather than in terms of mechanical procedures of electoral accountability and checks and balances. This in turn could have implications for efforts to promote the spread of democracy and expectations about how likely is the further extension of the democratic peace. Africanists, for example, are debating whether simply holding elections in illiberal societies can contribute to the development of democratic accountability and its benefits for social peace, or whether the whole package of Kantian preconditions, including deeply rooted normative change, is needed for the democratic miracle to happen.[49]

One reason that liberal international relations scholars have underestimated the role of religion is that they implicitly accept the liberal modernization theory view of political development—namely, that historical modernization is a linear process in which all liberal things (capitalism, secularism, democracy) all progress together. In this view, religion drops out of the equation as societies become more modern and democratic. The current resurgence of politicized religion shows, however, that political development produces multiple modernities.[50] In some of these trajectories, frustration with

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[49] Staffan Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.
[50] Shmuel Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, 1 (Winter 2002), 1-29; Peter J. Katzenstein, "Multiple Modernities as Limits to Secular Europeanization?" in Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J.

unresponsive secular government stimulates increasing pressure for mass political participation. When the political consequences of mass movements of this kind spill across international boundaries, this becomes a lively subject for international relations theory. A properly broadened version of liberalism, as the international politics paradigm that addresses political development and the emergence of modern regime types, is highly relevant to understanding these societal trends and their consequences for global politics.

Neo-liberal institutionalism

Religion has a less obvious connection to the other branch of the liberal paradigm of international relations, the neo-liberal institutionalism of Robert Keohane. His foundational *After Hegemony* stresses the role of multilateral institutions in facilitating cooperation among states by reducing information asymmetries, coordinating bargains across issue areas, and magnifying the long-run reputational consequences of short-term opportunism.[51] This highly rationalistic book makes no mention of religion.

And yet if we step far back and look from Max Weber's vantage point, religion constitutes one of humankind's earliest steps to rationalize and institutionalize society. In place of the patent irrationalism of shamanism and witchcraft, religion proposes an intellectually coherent interpretation of natural, supernatural, and social reality, and creates a specialized institution to carry out religious ritual and to transmit and develop religious doctrine. Religious organizations were thus forerunners of modern bureaucratic secular organizations. They carried out political and economic functions, and in some societies and in some issue domains, they still do.

Neo-liberal institutionalism is concerned with international organizations, which are of course secular, notwithstanding the religious roots or character of some quasi-official NGOs like the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Even so, Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore describe the authority and power of international organizations in terms that sound more characteristic of religious organizations: delegated authority (viz.,

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Katzenstein, eds., *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9-10.
[51] Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

divine right), moral authority, expert authority (viz. specialists in ritual and doctrine), the power to classify the world, the power to fix meanings, and the diffusion of norms.[52] In areas such as human rights, international organizations—for example, the International Criminal Court—compete directly with religious organizations in attempts to classify behavior, affix meaning to it, and promote norms. Michael Ignatieff contends that human rights dogma is the new profession of faith of secular humanism, and the institutions that are the keepers of this doctrine are more concerned with affirmation of faith than in getting results.[53] In this sense, the claim that liberal secularisms occupy the same terrain as religions applies not only to worldviews but also to some international institutions.

In short, although the liberal international relations canon largely overlooks religion and seems to take its own secularism for granted, religion may have played a formative role in liberal ideas, and religion may share some of the functional characteristics of liberal, secular, multilateral institutions.

Conclusion

Religion can be seen as integral to structures and processes at the core of the main intellectual traditions and research programs in international relations theory, though religion has rarely been the subject of explicit attention in any of them. Terrorism justified in the name of religion has brought this topic to the attention of the community of scholars studying international politics. However, the reason to think harder about the role religion should occupy in international studies is not mainly to understand current problems better, but to gain a deeper insight into the core concepts used to study international issues of all types.

"Mainstreaming" religion in international relations theory does entail risks, however, in both directions. One risk is that religious matters can be flattened to a degree that robs them of their distinctive character in an effort to plug them into inhospitable theories. Sometimes scholars have done this quite consciously as an explicit theoretical assumption—for example, Robert Pape's argument that religion matters for his strategic

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[52] Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 22-34.

[53] Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). See also Stephen Hopgood, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry ICC," presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, New York, NY, February 15-18, 2009.

theory of terrorism only in that suicide bombers find it easier to dehumanize targets of a different religion. Although Toft in this volume treats religion as a variable in her strategic theory of violence, she does not flatten it to this degree, since she engages with the content of religious ideas and organizational forms. At the other end of the spectrum, Nexon does not flatten religion at all in addressing the concerns of international relations theory. He treats religion as retaining its sacred character even while showing that its discursive frame encompasses strategic calculations. Different researchers will make different choices on this dimension as they try to mainstream religion into general international relations theories.

The opposite risk is that healthy theories that have usefully illuminated international processes without much reliance on religion will be adulterated by bringing in religion in ways that contradicts their core assumptions. International relations theorists have long differed in their tastes for parsimonious purity versus eclecticism. In bringing religion into their work, they will make different choices, which will be fine as long as those choices are conscious ones whose costs are explicitly considered. If it is true, as most of our authors believe, that religion plays a significant and increasing role in international politics, more scholars will want to find ways to integrate it into their conceptual frameworks.

The essays that follow embody a variety of choices on these dimensions. All are written by scholars that have made recognized contributions to international relations theory. These authors include the leading lights among those who are integrating religion into the academic field of international politics in a methodologically self-aware way. Together their essays provide a rich menu of choices for thoughtful readers to draw upon in designing their own approaches to mainstreaming religion in international relations theory.