

## ABSTRACT

### Defying Boundaries The Challenge of Transnational Religion to International Relations

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It is my intent to evaluate the ways in which the primary International Relations paradigms analyze, incorporate, or disregard religion, particularly its transnational manifestations. It is my contention that transnational religion is a potent actor in the international community, whose potential for disruption or for diplomacy within the international system has been systematically ignored or mis-interpreted by the predominant international relations paradigms. The developing field of constructivism, though primarily based in the other social sciences, offers an alternative and promising framework for the study of religion in international relations. I outline each school's deficiencies in their approach to transnational religion and identify important areas of potential development towards a more comprehensive analysis of the significance of transnational religion to international relations.

Defying Boundaries  
The Challenge of Transnational Religion to International Relations

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies

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## DEDICATION

To Rev. Dn. Dr. Daniel Payne, for his instruction, guidance and friendship. His personal fight has reminded me to stay focused on God and family.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In the last few decades of the twentieth century, the world witnessed religious leaders and religious communities insert themselves unabashedly into the realm of international politics. Pope John Paul II took a stand against the dehumanizing aspects of communism in Poland and around the world.<sup>1</sup> Muslim students overthrew the secular establishment in Iran and set up an explicitly religious government.<sup>2</sup> The Religious Right united to become an influential voting block in American politics, and the conflict over Jerusalem and the Holy Land continues to polarize the international system.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the confines of the discipline, scholars of International Relations have had a particularly difficult time understanding, analyzing and predicting such events. When the intersection of religion and international politics *is* addressed, scholars have widely varying approaches, which typically reflect their school of thought. Realists tend to address religious conflict within the established terminology of security theory. International political economists are likely to address the effects of development and poverty on religious movements and conflicts. Radical theorists draw attention to the effects of globalization and American foreign policy on the resurgence of political

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<sup>1</sup>Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

<sup>2</sup>John Esposito, *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *The Values Campaign? The Christian Right and the 2004 Elections* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006); For an analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as it relates to religion in international relations, see Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 137-162.

religions. Western intellectuals are clearly struggling to find a common voice about the way religion acts in global affairs.

The confusion essentially rests with two opposing dynamics: the transnational nature of many of the world's religions and the secular roots and focus of International Relations (IR) as a field.<sup>4</sup> Because the modern international system is essentially constructed on the basis of territorially defined states interacting with each other as the sole relevant actors, transnational phenomena like religion are often disregarded as irrelevant factors. This dynamic is reinforced by the assumptions of Western modernity that the world of government and international relations is, or should be, a secular one. Because of these two dynamics, scholars of IR have had difficulty recognizing, interpreting and responding to transnational manifestations of world religions, yet it is increasingly obvious that such analysis is needed.

Transnational religion is not a new phenomenon; universalistic religions have had a "transnational" element since their expansion beyond tribal determinants during the Axial Age. The way transnational religions fit into the international power structure has changed, however, and their importance and dynamism in the modern world are amplified today by the forces of globalization. Instead of being tied to empire or state through the traditional avenues of power, global religion exists and acts outside of the state, while increasingly being carried and lived by individuals instead of political entities. Furthermore, individuals are increasingly able to communicate with each other beyond state and cultural boundaries through advances in information and communication technology.

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<sup>4</sup>Throughout this work I will refer to the discipline of International Relations as (IR) and the actual practice of international relations between states without capitalization.

Transnational religion is able to affect world affairs both “positively,” by encouraging cooperation, communion, and reconciliation, and “negatively,” by inciting violence, causing divisions and disrupting the current system. Its ability to do so essentially confronts the nation-state in two ways: by challenging the state monopoly on legitimate authority from within (through adherents), and by working outside of the state system and thus avoiding the international system’s enforcement capabilities. In other words, transnational religion does not play the nation-state game. While this may weaken transnational religion in some respects—for instance the Vatican can no longer rely upon governmental coercion to ensure religious adherence—it also enables transnational religious actors to exploit their flexibility and independence from the governing responsibilities assumed by the state. This unique challenge is more fully discussed in chapter two.

In order to commence any study of religion in world politics, however, it is necessary to thoroughly explore religion’s absence from both the modern practice of international relations and from the academic field of IR.

### *Religion and Secularization*

Religion, in its modern, pre-modern and ancient forms, has always acted as an important keystone in the life of the individual and society. In his seminal work, *The Sacred Canopy*, sociologist Peter Berger explains in detail how religion fulfills this function by establishing order and certainty in an uncertain world. According to Berger, “men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality,” and

religion has historically been the most effective way to do so.<sup>5</sup> He continues, “The sacred cosmos, which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality . . . provides man’s ultimate shield against the terror of anomy.”<sup>6</sup> Beyond providing meaning for the individual, religion is equally important to providing meaning and legitimization for society. Berger states, “Religion legitimates social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by *locating* them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference.”<sup>7</sup>

International studies expert Vendulka Kubálková provides a broader definition of religion, expanding upon Berger’s, but omits any mention of the sacred or divine, in order to include secular ideologies that often appear and act like transcendent religions.<sup>8</sup> According to Kubálková, religion is: “A system of rules (mainly instructive rules) and related practices which act to explain the meaning of existence, including identity, ideas about self, and one’s position in the world, thus motivating and guiding behavior of those who accept the validity of these rules on faith and who internalize them fully.”<sup>9</sup>

Based on these definitions of religion, and assuming their vital importance to individuals and societies as described by Berger, it is essential to examine how the relationship between religion and society has changed from pre-modern to modern times.

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<sup>5</sup>Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>8</sup>Kubálková is supported in this regard by sociologist of religion, Mark Juergensmeyer, who finds secular ideologies to serve near-identical functions to that of religious systems. See Mark Juergensmeyer, “The New Religious State,” *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (July 1995): 380-381.

<sup>9</sup>Vendulka Kubálková, “Toward an International Political Theology,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, ed. Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 93.

Both Peter Berger and Scott M. Thomas provide compelling explanations for how religion made the transition into its privatized Western form and the effects this has had on political organization. Moreover, they each provide explanations as to why and how modern Western intellectuals have misunderstood the role of religion in society and are continuing to do so. Berger uses the terms “secularization” and “desecularization” to explain the course of religion in the West over the last five centuries. Scott M. Thomas uses the language of social versus modern conceptions of religion, to describe the shift that has taken place and the awkward way that both conceptions have come to co-exist in the modern world.

One of the most traumatic forces religions confront in the modernizing world, which was acutely present in the Latin West after the Reformation, is religious pluralism. According to Berger, religious traditions that are faced with competing denominations are much less able to legitimize social reality than those in societies in which one religion enjoys a monopoly.<sup>10</sup> When multiple religious systems become options for members of a society, the taken-for-granted nature of the traditional religion among the populace is destroyed, as is its ability to legitimate the structure of society and the individual’s indisputable place within it. According to Berger, this pluralism was first combated by extermination, then by segregation, and finally by secularization, that is, the removal of sectors of society from “the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”<sup>11</sup>

Berger originally postulated in 1967 that, as the world continued to modernize and people placed more faith in science and reason, religion would continue to lose its

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<sup>10</sup>Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 48.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

taken-for-granted character. As a result, secularization would spread globally, religion would eventually cease to dominate the reasons and means behind political entities, and would perhaps fade in importance in the lives of individual as well. This has proven *not* to be the case as religion remains vibrant in many countries, including the United States.<sup>12</sup> Thirty years after stating his theory on secularization, Peter Berger recanted his earlier prediction saying “The world today . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled ‘secularization theory’ is essentially mistaken.”<sup>13</sup>

Scott M. Thomas uses alternative language to trace the separation of religion from governance and international politics. According to Thomas, Western scholars have constructed a myth concerning the proper relationship of religion and government rooted in the “lessons” of the Wars of Religion and subsequent Peace of Westphalia in 1648. This myth affirms the supposedly indisputable truth that: 1) when religion and government coincide violence and oppression will necessarily result, and 2) the modern secular state and the privatization of religion are thus necessary to save society from such tyranny and destruction.<sup>14</sup> Thomas ascribes these lessons to the realm of myth rather than fact because of the improper imposition of a modern definition of religion on society in early modern Europe. He traces contemporary historians’ assertions that religion was not

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<sup>12</sup>Limited secularization has occurred, however, in Western Europe, which now seems to be the exception to the rule. For an analysis of secularization in Europe see Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case, Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Inc., 2002).

<sup>13</sup>Berger, “Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,” in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), 2.

<sup>14</sup>Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 22-23.

understood at the time to mean a set of beliefs or doctrines to be studied or accepted independently, but rather a system rooted in a community of believers. Thus the European armies were not fighting merely over specific theological doctrines, but were protecting the latter, social understanding of the identity of their community and their way of life. It is this social understanding that Thomas believes is appropriate to apply to many of the wars of religion today, such as those in the Balkans and the Middle East, where the Western understanding of religion as a separate entity has not fully been accepted.

For Thomas, the event that moved religion from its social to its modern definition was the growth of the new European monarchies in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries whose states assumed the intellectual and social functions that religion previously served. The invention of the modern notion of religion, as a set of beliefs or doctrines, was necessary for the state to expand its power. The Treaty of Westphalia cemented this shift. According to Thomas, “For the state to be born, religion had to become privatized and nationalized. The state used the invention of religion to legitimate the transfer of the ultimate loyalty of people from religion to the state as part of the consolidation of its power—the process of state-building and nation-building, which we have come to call internal sovereignty.”<sup>15</sup> Western scholars and governments have applied the modern invented definition of religion onto societies where religion is understood more properly in its social definition, and thus have been calling for the universal privatization of religion inappropriately.

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<sup>15</sup>Thomas, 25.

The process of secularization described by Berger and Thomas has affected the academic study of religion and world affairs, particularly in the field of IR. The results of the Westphalian myth described by Thomas are similar to the effects of the Secularization Thesis on academia described by Berger, in that this process has led Western scholars to apply an essentially Western phenomenon to non-Western states and societies. While secularization has occurred in European government and society, and certainly at the governmental level in the United States, levels of religiosity in society are still high in most of the world. This has led to a general attitude of indifference towards religion in the West and an incorrect extrapolation that religion must also be irrelevant, or at least inappropriate to discuss, in other parts of the world. Because social scientists assume the irrelevance of religion in the modern world, the West is ill-prepared to deal with the many manifestations of religion that affect domestic politics in foreign countries and, increasingly, world affairs.

According to political scientists, Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, the field of international relations has been, from its inception, indifferent towards religion.<sup>16</sup> The origin of the social sciences is inextricably tied to the Enlightenment rejection of religion as the ordering principle of the universe in favor of science in its ability to explain both natural and social phenomena. As the twentieth century progressed, scholars widely accepted the theory, articulated by Berger, that processes of modernization, particularly religious pluralism, would lead to a secularizing world where state institutions would no longer be dominated by religion.<sup>17</sup> Some went so far as to claim that religion would not

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<sup>16</sup>Fox and Sandler, 9.

<sup>17</sup>Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 127.

only separate out of the political sphere, but would eventually die out completely, while others called for campaigns to actively realize religion's end.<sup>18</sup> The discipline of IR was born into such an atmosphere, dominated by secular nation-states. Every indication was that civilized, modernizing countries had no need of religion to legitimize their right to govern and that state legitimacy would be based instead on the rhetoric and logic of nationalism. Therefore, neither would the IR paradigms have any need to consider religion in their studies.

According to Fox and Sandler, International Relations as a discipline was also founded partly on the assumption that the era of bellicose religiosity was over, and so most analyses of states, war, and the global system ignored religion. They note further that IR is "perhaps the most Western centric of the social science disciplines" since IR paradigms focus primarily on state power and such power was consolidated in the "free" and Soviet West throughout the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> This is compounded by the fact that the majority of IR scholars are based in the West, and Westerners are taught to believe that the separation of church and state is an unquestionable "good." Consequently, most scholars in academia, and policy-makers in government, are reluctant to discuss the realms in which the two fields do intersect and influence each other. Finally, IR methods rely heavily on quantitative analysis and behavioralism, yet religion is notoriously hard to quantify, and thus is often ignored, or at least insufficiently studied, as an influencing factor.

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<sup>18</sup>See, for example, V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, trans. Robert Service (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 68.

<sup>19</sup>Fox and Sandler, 9.

### *Summary of Chapters*

Having established the secular foundations of the practice and study of international relations, chapter two will highlight the difficulties of analyzing transnational religion from an IR perspective. I will first discuss the recent religious resurgence and rise of transnational organizations separately in their relation to the conduct of international relations, and then how these two dynamics merge together in the phenomenon of transnational religion. I will then demonstrate what transnational religion in both its “positive” and “negative” manifestations means or could mean to the international community and particularly to the academic field of International Relations.

In chapter three, I analyze the significance of transnational religion to the international system from the perspective of the realist paradigm. Realism is the defining paradigm of the discipline to which all other paradigms make reference. It is also the simplest and most direct in delineating the confines of the paradigm. Realists generally exclude religion and other transnational influences from consideration as prime influences in the international realm.

In chapter four, I evaluate the ability of the liberal paradigm to analyze effectively transnational religion’s influence on international relations. Liberalism is a more expansive and inclusive paradigm and, as such, acknowledges the significance of transnational actors. The solid foundation of liberalism on Enlightenment secularism, however, has led to the marginalization of religious studies in the liberal school.

In chapter five, I assess the constructivist perspective on transnational religion in international relations. Constructivism has roots in a number of disciplines, most notably sociology, and as such I include an examination of important works from the sociology of

religion. While constructivism has yet to develop to the level of a true “paradigm” in the discipline of IR, it offers important correctives to the existing paradigms and an alternative framework for understanding questions of transnational religion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Global Menace or Community Advocate? Transnational Religion in the International System

#### *A Religious Resurgence and the Rise of Transnational Organizations*

With the end of the Cold War, two dynamics became so evident in the 1990s that IR scholars were forced to rethink their paradigms: the “religious resurgence” and the impact of transnational organizations. Mark Juergensmeyer’s book *The New Cold War*, and Samuel P. Huntington’s article in *Foreign Affairs*, “The Clash of Civilizations?”—both published in 1993—dramatically signaled the return of religion as an acceptable topic in the field of IR.<sup>1</sup> The latter trend began much earlier than the 1990s, with a number of international non-governmental organizations cropping up in the 1960s and 1970s, but the potential of transnational organizations to influence the conduct of foreign affairs was, arguably, not felt until after the Cold War. In order to analyze the potentialities of the combination of these two factors, in the form of transnational religion, I believe a brief analysis of both separately is warranted.

The religious resurgence, or “the revenge of God” as Gilles Kepel has termed it, gained traction in the 1970’s when people around the world began to lose faith in the secular, positivist viewpoint and set out to rediscover authenticity and meaning.<sup>2</sup> It has been a global revival, encompassing countries from all geographic regions with different

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<sup>1</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas, 42-43; Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

levels of development, different political systems, and different religious histories. The religious revival is also taking place at all levels of society. For instance, scholars can readily examine the resurgence from a global standpoint, tracing the spread of religion through the processes of globalization such as technology, migration, and missionary activities. The resurgence can also be viewed on an inter-state level, familiar to Huntington, where states may design their interactions with other states dependent on the similarity of religious heritage.<sup>3</sup> Juergensmeyer has shown that analysis of the religious resurgence is also possible at the state or societal level, concerning phenomena such as religious nationalism or the ways in which religious pluralism are handled within state boundaries. Finally, the global resurgence of religion is visible at the individual level, evident in studies of charismatic religious leaders as well as the beliefs and values stated by individuals from all cultures around the world.<sup>4</sup>

The reasons behind the global resurgence of religion have inspired numerous explanations. Berger attributes the resurgence, in part, to the same modern forces he expected to have such a detrimental effect on religion. Berger states, “Modernity tends to undermine the taken-for-granted certainties by which people lived through most of history. This is an uncomfortable state of affairs, for many an intolerable one, and religious movements that claim to give certainty have great appeal.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, he mentions the possibility that those individuals and societies that have not benefited from secularity or modernity have come to resent it, along with the global secular elite who

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<sup>3</sup>In fact, Jonathan Fox points out that although Huntington uses the term “civilization” to denote the salient groupings of peoples and states in the post-Cold War world, Huntington in fact means religion. Fox and Sandler, 115-118.

<sup>4</sup>Scott M. Thomas, 26-37.

<sup>5</sup>Berger, *Desecularization of the World*, 11.

represent it, and as such are attracted to religious movements who share their attitudes. His third explanation is a true reversal of perspective, in which he postulates that perhaps secularism is the true aberration in a historically religious world. Berger states, “Strongly felt religion has always been around; what needs explanation is its absence rather than its presence. Modern secularity is a much more puzzling phenomenon than all these religious explosions.”<sup>6</sup>

Juergensmeyer expands on Berger’s second point in his study of secular and religious nationalisms. He explains that religious nationalists have rejected their secular counterparts in part because secular governance is not the culturally neutral political perspective the secular elite claims it to be; it looks, sounds, and behaves like a religion and should more properly be termed “European cultural nationalism.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, religion has to compete with secularism as a rival governing worldview and adherents often view its encroachment into non-Western societies is an act of imperialism. Religious nationalists describe the secular West as the “other,” the “enemy,” and “evil,” often attributing their society’s ills to Western secular influences. According to Juergensmeyer, peoples and politicians are choosing religious over secular nationalism in the modern world, because they have lost faith in secularism and, for too many, secularists have failed to deliver on their utopian promises.

An important component of religion, which explains its appearance in group conflicts, is its ability to bestow or to confirm group identity. Christopher Marsh, religious violence scholar, notes that similar to ethnicity, language and territory, religion

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>7</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War*, 19.

is often tied to a group's historical past, acts as a communal bond between members.<sup>8</sup>

Religion differs significantly, however, from these other factors in that it is believed. The significance of this difference is that one may change his religion, in a way that is not readily available for ethnicity and often language, and so religion requires a much greater degree of commitment and a stronger defense. Furthermore, Marsh states, "In identity formation, religion plays an important defining role in one's construction of self . . . it provides cosmological significance to their existence and offers them the hope of transcendental salvation."<sup>9</sup>

Juergensmeyer and Huntington's 1993 publications are just two of the important works that attempt to understand this religious resurgence and what it means for political communities. Writing in the context of the recent collapse of the Soviet system, Juergensmeyer and Huntington both articulate their arguments in reference to the Cold War. Huntington proclaimed the death of the wars of ideology and the beginning of the predominance of civilizational (read religious) conflicts. Juergensmeyer confined his boundaries to the nation-state and analyzed specific manifestations of religious nationalism and how they differ from secular nationalisms. While their scope, methods, and conclusions differ widely, the impact of the two works was impressive and demanded that IR scholars begin to take religion seriously.

The second significant development in International Relations in the 1990's was the increasing impact of transnational groups on international politics. Transnational groups are generally defined separately from international groups, in that they do not

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<sup>8</sup>Christopher Marsh, "The Religious Dimension of Post-Communist 'Ethnic' Conflict," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 5 (November 2007): 821.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 821-822.

represent any particular nation-state *per se* and work outside of the territorial and often the legal boundaries of nation-states. Examples of transnational groups include transnational corporations (TNCs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational religions. Issues can also be considered transnational, such as environmental and humanitarian crises, but while such issues are certainly addressed by transnational groups (such as NGOs), they are still primarily resolved through the interaction of nation-states and international organizations.

Political scientist John Ruggie explains that the reason transnationalism is seen as posing a problem to the state-based system of international politics is a matter of sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> According to Ruggie, political authority in pre-modern societies was not based on territory as it is now. Instead, political rule was based on family ties (tribal), on cycles of migration (nomads), and on an overlapping system of legitimizing institutions serving different functions in society (the medieval system). The modern system is “unique in human history” in that “it has differentiated its subject collectivity into territorially defined, fixed and mutually exclusive enclaves of legitimate dominion.”<sup>11</sup> These mutually-exclusive territories, known as states, are able to function only because they each recognize the other’s right to rule within their own boundaries.

Yet, according to Ruggie, the non-territorial has always posed a problem to this system.<sup>12</sup> According to the precedent set by the Treaty of Westphalia, non-territorial considerations below the state level were to be dealt with by each state within a state’s

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<sup>10</sup>John Gerard Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,” *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 139-174.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 164.

boundaries. As such, these territorial units (states) became more than territorial; they embodied the political and social self-image of the state's citizens.<sup>13</sup> Non-territorial issues that crossed state lines, however, challenged the reciprocal sovereignty on which the system is based. Early on, such issues often revolved around natural "commons" that no one "owned," such as shipping lanes in the ocean, but also included shared functional spaces such as common markets. To deal with these issues, states collectively determined a proper course of action, in effect creating an international sphere of relations. According to Ruggie, "Nonterritorial functional space is the place wherein international society is anchored."<sup>14</sup>

Today transnational non-territorial issues would still include environmental common areas and common markets, but also exhibit a more social dimension. According to sociologist Victor Roudometof, the first of these social transnational issues was migration, as people in contemporary society are increasingly able to sustain relationships with their home countries.<sup>15</sup> Transnationalism has since expanded beyond the actual transnational community of migrant people, however, due to advances in communication technology such as the internet, fax lines, satellite radio and television. Transnationalism now includes phenomena, groups and norms that cross borders and are internalized in the receiving country without the necessary aid of immigration—a process called internal globalization, or "glocalization." According to Roudometof, "Internal globalization is the process of creating the room or the space for these interactions; that

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>15</sup>Victor Roudometof, "Transnationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Glocalization," *Current Sociology* 53, no. 1 (January 2005): 113-135.

is, internal globalization provides the preconditions, the material and non-material infrastructure for the emerging spaces of human interaction. The resulting reality is *transnational social spaces*. (his emphasis).”<sup>16</sup>

In the modern system of international relations, non-state actors such as transnational groups are not considered to be an integral part of the international system; they are placed outside of the system but may influence the environment in which international relations take place. Increasingly, however, transnational groups are acknowledged to be contributing in some way to the actual foreign policies and international practices of states. Peter Haas provides one example, which he terms “epistemic communities.”<sup>17</sup> Such groups consist of a network of specialists, or “knowledge-based experts,” whom policy-makers may rely upon to inform their decisions about a wide range of issues that have uncertain variables, such as solving complex environmental issues, setting standards for the medical field, or establishing the best use of energy resources. According to Haas, “epistemic communities are channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore epistemic communities, such as those involved in environmental, medical, and energy research, are certainly not bound to reflect nation-state boundaries and often take on a transnational character. State leaders retain power and control over the final decision but by delegating authority to these transnational

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>17</sup>Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 1-35.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 27.

epistemic communities to complete the fact-finding groundwork and to make recommendations state leaders open their policies to direct transnational influences.

Sociologist William I. Robinson traces the significant impact globalization and TNCs are having on the international system.<sup>19</sup> According to Robinson, TNCs hold a large percentage of the world's wealth and gather and invest that wealth indifferent to national boundaries. Consequently, the forces of production are no longer tied to a geographic region, such that some pockets of populations have wealth while others do not, regardless of national boundaries. The result is that nations no longer develop economically as a unified political unit; some populations within or beyond a nation may develop, while others within the same geographic region remain underdeveloped.<sup>20</sup>

Robinson makes the bold prediction that capital will eventually be centralized within an international system, not a national one. He warns that the economy is moving faster than the political and institutional spheres, however, and while transnational organs already exist to deal with the economic consequences of globalization and transnational economic actions, political bodies (i.e., United Nations, G-8, and CSCE), are less developed. As economic trends are unfolding today, Robinson sees the transnationalization of wealth as a significant challenge to the nation-state system. He notes: "The central dynamic of our epoch is globalization, and the central tendency is the ascendance of transnational capital, which brings with it the transnationalization of classes in general. In the long historic view, the nation-state system and all the frames of

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<sup>19</sup>William I. Robinson, "Beyond Nation-States Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies" *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 4 (December 1998): 561-594.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 577-578.

reference therein, is in its descendance.”<sup>21</sup> While many of the IR theorists discussed in the following chapters would disagree that the nation-state will disappear anytime soon, Robinson’s analysis of the impact of TNCs is an important insight into the challenge that transnational groups pose to a system built on nation-states.

Transnational NGOs also pose a significant challenge to the nation-state system. Instead of representing transnational capital or science, transnational NGOs represent grassroots networks of individuals organized across state borders, on the basis of a shared interest or cause. While they generally have little to no hard power, these groups channel the “soft power” of information dissemination and political organization to challenge state policies, international programs and treaties, and to influence global norms and norms in particular societies. Transnational NGOs very often do target specific state policies and exist and act legally within the bounds of state law, but improved information technology in both developed and under-developed areas has allowed state-based organizations to address a global audience, receive global support in the form of funds and volunteers, and affect political decisions well beyond their own borders. Transnational NGOs challenge state sovereignty in that one no longer has to be citizen of a country, or an official representative of another country (i.e. a diplomat), to influence that country’s political scene. As transnational NGOs exploit the benefits of the spread of information and communication technology, governments are finding it increasingly difficult to control the domestic political trends within their own borders.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 581.

<sup>22</sup>Christopher Marsh and Daniel P. Payne, “The Globalization of Human Rights and the Socialization of Human Rights Norms,” *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2007, no. 3 (2007): 669.

Transnational groups are an important challenge to the status quo of the international system. Many questions arise regarding the true impact of transnational groups, the possible regulation of transnational groups, the ethics of transnational groups, the roles transnational groups play in war, peace-making, and nation-building and the future status of the nation-state. Each major IR paradigm has grappled with these issues, which will be explored further in the following chapters.

### *Transnational Religion*

Transnational religion, known to the world in some form since at least the Axial Age, refers to those religious organizations or trends that transcend state boundaries. In the modern world, transnational religion is part of and acts within a larger, emerging, transnational civil society, defined as that space outside of the nation-state system, not dependent on any particular territorial area, in which transnational groups interact. While the effects of transnational civil society on the international system are still being investigated and understood, it is clear that global norms and expectations are often created and disseminated in this space, and it is from this space that transnational groups affect state policy and public opinion.

Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, co-editor of the discipline's preeminent work on transnational religion contends that such religious groups are dynamic and creative contributors to transnational civil society.<sup>23</sup> Reiterating Berger's understanding of the function of religion in society, Rudolph attests to the power of religion in a modernizing world: in a world that threatens the cultures and lifestyles of traditional societies, religion

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<sup>23</sup>Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society" in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 1.

often restores a groups' sense of meaning and identity. Transnational religious groups act from above the nation-state level, from a centralized position of hierarchical bureaucracy, as well as from below, through decentralized and spontaneous grassroots groups.

The Catholic Church, with its highly evolved bureaucracy established in countries throughout the world and its estimated one billion global adherents, is the quintessential model of hierarchical transnational religion.<sup>24</sup> Sociologist José Casanova describes the transition the Catholic Church has made from its medieval dependence on the state for its influence, security, and dispersal (by law or war and, later, through colonization), to its modern alliance, instead, with the individual person. By disassociating itself from the state and even from endorsing particular political systems, the Catholic Church has truly become universal.<sup>25</sup> It is able to assert its power and influence throughout the world not through political-theology hegemony, but through its grassroots and institutional networks of believers. Casanova calls the Pope the “first citizen of the emerging global civil society,” who uses his spiritual authority to support human rights around the globe, particularly the right to the freedom of religion.<sup>26</sup> The efficacy of this type of influence should not be underestimated, since “In today’s world, power does not come solely or even primarily from the barrel of a gun, particularly when states holding onto the

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<sup>24</sup>“Number of Catholics and Priests Rises,” *Zenit News Agency* (Innovative News Agency, Inc.) <http://www.zenit.org/article-18894?l=english>; Internet; accessed 5 February 2008.

<sup>25</sup>Pope Benedict XVI reiterated the Church’s non-commitment to any particular political system in his letter to the Catholic Church in China; Pope Benedict XVI, “Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons, and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People’s Republic of China,” (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 27 May 2007).

<sup>26</sup>José Casanova, “Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a ‘Universal Church’,” in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press: 1997), 131.

monopoly of the means of violence have no legitimacy in civil society and do not have the moral or political resolve to use those guns against unarmed civilians.”<sup>27</sup>

Hierarchical transnational religions affect the international community not only through political presence but also by centralizing and directing resources to needy peoples throughout the world. Transnational religious philanthropy can have drastic affects on local communities affected by natural disasters or political crises. By building relationships with local communities, transnational religions increase their influence and their potential to change the political scene. Ralph Della Cava writes about the political impact of Roman Catholic philanthropy in Central and Eastern Europe from 1947 to 1993.<sup>28</sup> According to Della Cava, the financial and spiritual aid Catholics in the “Free World” were able to provide to their co-religionists behind the Iron Curtain was effective in bolstering churches in Communist lands as well as affecting political change, most notably in Poland and Yugoslavia.

Sociologist Peggy Levitt explored the global impact of transnational religions in her 2004 study of migrant populations.<sup>29</sup> She, too, considers the Catholic Church to be the clearest hierarchical transnational religious organization and observed the impact of the Church among recent Irish immigrants to Boston. With its universally standardized Mass and extensive bureaucracy, the Catholic Church “allows migrants who choose to do so to move almost seamlessly between sending- and receiving- country parishes and

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>28</sup>Ralph Della Cava, “Religious Resource Networks: Roman Catholic Philanthropy in Central and East Europe,” in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997).

<sup>29</sup>Peggy Levitt, “Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life,” *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 1 (2004): 1-18.

religious movement groups. The Church integrates them into powerful, well-established networks where they can express interests, gain skills, and make claims with respect to their home and host countries.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the local churches encourage political integration by educating the new members about local political issues and civic responsibilities.

A final example of transnational religion’s “top down” influence, is an extension of Peter Haas’ notion of the impact of transnational epistemic communities to transnational religious groups. Haas states, “Epistemic communities need not be made up of natural scientists; they can consist of social scientists or individuals from any discipline or profession who have a sufficiently strong claim to a body of knowledge that is valued by society.”<sup>31</sup> On a systematic level, political authorities often consult religious authorities, both formally and informally, in many countries that do not recognize the high Western standard of separation of church and state. The elevated legal status of the Grand Ayatollah in Iran is but an extreme example of the political regard for religious opinions. Russian President Vladimir Putin is also known to value the opinion of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexy II.<sup>32</sup>

Transnational religious groups also work “from below” through self-organization. With the ever-increasing ease and affordability of travel as well as the spread of communication technology, religions can easily expand their influence beyond national borders. For instance, the preceding example of transnational religions as epistemic

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>31</sup>Haas, 16.

<sup>32</sup>Zoe Knox, “The Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate’s Post-Soviet Leadership,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 4 (2003): 575-596.

communities can be placed on a grassroots level. It has become commonplace for individuals seeking “truth,” “knowledge,” or “authenticity” to seek out highly visible leaders of the world religions. The Dalai Lama, for instance, is very popular in the United States, drawing large crowds for his speeches and high revenues for his publications among a population that is not historically Buddhist. In fact, he has made visits to the United States seventeen of the past twenty years.<sup>33</sup>

Migration is another effective way in which individuals contribute to the transnationalization of religion. In addition to an analysis of hierarchical forms, Levitt’s study of transnational migration includes self-organized groups, which she terms “recreated transnational religious organization[s].”<sup>34</sup> Levitt observed Gujarati Hindus from India, now living in Massachusetts, who recreated their religious groups after arriving without the help of a formal transnational religious body. The Hindu migrants were able to create a sense of community in their new host country, while also keeping close ties to their home country. They received “periodic resources, financing, and guidance from sending-country leadership” and so were able to create a relationship between religious groups well beyond state lines.<sup>35</sup>

French scholar of Islamic studies, Olivier Roy, highlights another manifestation of transnational religion from below: globalized Islam.<sup>36</sup> According to Roy, a third of all Muslims currently live as minorities in non-Muslim communities, and the majority of

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<sup>33</sup>“Visits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama since 1959,” (Dharamsala, India: The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2008), [www.dalailama.com](http://www.dalailama.com); accessed 12 March 2008.

<sup>34</sup>Levitt, 11.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>36</sup>Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

them intend to stay.<sup>37</sup> Through this migration of vast numbers of Muslims outside the Islamic world, Roy contends that Islam itself has become a non-territorial and certainly transnational entity; it is increasingly difficult to ascribe one particular geographic region, government, or culture to the religion of Islam.

The consequences of the deterritorialization of Islam are many and potentially revolutionary. First, the deterritorialization of Islam leads to an *individual* reconstruction of religion since, separated from an Islamic culture that socially re-enforces what it means to be Muslim, it becomes the individual's responsibility to determine what Islam means to them. This suggests that the *ummah* itself is no longer a territorial community, but an imagined community; one of self-conception. This leads to the second point, which is the seemingly radical contention that the neo-fundamentalist search for "pure" religion detached from any specific culture is actually a significant step towards secularism. Because most Islamic scholars note the exact opposite trend, that is the desire for a fusion of Islam and the State, Roy's alternative analysis is crucial. He is able to illuminate the murky distinctions between political Islamists and neo-fundamentalists, the latter of which are a product of, and are contributing to, the globalized form of Islam. Thomas Scott's understanding of the Christian process of secularization discussed above, by which the modern concept of religion as a body of theological doctrines was invented separate from its communal understanding, certainly supports Roy's suggestion. The "pure" or "mere" form of Islam that results from the separation of the religion from cultural pressures and additions is a step towards universalization and thus truly embodies transnationalism.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 18.

The third major consequence of globalized Islam is the significant extent to which Islam is being Westernized. According to Roy, “Patterns of belief and authority are changing, even if the theological content remains the same.”<sup>38</sup> The Westernization of Islam does not mean liberalization, but rather it indicates a process of the individualization of religion and a growing emphasis of faith over knowledge. In a changing Islam where religiosity is valued over theology, and individual reconstruction of religious behaviors prevails over culturally sanctioned norms, Roy sees a crisis of social authority and the undermining of traditional Islamic theologians. In line with this analysis, scholars have noted the flourishing of self-proclaimed *mullahs* across Europe and on the Internet. Additionally, the rise of *madrasas* with unconventional teachers, curricula, and attitudes about Islam in the world, is producing radical Muslim students who are having a significant and sustained impact on the contemporary conduct of international relations.<sup>39</sup>

Transnational religious groups in both hierarchical and self-organized forms can have a significant impact on society and politics. Due to their evolved bureaucracy, focused funds, and large constituencies, hierarchical groups are better able to influence policy on an official level, sometimes behaving similar to a state without actually holding nation-state status. Self-organized transnational religious groups suffer from a lack of coherence and may appear to be less “official” than their hierarchical counterparts, but can more easily adapt to local circumstances and can better avoid cooptation by the

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>39</sup>S.V.R. Nasr, “The Rise of Sunni Militancy in Pakistan: The Changing Role of Islamism and the Ulama in Society and Politics,” *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (2000): 145-146.

state.<sup>40</sup> Understanding the ways in which transnational religious groups differ or align in terms of behavior, organization, and relationship to the nation-state system is crucial to the further development of the study of religion by the International Relations paradigms.

### *Transnational Religion and International Relations*

Transnational religion confronts the nation-state in two ways: by challenging the state monopoly on legitimate authority from within (through adherents) and, by working outside of the state system and thus avoiding the international system's enforcement capabilities. In other words, transnational religion does not play the nation-state game. While this may weaken transnational religion in some respects – for instance the Vatican can no longer rely upon governmental coercion to ensure religious adherence – it also enables transnational religious actors to exploit their flexibility and independence from the social responsibilities of state governance. Furthermore, transnational religion is capable of acting both as a source of conflict and of cooperation in the world, which is increasingly forcing the international community to take notice.

The challenge religious conflict poses to the international community is essentially tied to religion's unique role in society. Because religion is a social institution that can provide communal identity and meaning, religious violence arises when people and communities feel that their identity, culture, or lifestyle is threatened. Such conflicts may actually have an essentially religious catalyst, such as the Iranian Revolution, or the conflicting parties may mobilize religious rhetoric and resources for irreligious political

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<sup>40</sup>Rudolph, 13.

ends. Nevertheless, once religion is invoked as a cause, motivation, or victim in a conflict, the dynamics of religious violence often appear.<sup>41</sup>

One way an essentially religious quarrel can indirectly affect the international system is when a transnational religious group acts in a way that exasperates inter-religious strife and disrupts a region's political atmosphere. A recent example can be gleaned from Ralph Della Cava's investigation into Catholic philanthropy in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>42</sup> While such actions resulted positively for those receiving aid as well as for Western governments working to undermine their Communist opponents, Catholic actions also amplified existing tensions with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The ROC perceived the Catholic Church's increased activity in historically Orthodox communities during a time at which the ROC was itself being persecuted as dubious. This was exasperated by the Catholic Church's reticence effectively to "withdraw its troops" after the Soviet Union disintegrated. Orthodox believers have charged the Catholic Church, with its vastly greater financial resources, as attempting to "buy new believers" and Orthodox authorities have launched a political campaign to secure their canonical territory.<sup>43</sup> Partly due to the ROC's lobbying, the Russian Government passed its Law on Religion in 1997 granting elevated status to the nation's four "traditional" religions, which do not include Catholicism. Since that time, Catholic organizations and

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<sup>41</sup>Marsh, "Religious Dimension," 822-823.

<sup>42</sup>Della Cava, "Religious Resource Networks," 173-211.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 195.

other minority religious groups have faced official obstacles to their work in Russia and some have faced difficulty renewing their visas.<sup>44</sup>

Because the state and the structure of the international system are primarily concerned with security, the most significant form of transnational religion the international community must confront is also transnational religion's gravest manifestation: religious terrorism. Representing no particular state but based in many, funded by individuals but protected by states, Islamic terrorists are able to exploit the flexibility of their unofficial status on the world scene to evade accepted international norms and the prosecutorial arm of international law. Their religiously-based ideology, corrupted as it may be, provides neofundamentalist groups such as Al-Qaeda with an air of legitimacy, an effective recruiting tool, and a convenient vocabulary for justifying deviant behavior and making unconscionable demands.

Oliver Roy offers a compelling analysis of such groups, and the difficulties they pose to the nation-state. According to Roy, Osama Bin Laden's aim in attacking the United States on September 11, 2001, was to draw the powerhouse into a long war, destabilize the region, and disturb the status quo for the United States and its allies.<sup>45</sup> This type of transnational terrorism sets Al-Qaeda apart from other state-based terrorists and political Islamists who use revolutionary violence to achieve specific political outcomes, which can be addressed within the context of the nation-state system.

The United States government, then, is limited in its options for combating terrorism. American military options are constrained by the fact that Al-Qaeda inhabits

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<sup>44</sup>Wallace L. Daniel and Christopher Marsh, "Russia's 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience in Context and Retrospect," *The Journal of Church and State* 49, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 5-17.

<sup>45</sup>Roy, 55-57.

numerous states and represents none. Similarly, placing economic sanctions on any particular state is similarly futile, as Al-Qaeda relies on a mobile, transient network. It cannot negotiate with Bin Laden, not only because few of Al-Qaeda's stated goals are temporal, but also because the United States cannot leverage territories and policies that originate outside its borders. Finally, American material incentives are unlikely to end terrorist attacks or recruitment for such groups since the nature of their concerns are not material but ideological.<sup>46</sup>

The transnational nature of world religions can also significantly escalate conflicts between religious groups or nations, when adherents identify with their co-religionists across borders. When groups or states of different religious traditions go to war, adherents of the respective religions are known to contribute significant funds, troops and other resources to aid their co-religionists. Ironically, this is the flip-side of transnational religious philanthropy noted by Della Cava. Samuel Huntington famously described this tendency as "civilizational rallying," noting that, "In one way or another, diasporas and kin countries have been involved in every fault line war of the 1990s."<sup>47</sup>

Despite its ability to significantly and violently disrupt the international order, transnational religion also has a unique capacity for peace-making, reconciliation and communal progress. Because leaders of transnational religions represent the interests of adherents from multiple countries, they have a responsibility and interest in promoting stable relations between nation-states. The ability for transnational religion to be a force

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<sup>46</sup>Jeremy Pressman, "Rethinking Transnational Counterterrorism: Beyond a National Framework," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (Autumn 2007): 63-73.

<sup>47</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006), 273.

for cooperation instead of conflict is manifold and makes use of the capabilities of religious leaders at the top of religious structures as well as the common bonds of co-religionists for overcoming territorial or purely political wars.

When conflicts are rooted specifically in religious principles or are fought among religious adherents, the role of religious leaders is obvious and necessary. Religious authorities have the expertise truly to understand the issues and appreciate what is at stake. They are able to negotiate among themselves, as secular diplomats might, and are able to influence their adherents towards peace. There has been a call among religious leaders themselves for inter-religious dialogue to promote peaceful co-existence among the faithful. For instance the leaders of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, at odds since the eleventh century, have all publicly condemned any and all violence waged for religious purposes. During the historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Turkey in November 2006, the Pope released a Joint Declaration with the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Christians, Bartholomew I, affirming their condemnation of religious violence, stating “Above all, we wish to affirm that killing innocent people in God’s name is an offence against Him and against human dignity. We must commit ourselves to the renewed service of humanity and the defense of human life, every human life.”<sup>48</sup>

Even more notable is the way in which Christian leaders are approaching their Muslim counterparts. Building on a joint base of opposition to the growing radical secularism and materialism in Europe, Catholic and Orthodox leaders have found a basis for dialogue with Muslim theologians and leaders. Patriarch Alexy has blamed

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<sup>48</sup>Pope Benedict XVI and Patriarch Bartholomew I, “Common Declaration by Pope Benedict XVI and Patriarch Bartholomew I” (Istanbul, Turkey: The Ecumenical Patriarchate, 30 November 2006).

secularism for the rise of Islamic terrorism and religious fundamentalism worldwide.<sup>49</sup> If this line of causation is correct, or if it is at least perceived to be the issue from the Muslim point of view, the Catholic-Orthodox Alliance may be one of the best resources available to bring about meaningful progress in the struggle against Muslim fundamentalism. This alliance could represent a mediating institution that is an intimate part of the West and values the West, but simultaneously understands and laments the same issues that Muslims find repulsive in Western culture, hopefully without falling themselves to the temptations of radical fundamentalism and terrorism. This is precisely what Benedict and the Orthodox leaders are trying to articulate. By taking this two-prong approach, of seeking to engage with Islam while also firmly committing to a message of non-violence, the leaders of institutional Christianity are placing themselves in a very advantageous position for the entire global community.<sup>50</sup>

What, if any, affect such dialogue could have on international relations remains to be seen. If national representatives were to admit religion's global salience and bring religious actors into the diplomatic process, the results could be astounding. In an era when conflicts seem to revolve more around meaning and identity than around power and money, it would seem foolish to exclude experts and representatives from the former sphere in peace negotiations.

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<sup>49</sup> Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, "Message to the International Conference 'Dialogue of Cultures and Interfaith Cooperation,'" (Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia: The Mosow Patriarchate, Sep 2006), <http://www.mospat.ru/index.php?page=32852>, accessed 12 March 2008.

<sup>50</sup>At the time of conclusion of this work, Pope Benedict XVI has invited leading Muslim theologians and scholars to participate in a seminar with him in Rome in November of 2008. "Pope to Hold Seminar with Muslims," (Rome: Cable News Network, 2008), [ww.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/03/05/pope.muslims/index.html?iref=newssearch](http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/03/05/pope.muslims/index.html?iref=newssearch), accessed 7 March 2008.

According to IR scholars Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos, it is not sufficient for the discipline to recognize the global religious resurgence, then to proceed with analysis through the current IR paradigms. There is a significant tension in bringing religion into a secular system, which needs to be explored. They state, “What is at stake, in theoretical terms, is not the question of method but the potential negation, by religious traditions, of the core of contemporary normative theory: the very terms through which we define what an ethical action is...religious traditions acknowledge what International Relations theory completely ignores: the fundamental tension between morality and law.”<sup>1</sup>

In the chapters that follow, I attempt to explore what the rise in religious politics means for the secularly-founded, security-dominated field of International Relations. Each of the paradigms in the discipline of International Relations is currently approaching the global religious resurgence and its transnational manifestations in a different way, asking different questions and coming to different conclusions. My overriding concern is whether or not there may be space in the discipline for religious study, religious participation, and religious solutions and what the risks may be for the global community if sufficient space is not made.

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<sup>1</sup>Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos, “The Return from Exile: An Introduction,” *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 16.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Transnational Religion and the Realist Paradigm

The dominant theory within International Relations is realism. The development of realism follows the development of the field of IR itself, drawing on a legacy that includes such authors as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Morgenthau. Its lengthy history and solid foundation have allowed the realist school to dominate the field of International Relations; nearly all academic discussion takes place within, based on, or in relation to the realist school. Because the modern theory and practice of IR grew out of the development of the nation-state as an independent political entity, the realist paradigm is essentially structured on the nation-state. By taking the form of a non-state actor, transnational religion confronts the realist school at its heart. In this chapter I intend to summarize the realist literature on religion and transnationalism and analyze its effectiveness in understanding and incorporating modern transnational religious forms and movements into the realist perspective.

#### *Realist Literature*

Realism in International Relations is based on a series of key assumptions. First, states are the primary actors in the international system and are understood to be the key unit of analysis. These states are unitary actors who, at the theoretical international level, speak with one voice, representing one cohesive policy per state, regardless of divisions that may exist at the domestic level. The state is also a rational actor—that is, the state's leaders or representatives make logical choices devising foreign policy and engaging in

international actions based on the ultimate benefits such policies and actions would provide for the state. Finally, of all the issues existent at the international level, the primary concern of the state is its own security. A state's foreign policy will be designed to best secure the homeland and advance the state's position relative to other states. For realists, the best way to do so is to amass power.<sup>1</sup>

Realists also hold basic assumptions about the nature of man, which influences the nature of the state. Political philosopher Thomas Hobbes wrote that the three principle causes of conflict can be found in human nature: competition (which encourages aggression), diffidence (which necessitates defensive violence), and glory (which utilizes violence for luxuries).<sup>2</sup> In Hobbes' world, the life of the individual is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," in part because the natural state of man is one of anarchy.<sup>3</sup> Thus, to ensure survival and a relatively stable and peaceful environment, individuals collectively surrender their rights to the sovereign, who imposes order. The Hobbesian understanding of human nature critically informs the realist understanding of states' behavior. Because the international system is composed of independent nation-states that recognize no authority higher than their own, the international system can be described as anarchic, similar to Hobbes' vision of the natural state of man. For their survival, states must act primarily for their own self-interest and view other states as competitors for limited resources.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), 76.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The three Hobbesian causes of conflict, noted above, are also replicated at the state level so that the international environment is one of distrust, suspicion, subversion and conflict. The state must necessarily build defensive forces in recognition that aggression by another state is a genuine possibility; it is required, therefore, to maximize its capabilities to defend itself from potential aggressors. The aggregate of a state's capabilities, including its ability to influence other states to do its will, is termed "power." A state that can maximize its political, economic and military power can best provide for the survival, security, and advancement of its constituents. Therefore, all states will act (rationally or strategically) to increase their power, to a hegemonic degree if possible, and will seek to keep a balance among the remaining states so that no one state grows too strong and becomes a threat. In the famous words of one of the founding realist theorists, Hans Morgenthau, "All politics is power politics."<sup>4</sup>

In the realist understanding of the anarchic international system, no one power exists to keep order and ensure good behavior among the many nation-states, yet this does not mean that there is *no* order to the system. States agree to abide by the principle of sovereignty to conduct their affairs. This makes each state responsible for its own policies and activities within its borders and prohibits states from interfering in another's domestic issues. Respect for the principle of sovereignty ensures a level of stability in the system and a model of expected behavior among states, which is then codified into international law. Because states are largely bound to ignore each other's domestic policies, realists tend to disregard the nature of a state's domestic regime as a primary

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<sup>4</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 27; quoted in Michael C. Williams, "Why Ideas Matter in International Politics: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 58, no. 4 (Autumn, 2004): 633-665.

factor in the conduct of international relations. Realists contend that in this state-centric power-based system, the domestic composition of a country is largely irrelevant to its international behavior, and most official state actions can be explained in terms of self-preservation.<sup>5</sup>

Amidst this decidedly pessimistic and uncertain world system, IR theorist Kenneth Waltz provides an understanding of why states do not, then, submit themselves to a world *Leviathan* to ensure order and promote peace. He takes a multivariate approach to international conflict, investigating the individual psychological level, the internal construction of states, and the structure of the international system, and determines that the potential for conflict rests on all three levels. Waltz contends that it would be unfair to simply blame man's propensity for violence at the level of human nature and vigorously opposes proposals to use science or education to rid the human person of his violent impulses. Nor can one solely blame a state's political structure, and so endeavor to ensure that all states move towards the (supposedly more peaceful) democratic, responsive forms of government. Finally, while it is true that the anarchic nature of the state-centric international system provides no obstacles to war, this is not war's sole cause, as is evident by the existence of conflict in the former two dynamics.<sup>6</sup>

Waltz represents a shift in the classical realist understanding of the international system towards neorealism. While traditional realists defend their theories based on a negative view of human nature, as articulated by Hobbes, neorealists tend to focus more

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2003); John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, 19, no. 3 (1994-1995): 5-49.

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, "Explaining War," in *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2d ed., ed. Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 123-142.

on the structure of the international system which, similar to an economic system, determines the way in which actors behave. Rather than speaking of money or wealth, however, neorealists use the language of capabilities. Just as a company's ability to purchase a desired asset will be affected by its amount of wealth relative to others in a competitive market, so does a country's capabilities (primarily military and economic) affect its potential to achieve its goals in the international system. Furthermore, Waltz argues that the international system of self-interested competitive states sustains itself – that capabilities will perpetually be redistributed among states so that the balance of power may shift and new great powers will emerge and wane, but that the system as a whole will remain intact, regardless of deliberate state actions to the contrary.<sup>7</sup>

### *Realism and Transnationalism*

The potential of groups and trends that exist above or below the state level to influence the conduct of international relations is a hotly contested area among realists. Admitting a significant role for such groups would strike directly at the heart of realists' underlying assumptions that states are the primary actors in the international system. One area of intense debate in the supra-state realm, yet underneath transnationalism, is the role of international institutions in the state system. The ways each school attempts to address this issue is telling for how each, in turn, approaches transnational groups.

John J. Mearsheimer, one of the leading contemporary realists in the United States, laid out the realist understanding of international institutions in a series of articles

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<sup>7</sup>Viotti and Kauppi, 50-52.

in the mid-1990s.<sup>8</sup> According to Mearsheimer, because international institutions are state-created and state-enforced, international institutions are no different than any other tool or resource states use to secure their interests. International institutions generally reflect the distribution of power in the state system, such that the most powerful states are able to use these institutions to their advantage. A pertinent example would be the composition of the Security Council of the United Nations, which provides the most powerful nations (at the time of its creation) with a veto power not granted to the weaker members. Furthermore, it is not only the structure and policies of international institutions that reflect their state-based nature, but also the way states use such institutions. For instance, Mearsheimer argued that NATO is no more than an alliance, originally formed to balance Soviet power, created by states and whose activities are carried out under state control.<sup>9</sup>

Mearsheimer concluded that because international institutions are mere tools of states, they have little impact on the behavior of states and bring the world no closer to world peace. Transnational groups, however, are further removed from the nation-state system; like international institutions they are not states themselves, yet unlike their international counterparts they do not officially represent any state, they sometimes act beyond states' control and they often disregard state sovereignty and territorial boundaries. The realist approach to transnational groups and trends is best explored in the literature on interdependency.

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<sup>8</sup> Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions"; John J. Mearsheimer, "A Realist Reply," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 82-93.

<sup>9</sup>Mearsheimer, "False Promise," 13-14.

Interdependency, defined as “a relation or relations between two or among more than two units, in which one is sensitive or vulnerable to the decisions or actions of the other or others,” is generally viewed as a negative condition by realists.<sup>10</sup> If one state is dependent upon another to augment an economic, military or political capability, that state is in a vulnerable position in relation to the state it is dependent upon. A classic example would be the United States’ reliance on the OPEC nations for the majority of its oil, which leaves the United States vulnerable to price hikes, while simultaneously constraining American foreign policy options.<sup>11</sup> Yet it is important to note that, while interdependence is often not equal (one party often dominates the other or others), it is also not one-sided. If the United States were able to develop energy alternatives and drastically reduce its reliance on foreign oil, OPEC would lose a major consumer, and the economic capabilities of the OPEC nations on the international level would be negatively affected, thus revealing the counter-dependency of OPEC on the United States.

Interdependence can also be observed between states and non-state actors, such as transnational groups. These relations, termed complex interdependence, mark a central factor in liberal IR theories, to be further investigated in chapter four. Realists, however, do not view such relations to be very significant to the functioning of the international system. Because one of the underpinning assumptions of realism is that states are the primary actors, realists cannot accept transnational actors as sincerely influential factors. In an era of increasing globalization, realists have been forced to defend this central tenant vigorously.

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<sup>10</sup>Viotti and Kauppi, 584.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 55-56.

In a 1999 article, Kenneth Waltz defended the neorealist paradigm against the many popular writers of the decade who predicted the inevitable subjugation of the state to global economic forces who recognize no authority, thus weakening state control over the system and, with it, the realist paradigm.<sup>12</sup> He argues that states are no more economically interdependent today than they were at the turn of the last century, and that the seeming convergence of cultures (embodied in cosmopolitanism or the spread of capitalism) is just a modern manifestation of the weak imitating the strong to gain an advantage. In response to those who looked forward to economic interdependence as a deterrent to war, Waltz denies that economic interests will ever trump political ones.<sup>13</sup> He states “the most important events in international politics are explained by difference in the capabilities of states, not by economic forces operating across states or transcending them...The most important causes of peace, as of war, are found in international-political conditions, including the weaponry available to states.”<sup>14</sup>

According to the realist paradigm, international politics supersedes transnational economics as the determining factor in international relations, and the realist approach to transnational cultures, ideas, and movements is no different.

### *Realism and Religion*

Ironically, the realist perspective can also be argued through a religious lens. The preeminent thinker on Christian realism, Reinhold Niebuhr, supports the general concepts

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<sup>12</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, “Globalization and Governance,” *Political Science and Politics* 32, no. 4 (December, 1999): 693-700.

<sup>13</sup>The authors to whom Waltz is responding include Thomas Friedman, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, and Kenichi Ohmae, among others.

<sup>14</sup>Waltz, “Globalization and Governance,” 698.

of the realist school of IR. Niebuhr argues that the Christian understanding of human nature is similar to that of Hobbes, in that the seeds of conflict are inherent in human nature. Utilizing the Christian terminology of “sin,” Niebuhr contends that “all historic struggles are struggles between sinful men.”<sup>15</sup> Niebuhr’s theological principles affirm the assumptions of classical realism, while also agreeing with some tenants of neorealism. For instance, because the human and societal potential for sin cannot be overcome by humans in the temporal world (only by Christ), Niebuhr echoes Waltz’s contention that the psychological or social causes of conflict can not be rooted out by education or modern science.<sup>16</sup>

While some theological perspectives may support realism, realist scholars are not so open to religion. Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, states have relegated religion to the realm of internal affairs in a way that other phenomena found within a state’s borders have not (i.e., economics, the press, the environment). Therefore, while other phenomena have recently enjoyed an emergence in the considerations of IR theorists, most notably economics, scholars are reticent to resurrect the study of religion as an international factor. Because the modern system of international relations was founded upon the principle of *cujus regio ejus religio*, the realist approach to religion is primarily in religion’s domestic forms.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, a more nuanced analysis of the realist understanding of domestic politics is in order.

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<sup>15</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, “The War and American Churches,” in *Classics of International Relations*, 3d ed., ed. John A. Vasquez (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 20.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 21; Waltz, “Explaining War,” 124-126.

<sup>17</sup>Also spelled “*cuius regio, eius religio*,” which means “a territory’s religion [is] that of its prince.” *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, volume A-E, s.v. “Cuius Regio, Eius Religio,” (1979).

Kenneth Waltz best explained the realist approach to domestic composition and activities within his larger theory, later termed “structural realism.” Waltz acknowledged that the domestic structure and policy of a state, and any change therein, could have consequences for the ability of particular states to make choices at the international level. These same domestic factors, however, will not affect the international structure or the nature of international relations as such. Waltz explained that all states, as political entities organized by territory, perform similar functions and goals; the domestic makeup of a state will not change the fact that states will seek power to secure their interests. What domestic policies and changes *will* do is extend or limit a state’s capabilities to act on the international scene. For instance, if the domestic policies of a state are detrimental to its economy, the domestic policy directly (and negatively) affects the resources the state may rely upon in its international contests, and thus the way the state will interact with the international community. Waltz contended that domestic issues change neither the structure nor the nature of international relations, merely the capabilities of a state to achieve its goals.<sup>18</sup>

Within the realist understanding of the impact of a state’s domestic affairs on the international system, it is possible that religion may influence IR, through changing the capabilities of a state to act at the international level. A historical example might be Max Weber’s concept of the “Protestant Ethic.”<sup>19</sup> Weber believed that the particular theological principles and directives of Protestantism were fertile ground for the growth

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<sup>18</sup>Robert O. Keohane, “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond,” in *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2d ed., ed. Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 186-223; See also Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

<sup>19</sup>Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner, 1958).

of capitalism, and perhaps even encouraged economic productivity. If accurate, this theory would conclude that religion may contribute to a state's economic capabilities at the international level. A more standard economic practice is the sharing of funds among co-religionists across state borders. Whether through the fund-raising capabilities of religiously-affiliated NGOs or the direct impact of missionary groups, transnational religions certainly have the capability to affect a nation's economy, even if at a relatively low level.<sup>20</sup>

Religion also may be used as a military resource in its considerable ability to legitimate military actions and to "rally the troops." In his groundbreaking study of religious nationalism, Mark Juergensmeyer explains that religious rhetoric can be utilized to give an essentially political conflict cosmological gravity, to raise death to the level of sacrifice and martyrdom, and to redefine political enemies as enemies of religion.<sup>21</sup> Even beyond the nation-state, religion can similarly affect global conflict by empowering marginal populations, who otherwise would not have access to such resources. Juergensmeyer describes the effects on the political system of religious violence used by non-state actors, saying "Because their activities are sanctioned by religion, they are not just random acts of terror but are strategic political actions: they break the state's monopoly on morally sanctioned killing."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, depending on one's position in the conflict, as a state agent or as a member of a marginalized population, religion could

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<sup>20</sup>Ralph Della Cava, "Religious Resource Networks: Roman Catholic Philanthropy in Central and East Europe" in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 173-211.

<sup>21</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1993), 153-170.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

be the factor that either “makes” or “breaks” the state.—either way, religion would certainly affect a state’s capabilities at the international level.

Despite the conclusion among social scientists that religion does influence global society and international politics, even in the modern world, realists’ narrow construction of what is relevant to their paradigm excludes religion from consideration. Even in the terminology of a state’s “capabilities,” neorealists tend to ignore the composition of a state’s capabilities and emphasize instead the mere fact that capabilities among states are disparate and allocated across an international system of competitive states.

*Realism and Transnational Religion in Theory and Practice: Tensions and Potential*

Although realism has remained the predominant paradigm of international relations since World War II, the practice of foreign policy among states has strayed from realist theory considerably and offers numerous examples of how realism can be decidedly unrealistic. The practice of diplomacy is perhaps the best study in this regard, as it involves the actual embodiment of foreign policy and the actual relations among states’ representatives. While diplomats certainly work for states, with the goal of enhancing a particular state’s global standing, within international law governing the state system, and predominately according to rules revolving around the state, diplomats regularly act outside of the official state structure.

One tool employed by diplomats since the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s is public diplomacy.<sup>23</sup> This includes not only the necessity of gaining support among one’s own constituency, at least within states with representative governments, but also

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<sup>23</sup>Paul Gordon Lauren, Gordon A. Craig, and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Challenges of our Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 47-58.

appealing to another state's constituency through propaganda. The rise of ideological wars made "winning the hearts and minds" an important task of diplomats and state leaders – one that is arguably central to American foreign policy today. In essence, it would be correct to say that public diplomacy still falls within the realist paradigm, in that it is merely a tool to enhance one's capabilities in relation to other states. While it may not change the nature of the system itself, however, public diplomacy can change the outcome of a particular power contest. The actual act of public diplomacy inherently recognizes that domestic politics matter to international relations, at the very least in its ability to alter the political capabilities in a state.

Furthermore, the modern composition of many Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) supports the contention that issues and relations at the sub-state and supra-state levels affect the conduct of international relations.<sup>24</sup> Since the 1950s and 1960s, many MFAs established functional departments, in addition to the geographic departments that historically paralleled the state system. The establishment and growth of functional departments acknowledge that some important issues of foreign affairs are not state-defined, such as the drug trade, terrorism, and arms control. Expansion of the actual practice of foreign affairs has also extended below the state level, to ministries of internal affairs that currently conduct relations across state borders to their counterparts in other states, establishing "direct dial diplomacy."<sup>25</sup> Some examples include ministries of trade, defense, and transportation.

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<sup>24</sup>G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 2d ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 11.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

Another way religion possibly affects international relations in its transnational form is through kin-country rallying, briefly mentioned previously in chapter two. In his 1993 article, and later elaborated upon in his 1996 book, Samuel Huntington proposed that in the post-Cold War world, when two countries belonging to different civilizational groups come into conflict, states outside of the conflict will ally with the state that is most similar culturally to its own tradition.<sup>26</sup> Huntington defines his concept of civilization almost entirely along religious lines, and thus seems to indicate that co-religionists support each other in times of war. This theory suggests, then, that states sometimes conduct foreign policy according to considerations other than power: in this case, religion.

Finally, realism has had to confront theoretically transnational religion in its violent forms and the effect such violence has had on the international system. Realists have difficulty explaining both the use of violence among non-state actors on the level of international relations and the state of world affairs after September 11, 2001. According to Robert A. Pape, political violence organized by individuals below or beyond the state-level still might be considered a state's defensive mechanism when such militants are fighting to expel some sort of external domination from their state.<sup>27</sup> Pape cannot explain, however, the fact that some truly transnational terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda have few temporal political goals directed at any particular state's defense.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1996), 273.

<sup>27</sup>Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism" *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (August 2003): 343-361.

<sup>28</sup>Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

It is easier for realists to explain the American reaction to the 9/11 attacks, because the United States retaliated against *states* who were seen as supporting terrorist groups' efforts, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq. Still, realists contend that although this state-centric reaction fits the realist expectation of state behavior, the American response was hardly adequate. Before the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, several leading realist scholars signed an open letter imploring the U.S. government to act only within its capabilities and to resist disturbing the (admittedly hegemonic) existing balance of power. They especially deplored the notion that American troops would be able to establish peace and democracy in these societies, and perhaps throughout the world.<sup>29</sup>

Realism does have some potential, however, for evaluating the role of transnational religion in international relations. This can be found first in a possible expansion of the definition of power, and second in the literature on state capabilities. Realists could expand their consideration of power in its purely physical sense to the larger sense of political or social power. This would, in turn, lead to a deeper investigation of the particularities of states' capabilities. For instance, a state can use religious rhetoric to legitimate a particular course of action on the international level or even to rally its troops to war. It could also use a shared religious history as a defensive mechanism to convince the citizens of an opposing state that, for religious reasons, friendship is a more tenable and desirable relationship than enmity. The power the state is exhibiting is political, not material or military, yet it still enables the state to pursue its interests in line with realist expectations. Furthermore, a state that has a strong religious

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<sup>29</sup>Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (November/December 2004): 52-62.

identity on which to draw legitimacy for its actions could be said to have greater capabilities than states that lack this political resource.

It seems that a key component of expanding realism towards a consideration of the influence of transnational religion exists in asking relevant questions through realist lenses. For instance, realists have a strong tradition of evaluating the tools a state uses to pursue its self-interest or to sustain the balance of power, chief among them being the art of diplomacy. The potential exists within realism, then, to understand and evaluate the way diplomats can appeal to religion to pursue state interests, or the necessity of understanding another state's religion or cultural point of view in order to successfully build bilateral relationships and negotiate treaty terms. Realists could even investigate the dynamics of transnational religion as a form of public diplomacy on its own terms.

Another relevant question that could be illuminated through a realist perspective is the role of transnational religion in enforcing or undermining the balance of power. A realist analysis of Huntington's "kin-country rallying" might conclude that shared religion re-enforces alliances between states while religious difference undermines alliances. In essence, viewing these dynamics through a realist perspective still assumes the state to be the primary actor of international relations, but does not deny the capability of transnational forms of religion to influence relations between states.

### *Conclusions*

Realism's strength can be found in its consistency and longevity. Notorious for its reluctance to change, realists have been able to construct a paradigm that explains much of the political activity at the international level throughout the ages. Yet Waltz's insistence that nothing is new, even within the modern, globalizing world, seems a bit

narrow-sighted. By ignoring important societal, technological, and religious trends, realists constrict their relevance to the actual practice of international relations. The simple fact that realists must lobby the government to act according to realist constructs, as has been the case with the Iraq War, illustrates that conducting policy against the paradigm is not only possible, but is actually happening.

Without an expansion of scope and permitted determinants, realism's ability to predict the causes and effects of international conflict will continue to wane. In an era when many states are acutely aware of the need for public acceptance of government policies, as demonstrated by the changing orientation of diplomatic strategies, trends at the societal level increasingly affect the actual conduct of foreign policy. Furthermore, realists must contend with the fact that important international conflicts can sometimes be sparked by considerations other than power, one of which is religion.

Classical realists and neorealists miss the importance of religion to international relations. Because they tend to disregard the effect the domestic situation of a nation-state has on its foreign policy, realist scholars have traditionally ignored the political makeup of government, the particularities of culture, and the religious dynamics working within any particular state. Yet religious movements and groups have certainly affected the international relations of the late twentieth century. In its nationalist form, religion was most certainly visible in the Iranian Revolution and the Balkan Wars. In its international form, Huntington's theory of religion and kin-rallying may prove to be an equally telling predictor of state behavior in the twenty-first century as power considerations. In its transnational form, religion is a key motivation behind the system-disrupting acts of religious terrorism.

Due to its restricted focus on the nation-state as the proper unit of analysis of international affairs, and its narrow concentration on power as the most significant state motivator, the realist paradigm is an inadequate predictor of transnational religion's effect on the international system. Still, if realists would admit a broader definition of power and a more intensive investigation of the composition of a state's capabilities, the potential exists for realism to better conceptualize the role of transnational religion in international relations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Transnational Religion and the Liberal Paradigm

Liberal theorists, like realists, frame their paradigm in terms of the structure of the international system. In fact, much of the liberal approach to international relations is based off, grounded in, or in reaction to the realist literature and, as such, much of the theory discussed in this chapter will necessarily reference the positions explained in chapter three of this work. Working to correct perceived deficiencies or poorly grounded assumptions in the realist school, liberals have created a much more complex and inclusive paradigm. The predominant liberal authors seek to investigate the causes and conditions, beyond the consideration of power, which may affect the international system. Such causes and conditions can be economic, legal, psychological, or even cultural in nature.

My purpose in this chapter is to investigate how liberal theorists understand transnational religion as a cause of behavior at the international level or as a conditioning factor of the international system. Because liberal theorists are much more open than their realist counterparts to admitting the influence of non-power based phenomena on the international system, there appears to be the potential for a liberal IR theory of transnational religion to emerge. In actuality, however, certain historical and academic presuppositions that exist within the liberal paradigm work to counteract that possibility.

The liberal approach to IR is not as coherent a school as realism; many strands have developed seeking to explain specific deficiencies in realist thought, which in turn

have created a plurality of themes and theories among liberals. Because of this tendency, the liberal school is called by a plurality of names, including “idealism,” “pluralism” and “institutionalism.” While significant differences sometimes exist between these strands, I will refer to the basic assumptions held by the majority of liberal theorists as “liberalism,” and denote where specific authors diverge from the main body of work.

### *Classic Liberal Literature*

Liberals trace their scholarly heritage to eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, nineteenth-century British philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill and twentieth-century American president Woodrow Wilson. Liberals tend to hold a positive view of human nature and emphasize that change and progress towards peace is possible. They also contend that factors transcending and interacting with nation-states help set the context in which states act, the principal factor being trade. In fact, due to the growing economic interdependence of states, liberals contend that the international system is less anarchic than realists and neorealists contend. Liberals look to international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, to settle disputes between nation-states peacefully.<sup>1</sup>

Liberalism is based on four key assumptions. First, non-state actors hold significance for the international system and can function as their own entities, independent from states. Second, because states are constituted of diverse groups seeking differentiated interests at the domestic level, scholars should not consider states to be unitary actors on the international level. The third assumption follows, then, that states

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2003), 5.

may not always act rationally since the domestic clash of interests often necessitates compromise on foreign policy issues. In essence, this may lead to state leaders acting internationally in a way that is not, “rationally,” in their very best interest. Finally, liberals contend that states’ interests extend beyond the primary level of physical security, and include economic, social and ecological concerns that dictate behavior in the international system.<sup>2</sup> All four assumptions work together to create a paradigm wholly different from realism; liberalism is much more expansive in scope, more inclusive of influencing actors, and multi-purpose in function.

Liberal IR theory owes much to the framework laid by liberal political and economic theorists that shifted their focus from the state to the individual, as the primary unit of political analysis. Political liberals, such as John Locke, and liberal economists, such as Adam Smith, called for political and economic systems that would limit the state to the minimal level necessary to ensure that individuals could pursue their desired goals. Underpinning these convictions was the shared assumption that human activities did not have to be based on suspicion, domination and conflict, as the realists assert, but could instead be based on shared human interests.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary liberal IR theorists project these principles onto international politics. They recognize that the anarchic nature of the international system cultivates some amount of uncertainty and conflict, which sets it apart from domestic circumstances. Yet, they also believe that if a harmony of interests is articulated and recognized, a more stable and peaceful system is possible.

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<sup>2</sup>Paul R. Votti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2d ed. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1993), 228.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 230-231.

Theorists asserted this possibility through legal, economic and democratic arguments. The first, legal, is based on the works of early seventeenth century legal theorist Hugo Grotius. Neither a realist nor a liberal, but influential to both, Grotius recognized that states are the primary actors in international relations, but did not condemn them to an unending cycle of conflict. Instead, Grotius wrote that rules and institutions developed among states could serve to impose a stabilizing order on the system. From a Grotian perspective, a society exists among states in which common laws and norms are established, and the demands of morality and ethics shape state behavior.<sup>4</sup> Woodrow Wilson's attempt to form the League of Nations after World War I is the typical example of the political embodiment of Grotian ideas. While this attempt infamously failed, its successor, the United Nations, along with economic institutions such as the World Bank, represent contemporary attempts to reduce conflict by imposing a legal order on the world's states. Contemporary liberal theorists have developed institutionalism as a basis of their paradigm and, as such, will receive further analysis in regards to transnationalism below.

Liberal theorists argue that economic factors also inhibit international conflict and work to impose order and stability on the system. Nineteenth century liberal economists analyzing the economic costs of military conflict made premature predictions that war would end simply because it made little financial sense.<sup>5</sup> After the outbreak of World War I largely discredited this logic, liberals were forced to modify their theory.

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<sup>4</sup>Hedly Bull, "Does Order Exist in World Politics?" in *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2d ed., ed. Paul R. Votti and Mark V. Kauppi (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1993), 119-123.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913).

Contemporary liberals now argue that trade and economic connections possess the ability to impose order and promote peace not because they can prevent war, but rather because they can redefine state interests.<sup>6</sup> Increasing economic ties between states provides an incentive to protect a profitable system, though liberal theorists recognize that such ties would not make war an impossibility.<sup>7</sup>

The third liberal argument for the possibility of overcoming conflict among states is based on Immanuel Kant's theory of a systematic peace.<sup>8</sup> Kant establishes early in his work that he essentially agrees with the realist presumption that the state of nature is one of war, yet he insists that a state of peace can be established through legislation.<sup>9</sup> Kant establishes three principles that must be observed in order for a perpetual peace to take shape. First, and most significant, is the necessity of the establishment and perpetuation of representative governments. Unlike in autocratic governments wherein a leader can simply command his subjects and his subjects' resources to war, the citizenry of a republic must decide to deprive themselves of life and wealth in order to conduct warfare – a situation Kant views as unlikely at best. Kant then calls for a federation of nations to be established – not so that all nations become one state and surrender all sovereignty – but so that a “federation of free states” will bound themselves to coercive laws created to

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<sup>6</sup>Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*, 43-44.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986).

<sup>8</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 10.

ensure peace.<sup>10</sup> Here, Kant specifically takes aim at the anarchic nature of the international system and the vices it allows among states, saying

when we see savages in their anarchy, prefer the perpetual combats of licentious liberty to a reasonable liberty, founded upon constitutional order, can we refrain to look down with the most profound contempt on this animal degradation of humanity? Must we not blush at the contempt to which the want of civilization reduces men? And would one not rather be led to think that civilized nations, each of which form a constituted state, would hasten to extricate themselves from an order of things so ignominious?<sup>11</sup>

Finally, Kant's third requirement for perpetual peace is the recognition of the right (as opposed to the privilege) of persons to be treated with hospitality, regardless of their national affinity. In this way, no person is to be considered an enemy and all persons are to receive the rights accorded to all.<sup>12</sup>

Versions of Kant's proposals for peace have come to be established in contemporary liberal theory as "democratic peace theory."<sup>13</sup> Various authors and multiple American administrations of both parties have acted upon the assumptions of the democratic peace theory. Kant's third component is now codified in various human rights doctrines signed by the nations of the world. His second requirement is arguably embodied by the United Nations. It is his first principle, however, that continues to inspire debate among theorists. Numerous contemporary studies have shown that, contrary to Kant's thesis that citizens would not will themselves to war, democracies are just as likely to engage in warfare as states with another form of domestic political

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 18.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 18-19.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 23-27.

<sup>13</sup>Steve Chan, "In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, no.1 (May 1997): 59-91.

composition. What does seem to stand firm is the principle that democracies rarely fight each other. The theory follows, then, that an increase in the number of states that implement a democratic form of government would result in a decrease in military conflict: a democratic world would be a peaceful one. Of course, one must also note that subsequent studies have revealed that nascent democracies are often very turbulent and prone to international and civil wars. Liberal theorists, therefore, must warn that the *transition* to a democratic, peaceful world may not be peaceful at all.<sup>14</sup>

### *Interdependency*

A hallmark of contemporary liberal thought is the importance of economic integration and levels of interdependency among states. Unlike realists, who insist that little has changed since antiquity in the essentials of how states interact, liberals view the changes brought about by modernity as significantly altering the world system. Because of the technological, industrial, transport and communicative advances in modernity, the ties between states have increased and solidified, and have done so at multiple levels of society. Rather than the realist vision of states as “billiard balls” colliding against one another, liberals view the international system as a latticework or cobweb, where states are intricately connected and even dependant upon one another.<sup>15</sup> States are bound together legally, by treaties and other constructs of international law, as well as by international institutions, such as the EU or NATO, to which states recognize agreed-upon obligations. Furthermore, links between states exist irrelevant to the state construct

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<sup>14</sup>Jack Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (November/December 2004), 52-62.

<sup>15</sup>Viotti and Kauppi, 239-240.

on various levels: economic (between private companies), familial (between migrant populations), political (between NGOs concerned with similar issues), or even theological (between co-religionists).

For liberals, the cobweb image shows that the international system of states is not completely anarchic, and they attempt to show that the relations between states provide a level of stability and a buffer against conflict. Liberal theorist David Mitrany, in particular, investigated how transnational ties could require collaboration between states, possibly reducing extreme nationalism and fostering a more peaceful and stable environment.<sup>16</sup> One way stability can be achieved is through economic integration. Exemplified by the creation of the Economic Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), liberals emphasize that the integration of economic interests, in which a benefit for one party is a benefit for the whole community, promotes non-aggressive behavior and cooperation between states.<sup>17</sup> Many economic ties exist below this level of full economic integration, which liberal theorists contend also can promote cooperative behavior. Political scientist Richard Rosecrance notes how, in a state's perpetual balance between acquiring its needs either militarily or through trade, increased economic interdependence tips the scale in favor of the latter.<sup>18</sup>

Based on the notion that increased ties between states stabilize the international system and curbs conflict, liberals view interdependence between states as a positive development. In contrast to realists, who see interdependency as exposing a state's

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<sup>16</sup> Viotti and Kauppi, 241. See also David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966).

<sup>17</sup>Viotti and Kauppi, 241-242.

<sup>18</sup>Rosecrance, 212.

vulnerability, liberals contend that the benefits of interdependence may outweigh the disadvantages. For this assumption to hold, of course, liberals must concede that security concerns do not always top the hierarchy of state objectives; economic, social and cultural ties might prove to be just as significant or influential. Important, here, is the liberal extension of the latticework image inward to a state's domestic composition. Particularly in countries that have representational forms of government, regimes are prone to considering domestic goals when devising foreign policy. For instance, an administration might risk angering other countries by establishing protectionist trade tariffs in order to protect domestic jobs, thus setting economic concerns ahead of security.<sup>19</sup>

Liberals do admit that there is a level of vulnerability in interdependent relations, especially when such relations exist between states with uneven powers or capabilities. To help manage the interdependent relations between states, liberals promote the composition of international law and the construction of international institutions, thereby incorporating the Grotian assumption that legal norms and institutions can further promote stability. In response to Mearsheimer's charges that international institutions are no more than tools for powerful states to further extend their influence, "neoliberals" or "institutionalists" contend that institutions act upon the system in such a way as to reduce conflict. They help to shape expectations of peaceful behavior, provide a sense of continuity in the system, and act as an alternative location for conflict resolution.

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<sup>19</sup>Viotti and Kauppi, 240-245.

Whereas “classical liberals expect ‘peace breaking out all over’; today’s liberals look for *islands* of peace where institutions and stable expectations have developed.”<sup>20</sup>

### *Liberalism and Transnational Studies*

Based on the above theory of interdependency among states, liberals assert the parallel significance of transnational relations and institutions on the international system. The foremost contemporary authors on interdependency theory and early analysts of transnational relations, Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, state “At the most general level our contention is that these transnational relations increase the sensitivity of societies to one another and thereby alter relationships between governments.”<sup>21</sup> They outline five ways in which transnational relations affect international relations. First is the ability of transnational relations and groups to change attitudes among a state’s elite or non-elite populations, such that their willingness to engage in conflict or cooperation with the members of another society may change. Second is the growth of transnational groups that link non-governmental organizations of different states, according to common concerns. This contributes to international pluralism and expands the ability of peoples and groups of one state to affect the politics of other states.

The third effect transnationalism has on international relations is by increasing the level of dependency in the system. As described in the section above, states can (and often do) become dependent on each other, but they can also become dependent on

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<sup>20</sup>Nye, *Understanding International Conflict*, 46. See also Robert O. Keohane, “International Institutions: Two Approaches” *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (December 1988): 379-396; and Robert O. Keohane and Lisa Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 39-51.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and Robert O. Keohane, “Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction,” *International Organization* 25, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 336.

transnational groups, such as communication and travel networks. States sometimes find that they must conform their policies to the systems or procedures established by transnational groups or networks, lest they set themselves at a severe economic or political disadvantage. Fourth, governments can use transnational groups or relations as a tool for influencing the behavior of other states. Nye and Keohane use as an example the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in which the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics attempted to engage the other side in arms-control talks without meeting on an official governmental level.<sup>22</sup> Finally, transnational groups can affect the international system as autonomous actors in world politics who sometimes directly challenge the interests of states. Transnational corporations and transnational religious bodies have obligations to share-holders and adherents that sometimes pit the group against a state or collection of states.

Although Nye and Keohane acknowledge the ability of transnational actors to influence the international system, they do not envision the wane of the state as a viable political unit. Instead, they predict the growth of the “control gap” that exists between the desire a state has to control its domestic and foreign affairs and the state’s ability to achieve that control. Furthermore, by admitting the influence of transnational studies on the conduct of international relations, liberals necessarily expand the list of significant actors in their paradigm. Rather than defining international politics as relations between states, Nye and Keohane redefine world politics as “a world system in which a significant

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<sup>22</sup>Nye and Keohane, “Transnational Relations,” 340.

actor is any somewhat autonomous individual or organization that controls substantial resources and participates in political relationships with other actors across state lines.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Liberalism and Religion*

While it would seem that the liberal paradigm’s greater flexibility and inclusiveness of variant factors would lead to the recognition of religion’s influence in global society, liberals traditionally have been reluctant to admit the potential impact of religion in world affairs. The liberal paradigm may technically be able to incorporate a religious influence on world relations, yet religion perhaps has been even more taboo in the liberal camp than in the realist. Liberal scholars tend to be personally irreligious, and have been the greatest proponents of the Secularization Thesis. They tend to view religion as a dying remnant of the past with occasionally violent nationalistic manifestations. Peter Berger referred to this group as a “globalized elite culture” that is “composed of people with Western-type higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences” and, for one reason or another, this group is drawn to secularism.<sup>24</sup>

The problem of religion in the liberal paradigm, however, is more deeply-rooted than the superficial biases highlighted above. In fact, certain religious perspectives strike at the heart of liberalism in a similar way to that discussed in the chapter on realism. Transnational religion challenges realism by questioning the primacy of the nation-state, while challenging the heart of liberalism by questioning the field’s secular foundations. In the twentieth century, the gravest philosophical and political threats liberalism faced

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 345.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Berger, “Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview” in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), 10.

were other secular ideologies: communism and fascism. In the twenty-first century, liberalism's greatest adversary is revealed religion that refuses to find a place within liberal constitutionalism. This type of religion is referred to by political scientist J. Judd Owen as "illiberal revealed theology," and is more commonly called "fundamentalism."<sup>25</sup>

Traditionally, the challenge religion poses to the foundational premises of liberalism is one of authority. Religion affirms divine authority and revelation to mankind as the source of political systems and laws while liberalism asserts the human ability to discern truth rationally and build political systems thereupon. In the modern era many religious groups have found a place within the liberal constitutional system, which in turn has accommodated religion to some degree; in the American system this is accomplished by granting the freedom of religious belief and by prohibiting the government from deciding theological questions. Fundamentalists, however, reject the validity of the separation of theology from political questions and systems. Even more fervently, fundamentalists refuse to accept the mere accommodation of religion within a larger secular order; they argue the spiritual should not be subordinated to the temporal, but *vice versa*.

At the international level, the liberal paradigm is forced to consider the consequences of the religious foundations of states in a way that realism is not. Because realism puts domestic factors into the proverbial "black box" and sees the state as a

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<sup>25</sup>J. Judd Owen, "The Task of Liberal Theory After September 11," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 2 (June 2004): 325-330. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby define fundamentalism as "a tendency, a habit of mind, found within religious communities and paradigmatically embodied in certain representative individuals and movements, which manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or a group. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past." Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance* The Fundamentalism Project, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3.

unitary actor, the realist paradigm can function whether states are democracies, autocracies or theocracies. Because of the assumptions of democratic peace theory, however, liberal IR theorists are compelled to defend the secular and rational principles upon which representative government is based. Moreover, religion is not the only philosophy that questions the founding assumptions of liberalism. As Owen notes, “Does not the ‘post-modern’ critique of the Enlightenment willy-nilly reopen the door to illiberal revealed theology?”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, both theologians and post-modernists call into question liberalism’s focus on empiricism, its disregard of emotions and consciousness, and the liberal emphasis on theory and its modernizing ends rather than on meaning.<sup>27</sup> Faced with such opposition at the foundational level, it is no wonder why liberal IR theorists perennially ignore religious phenomena or subjugate them to the margins of the field.

### *Liberalism’s Religious Capabilities*

Paradoxically, as a system of interpreting actions and predicting behavior on the international level, liberalism has the ability to incorporate transnational religion’s influence much more readily than realism. Beginning with the assumptions of liberal theory, summarized at the beginning of the chapter, religion is admissible at all levels. First, liberalism allows for the influence of non-state actors, which could certainly include religious groups. Second, liberalism accepts the significance of domestic politics, which are readily influenced by a state’s religious traditions and predominant religious

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 328.

<sup>27</sup>Vendulka Kubáľková, “Toward an International Political Theology,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, ed. Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 82-86.

groups. Third, liberals do not view states as strictly rational actors, and emphasize the role of “irrational” motivators and priorities that exist beyond security interests; religion would seem an obvious “irrational” and non-security related motivation behind state’s actions at the international level.

Furthermore, the influence transnational religion can confer on the international system can be articulated using Nye and Keohane’s analyses of transnationalism. Transnationalism, they assert, may result in a change in a population’s attitudes towards another population; when people travel across borders, cultural works are disseminated world-wide, and norms change. Missionaries have been very effective transnational bearers of cultural, and of course religious, works and dialogues that result in “attitude changes” in foreign populations. The second effect of transnationalism is the increased pluralism of international society as NGOs are linked according to interest across borders; religious groups are no exception. Third are the dependent and interdependent effects of transnationalism, which could include religious transnationalism. For instance, states might find it costly, in terms of political capital, to attempt to avoid established religious rhetoric, traditional religious holidays, the requirements of religious pilgrimages and certainly friendships among states with similar religious histories.

Fourth, transnationalism creates “*new instruments for influence* for use by some governments over others” (their emphasis).<sup>28</sup> As an example, Nye and Keohane cite informal interactions among elites of different nations at non-governmental conferences. International religious forums, especially those of inter-religious composition, might provide an opportunity for such unofficial cross-cultural influence, as would the world

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<sup>28</sup>Nye and Keohane, *Transnational Relations*, 340.

travels of influential religious leaders. Fifth are transnational religious groups that act autonomously as independent actors on the world scene. Nye and Keohane specifically acknowledge the Catholic Church as such an institution.<sup>29</sup>

A final consideration of the potentialities of liberalism with respect to its ability to include transnational religion as an influence in international affairs is its openness to the effectiveness of soft power. According to Nye, “soft power can rest on such resources as the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences others express.”<sup>30</sup> Nye considers culture and ideology to be components of soft power and notes that soft power is not only wielded by states, but also by institutions and NGOs. The capability of the liberal paradigm to easily incorporate transnational religion at this point again appears obvious. As a component of both culture and ideology, religion serves as an important resource of legitimacy for state constructs and state activity at both the domestic and international levels.

Conversely, transnational religion can influence state action through its own use of “soft power.” Pope John Paul II wielded soft power in Poland in the late 1970s and 1980s<sup>31</sup> The Dalai Lama uses the “soft power” of his diplomacy and publications to influence Western attitudes towards the political autonomy of Tibet.<sup>32</sup> By widening the

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<sup>29</sup>Payne and Kent similarly recognized the ability of religious actors to independently influence world affairs in Daniel Payne and Jennifer M. Kent, “Towards a Catholic-Orthodox Alliance?” (working paper presented at *The Dialogue of Cultures*, Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture, South Bend, Indiana, 30 December 2007). We argued that a three-way dialogue between Pope Benedict XVI, the leaders of the Orthodox Churches and predominant Muslim leaders, working as autonomous actors, could incite the type of “attitude changes” Nye and Keohane see as possible in transnational relations.

<sup>30</sup>Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

<sup>32</sup>Barry Sautman, “The Tibet Issue in Post-Summit Sino-American Relations,” *Pacific Affairs* 72, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 7-21.

definition of power to include non-material resources, the liberal paradigm exhibits a clear capacity to incorporate and analyze the influences of transnational religion.

Despite the many possibilities that exist within the liberal literature, relatively few liberal theorists are currently endeavoring to explore religion's ability to affect the international system. Perhaps some liberal scholars fear acknowledging religion's strength in an avowedly secular world. To do so would risk legitimizing the many religious critiques of the system and liberal theory. Would it be possible for liberals to admit the impact of transnational religion, as exemplified by my analysis of the assumptions of liberalism and the affects of transnationalism, and still hold together a coherent paradigm based on secular foundations? I believe so. While the battle between the extremes of secular liberalism and illiberal revealed theology may be a zero-sum game, both exist in international politics in shades of gray. For instance, many international laws and norms have a clear religious heritage, found in such conventions as just war theory and human rights doctrines. Conversely, fundamentalists often do accommodate themselves to the established international system; they may write of a global *ummah* with no state borders but in actuality pursue their goals through political processes and within the context of the nation-state.

Liberals ignore the potential and actual influence transnational religion accords to the global system, because of liberalism's particular history, philosophy, and academic prejudices. By doing so, liberals impoverish their own paradigm by denying consideration of an influencing factor that easily fits many of the liberal constructs. In the cobweb world of liberalism the impulse towards interstate cooperation is readily identified, but religion, as an actor that can both provide fertile ground for increased

cooperation and act as a potentially powerful disruptor of such cooperation, is too readily overlooked. Fortunately, multiple possibilities exist within the liberal paradigm for its deficiencies to be overcome.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Transnational Religion and the Constructivist Paradigm

Constructivist theorists take a fundamentally different approach to international relations than theorists in either of the previous paradigms. Rather than looking towards the anarchic or interdependent structure of the international system, constructivists examine the process by which international norms and the current international structure themselves come to be. Constructivists emphasize the role that identity plays in international conflict and cooperation, and thus has gained popularity in a post-Cold War world in which many global conflicts seem to revolve precisely around this issue. Constructivism is seen by some IR scholars as an “approach” rather than a paradigm, but due to its growing ranks and ability to explain phenomena that both realism and liberalism approach with difficulty, I will consider constructivism to be a school on par with the prior two paradigms.<sup>1</sup>

Constructivists contend that reality is shaped by people, ideas, and discourses, and in turn this socially constructed reality works back upon society to help determine and influence human actions. Importantly, constructivists shift the primary unit of analysis within IR away from the state toward the individual. Its emphasis on individual and group dynamics makes constructivism especially adept at exploring the influence of culture and religion on the practice of international relations. The constructivist analysis of identity is particularly revealing as to the alternative causes of conflict between states,

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2003), 8.

beyond security and economic concerns. Furthermore, because they embrace the larger society beyond the legal or territorial boundaries of the state, constructivists easily accept transnationalism. In this chapter, I intend to analyze the constructivist literature on socialization, rules, norms and identity in order to illuminate the constructivist understanding of the role of culture and religion in global affairs, especially its transnational manifestations.

### *Constructivist Literature*

Constructivism is a relatively new theory to be applied to the field of International Relations, and arose in the context of the discipline's "third debate."<sup>2</sup> Constructivist theory has existed in the social sciences, however, since Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman wrote *The Social Construction of Reality* in 1966.<sup>3</sup> Berger's prolific writings constitute one of the primary foundations of the subdiscipline of the Sociology of Religion, but a new generation of social scientists and IR theorists has extrapolated his ideas to their own disciplines.

Berger and Luckman's primary purpose in their 1966 work was to construct a sociology of knowledge; a body of theory that would examine the way knowledge comes to be, assuming that such knowledge exists and that humans can, in fact, "know."<sup>4</sup> They

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<sup>2</sup>The "third debate" is characterized by a struggle between positivism and post-positivism. Vendulka Kubáľková, "The Twenty Years Catharsis: E.H. Carr and IR," in *International Relations in a Constructed World*, ed. Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Vendulka Kubáľková (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

<sup>3</sup>Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967).

<sup>4</sup>Berger and Luckman make clear that their analysis exists on a level below that of the many philosophical works on epistemology and starts, instead, with the knowledge consistent with the "non or pre-theoretical" lives that people view as everyday reality. Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 15.

start with the individual's subjective consciousness and interaction with everyday life, which presents itself as one's reality most immediately; such a reality is taken for granted and does not need to be verified constantly. This individual world is necessarily shared with others and the shared ideas about reality are called "common sense knowledge."<sup>5</sup> Other realities exist such as dreaming, insanity, theoretical physics, art and religion – but the tendency is to bring experiences or meanings found within other realities back to the context of the everyday. In social interactions, wherein at least two people are interacting face-to-face, their individual subjective realities overlap and affect each other. Such everyday interactions are considered to be "typical," and expectations of such "typical" types of interactions create a foundation for the working of society. Berger and Luckman state: "Social structure is the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life."<sup>6</sup>

According to Berger and Luckman, human beings are inherently unstable and unfocused because their biology does not require that they act within a limited environmental sphere which would determine and direct their activities. Instead, humans must create an order and framework in which to live.<sup>7</sup> This is accomplished in a three-step continuous process whereby an individual externalizes himself to the world; his actions then become objectified by society as observable shared reality and finally internalized by the individual.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 47-52.

One way to establish order in man's constructed reality is through habitualization. Actions and systems of actions are repeated and become taken for granted, so that the original reasons lying behind and the methods for doing such actions need not be created anew on an *ad hoc* basis. When these habitualized actions are performed by a group of actors as a "typical" activity, they become institutions.<sup>8</sup> Finally, when these institutions gain historicity, such that they transcend the here and now, they become objectified. Here, Berger and Luckman importantly note that an objectified institution does not achieve an existence independent from its human objectifiers, rather "Both in its genesis (social order is the result of past human activity) and its existence in any instant of time (social order exists only and insofar as human activity continues to produce it) it is a human product."<sup>9</sup> The dialectic process thus continues: the social world is produced by people, the social world acts back on the producers, the producers then internalize the social world through socialization.

In order for socialization to be successful, however, the institution must be explained and justified: a process Berger and Luckman refer to as legitimation. This is necessary because once individuals who were not privy to the original interaction that began the institution are brought into the purview of the institution, the reasons behind such an institution are less obvious and appear as "hearsay."<sup>10</sup> When a society is no longer in direct contact with an institution's origins, sanctions become necessary to enforce compliance. Furthermore, institutions are best legitimized if overlapping

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<sup>8</sup>Berger and Luckman do not refer to institutions in its contemporary context of international organizations, but rather as established modes of behavior, which are socially enforced.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 61.

justifications are consistent with each other, thus producing a coherent system of social explanation of how the world works and what our roles are within that world. These overlapping institutions and their justifications come to be objectified as “knowledge” and further as “reality.”<sup>11</sup>

According to Berger and Luckman, roles are a necessity in a social world because they make the living out of institutions possible. All social action is done in the form of a role depending on the specific context of the social act; in any particular social interaction, one might be a daughter, a wife, a neighbor, a friend, a stranger, a compatriot, an enemy, a banker, a firefighter, a criminal, and so on. Some roles symbolically represent the institution in its entirety, most often embodied by political and religious leaders.<sup>12</sup> Because of the existence of a plurality of roles along with the specialization and differentiation of knowledge among various social institutions, society needs to provide some sort of legitimation, or a tying together of the various modes of knowledge, so that roles make sense and reality appears to be coherent.<sup>13</sup> As we will come to see in Berger’s next work, the most effective way for a society to accomplish this task is through religion or ideology.

Berger and Luckman complete their analysis of social construction by looking again at the individual and how one comes to internalize reality subjectively. The individual undergoes primary socialization through his family and those significant others who are responsible for his upbringing and care from birth. His view of reality will

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 84-92.

necessarily reflect theirs, and his interaction at this early stage becomes the basis of his identity. The child is exposed later to secondary socialization, such as schooling, in which more specialized knowledge is presented to the individual as a “subworld,” but which is always more tenuous and more easily bracketed than the world of primary socialization.<sup>14</sup> These subworlds of secondary socialization, and sometimes even the primary world, are maintained by “plausibility structures,” defined as “the specific social base and social processes required for [social reality’s] maintainance.”<sup>15</sup> One’s identity is inextricably tied to these plausibility structures in which reality is assumed, expected and taken-for-granted, and outside of which activities seem somewhat unreal or nonsensical.

### *Constructivism in International Relations*

Constructivism made its contemporary debut into the field of IR in Nicholas Greenwood Onuf’s 1989 work *World of Our Making*.<sup>16</sup> Onuf has since been joined by fellow constructivists such as Vendulka Kubálková, John Ruggie, Alexander Wendt, and Peter Katzenstein in the attempt to apply social constructivism to the conduct of international relations. The approaches of these and other constructivists often differ widely, and IR scholars have attempted on multiple occasions to classify constructivists into distinct sets of groups depending on their emphases, principles and goals. Some analyses use the terms “neoclassical,” “postmodernist” and “naturalistic,” while others

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>16</sup>Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making. Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

use the terms “conventional” and “critical.”<sup>17</sup> Vendulka Kubálková consistently makes the distinction between “rule-based” constructionists like herself and Onuf and “soft” constructivists like Wendt and Katzenstein.<sup>18</sup> I will rely on the latter terminology throughout, as I believe these categories best reflect the dividing line that is most relevant to the study of religion in IR, because they mark the distinction between “positivist-friendly” constructivism and “post-positivist” constructivism.

Soft constructivist Alexander Wendt is perhaps best known in IR mainstream, due to his oft-quoted assertion that “Anarchy is what states make of it.”<sup>19</sup> According to Wendt, the process by which inter-state relationships are built will affect what sort of system emerges to regulate relations between them, not the structure of the system, as realists claim. He challenges the assertion that anarchy necessarily causes distrust among states because they must act on a worst-case scenario basis. Instead, Wendt asserts that actors unknown to each other, who have no shared history, would act on the basis of probabilities. In this situation an atmosphere of distrust only arises if one of the actors gives the other a reason for distrust, such as an aggressive approach or outright attack. Otherwise, both actors have every incentive to work peacefully and cooperatively.

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<sup>17</sup>Steve Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of It: Social Construction and International Relations Theory” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubálková (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 40.

<sup>18</sup>Vendulka Kubálková, “Toward an International Political Theology,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, ed. Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 81; and Vendulka Kubálková, ed., *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

<sup>19</sup>Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1993): 395. Other IR theorists whose work is termed “soft” constructivism or who use “soft” constructivism in their larger theories include Emmanuel Adler, Peter Katzenstein, Stephen Walt and Stephen Krasner.

Based on the constructivist notion that society is created by human interactions with each other, Wendt contends, “social threats are constructed, not natural.”<sup>20</sup> Thus Wendt determines that if the practices that constructed a system of insecurity and aggressive behavior changed, so too would the system itself. Furthermore, scholars and state leaders who believe that the structure of the international system is all-determining will have little hope that aggressive state behavior could change and little reason to encourage aggressive states to do so, since such actions by states are seen as inevitable (this appears to Wendt to be a self-fulfilling prophecy). Wendt encourages IR scholars to see the international system, instead, through a constructivist lens, whereby the ways in which states interact influence an aggressive state’s actions.

In later works, Wendt qualifies his structure/process argument saying that he does not deny the ability of structure to affect international relations if that structure is social in nature, rather than purely material.<sup>21</sup> If the international system is materially constructed, then inter-state behavior will be determined by physical capabilities, such as military and economic strength. If, however, the structure of the international system is inherently social, then inter-state behavior will be based upon “intersubjective understandings,” such as a shared expectation of conflict or a shared expectation of responsible international behavior and even collective security. It is in this sense, then, that Wendt’s form of constructivism considers ideas, norms, and values to be significant to international relations. Beyond the opening of the meaning of “structure” to its wider social meaning, however, “soft” constructivists tend to fit comfortably within the existing

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<sup>20</sup>Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” 405.

<sup>21</sup>Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security* 20, no.1 (Summer 1995): 71-81.

IR paradigms. Wendt himself notes that he agrees with Mearsheimer on the majority of realism's guiding assumptions.<sup>22</sup>

Rule-based constructivists approach international relations from farther outside the limits of the traditional IR paradigms. Kubálková notes that a constructivist's very first step is to embrace post-positivism (which the "soft" constructivists are reluctant to do), thereby freeing the scholar from the limits of empiricism.<sup>23</sup> The next step into "rule-based" constructivism is to take the "linguistic turn," laid out by language philosophers Gustav Bergmann and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and further developed into IR theory by Nicholas Onuf.<sup>24</sup> The "linguistic turn" demands that language, as a universal and unique characteristic of humanity, is placed at the center of any theory of social science.

Onuf's contribution to the field is best understood in the context of the agency/structure debate that has consumed IR for much of the second half of the twentieth century. On one side of the debate, behavioral scholars believed that international relations may be determined, at least in part, by the actual behavior of a state's political and diplomatic leaders (also termed agents). On the other side, structuralists, such as Kenneth Waltz, assert that the structure of the system determined the actions that rational agents would pursue, much like a businessman who acts to maximize his profit and minimize his losses dependent on the economic system in which

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<sup>22</sup>Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," 72.

<sup>23</sup>Vedulka Kubálková, "A Constructivist Primer," in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 58-60.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 63-64.

he acts.<sup>25</sup> Onuf denies this split as artificial, since agent and structure continuously influence and construct each other, through the use of language and rules.<sup>26</sup>

Rather than try to fit certain constructivist ideas into the existing IR paradigms, rule-based constructivists like Onuf and Kubáľková offer an alternative system of agency, institutions and rules through which international relations can be viewed. Onuf outlines three types of rules (instructive, directive, and commitment) and three forms of rules (hegemony, hierarchy and heteronomy), into which all acts of international relations, on both the agency and structural level, can be categorized, and from there interpreted.<sup>27</sup> For instance, assertive rules or speech acts, through which the speaker intends for others to accept the truth of their statement, would include statements of fact or prophecy. Assertive rules create hegemonic rule, such that authoritarian, nationalistic, or theocratic regimes primarily exhibit this type of speech act. A speaker will use directive rules or speech acts when he intends some action to be performed as a result. Regimes built on directive rules are typically hierarchical and include military and business corporation models. Finally, commissive rules or speech acts are used by a speaker who promises or offers to make something happen, and such acts hold the speaker to account for his own statement. Liberal democratic regimes will most likely fall into this category.<sup>28</sup>

By linking an actor's language to his behavior, or rather the nature of a state's regime to its expected conduct, constructivists have created a comprehensive, though

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<sup>25</sup>Vendulka Kubáľková, "Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism," in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 18-19.

<sup>26</sup>Kubáľková, "A Constructivist Primer," 64.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 66.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, Table 3.2, 67-69.

complex, framework for better understanding international relations. The most visible area of constructivist contribution is the ongoing conversation of the role of human rights in international relations. In this effort, numerous contemporary constructivists have chosen to adopt the Bergerian language of the internalization and socialization of “norms” rather than the technically complex terminology of Onuf’s “rules.” Christopher Marsh and Daniel Payne, for instance, show how human rights can become internalized in a society in which such rights had not existed or been widely acknowledged previously.<sup>29</sup>

According to Marsh and Payne, an oppressive government may make a nominal overture to human rights, perhaps even signing an international agreement stating as much, in an attempt to elevate its standing in the international community. While its intentions may be vacuous, the regime’s stated support for human rights could instill in the state’s citizenry an expectation that human rights exist and are a “good” to which they are entitled. This would then spark a process of socialization among the population whereby the protection of human rights becomes internalized as a norm. Of course this process is not a linear one, nor a quick one; the internalization of human rights requires the interaction of culture and law, of society and government, and of transnational and domestic groups.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, constructivist IR theorists differ from their positivist peers in their focus on people.<sup>31</sup> From this starting point, constructivists are able to demonstrate, in a

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<sup>29</sup>Christopher Marsh and Daniel Payne, “The Globalization of Human Rights and the Socialization of Human Rights Norms,” *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2007, no. 3 (2007), 665-687.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 668-673.

<sup>31</sup>Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Vendulka Kubáľková, *International Relations in a Constructed World* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), x.

way the realist and liberal paradigms do not, that a change in the nature and actions of a regime are intimately linked with the social, linguistic, and political actions of actors beyond states and due to dynamics beyond power or money.

### *Constructivism and Religion*

The importance constructivists place on societal norms and relationships enables them to perceive the various manifestations of transnational religion in the international system. Constructivism has an advantage in addressing religious phenomena over its liberal and realist counterparts on many levels, the first of which lies with Berger. It is a little-known fact that Berger's early sociological thought focused on the sociology of religion, but in order to successfully write *The Sacred Canopy* (his manifesto on the topic) he felt it necessary to outline first his theory of knowledge in *The Social Construction of Reality*.<sup>32</sup> In fact, in the conclusion to their 1966 work Berger and Luckman alluded to the importance they placed on the sociology of religion even to the extent that they felt that a sociology of knowledge would be impossible without a corresponding sociology of religion.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger continues precisely where he and Luckman finished the previous year reiterating that, through a process of externalization, objectification and internalization, man (individually) constructs a world that constructs him back and humans (collectively) produce society.<sup>34</sup> Yet he ventures beyond his earlier questions of how society is constructed and focuses on the meaning behind the social.

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<sup>32</sup>Christopher Marsh, interview by author, Waco, Tex., 21 Feb 2008.

<sup>33</sup>Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 185.

<sup>34</sup>Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967).

According to Berger, “to live in the social world is to live an ordered and meaningful life.”<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, humans attempt to extend this order and meaning not only to the material and social world, but to the entire cosmos. It is at this point that religion is so key to human society; because religion both transcends man and specifically refers to man. It is able to locate man in an “ultimately meaningful order,” while escaping the problems the temporal process of socialization encounters, especially in facing death.<sup>36</sup>

Religion is not confined to explaining only the unknown and transcendent. In addition to its cosmological role, religion is often rooted in the practices of everyday life. Furthermore, religion is the most effective tool for legitimizing the existing institutions of a particular society, because it grounds the tenuous social constructions of reality in an order that is inherently beyond our ability to question it. By linking the sacred cosmos with the profane temporal realm, religion provides human beings with a stable and coherent social order in which an individual’s social roles, imposed upon him by birth, chance, and choice, are also seen as “realizing the deepest aspirations of their own being and putting themselves in harmony with the fundamental order of the universe.”<sup>37</sup>

Christopher Marsh applies Berger’s sociology of religion specifically to international relations. In his analysis of the religious causes and undertones of supposedly “ethnic” political conflict in post-communist societies, Marsh finds that the sacred legitimation of social actions and institutions applies to situations of war and

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 22-23, 36.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 33.

violence as well.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it is in such marginal situations of reality as war that religion becomes even more vigorously intertwined in an individual's and a society's sense of identity and of meaning. Religion is a potent delineator between "us" and "them;" it can sacralize a community or a cause, and it can justify or even encourage taking another's life and sacrificing one's own. Furthermore, due to the centrality of religion to upholding the coherence of one's reality, adherents have shown their willingness throughout history to fight for religion itself.

Vendulka Kubálková has called for the creation of a new subfield in IR to deal specifically with the global political impact of religion entitled International Political Theology (IPT).<sup>39</sup> Its necessity, she claims, begins with the inability of modernity or post-modernity to supplant the human need for religion, because "the religious concern for the soul...runs a lot deeper" than the rationalism that has attempted to take its place.<sup>40</sup> She suggests that IPT begin with an analysis of the "ontological foundation of religious discourse," because religion's foundational acceptance of the transcendent makes it intrinsically different from the secular empirical temporal reality IR scholars are conditioned to analyze. She also suggests IPT should include an evaluation of the religious according to Onuf's framework of rules. Using these rules, scholars can discover how the religious understanding or framework of a society influences the construction of its political institutions and its international behavior.

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<sup>38</sup>Christopher Marsh, "The Religious Dimension of Post-Communist 'Ethnic' Conflict," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 5 (November 2007): 811-829.

<sup>39</sup>Vendulka Kubálková, "Toward an International Political Theology," 79-105.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

Constructivism, then, understands religion and expects the social to be infused with, or understood within, the religious in a way that the traditional IR paradigms do not. Constructivism is able to “see,” theoretically, the complex social framework within which international conflict actually takes place. Kubálková bluntly states what many IR scholars have been forced to accept in the post-Cold War world, “IR in the contemporary world with its ever-increasing global stakes is not only about power and wealth but perhaps even more so about values and the very meaning of the very human existence.”<sup>41</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Constructivism is better able to evaluate religion than the traditional IR schools because of its focus on the individual and society, rather than on the state. In the pseudo-secularized West, religion is predominantly found in the former realms and often legally stricken from the latter. Therefore, in order to construct an accurate picture of religion it makes sense to start with the unit of analysis where religion is most salient: society. Through the constructivist lens, it becomes clear that religion is important if a society believes it to be. This illuminates both the lack of interest in religion among Western IR scholars, who have collectively deemed religion to be a fading societal and political determinant, as well as the abundance of examples that continue to show religion to be important in the affairs of non-Western or non-Westernized societies, who continue to rely on religion to legitimate and order their world.

Constructivism also illuminates why transnational society is important. According to Berger and Luckman’s earliest arguments, if humans collectively construct a society, even to such an expansive degree that the society transcends state borders, that

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 102-103.

social construct does exist and it works back on all who objectify it. The coercive potential of transnational society may not be as potent as what one encounters in primary socialization, which serves to emphasize the existing differences among local cultures worldwide. Still, constructivist understanding of transnationalism shows the importance of the process by which norms constructed at the international or cosmopolitan level are brought down to and socialized within particular societies.

Because it recognizes the power of social norms to direct individual and national behavior, constructivism is the most capable of recognizing the influence of both transnationalism and religion on individuals, societies and the international system. Scholars of the other paradigms limit their analyses to a scope so narrow that their explanatory capabilities seem constricted, or even superficial. This is not to say that constructivism should replace the predominant IR theories completely, nor could it. The world we have constructed *is* primarily state-based and anarchic in character, and as long as the field chooses to espouse the existence of such a system (and state leaders continue to act on this basis), realist and liberal theories apply.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

The merging of the dynamics of transnationalism and the religious resurgence into one in the form of transnational religion is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the discipline of international relations today. Its defiance of territorial boundaries and western political assumptions confounds the traditional paradigms and in many cases render their analytical and forecasting capabilities impotent. In sum, each of the IR paradigms has deficiencies that must be addressed theoretically so that state leaders and policy makers can act on the very best and clearest of information.

Realism has historically been the most consistent and solid of the IR paradigms, but has also suffered the most criticism in the post-Cold War world. The issue, most often, is realism's simplicity. Its narrow focus on the state and on power constricts realism's analytical power in an age when the non-state and the immaterial seem increasingly to be involved in international conflicts. Still, in a way, realism's beauty *is* its simplicity. Realist scholars have the luxury of avoiding such potentially undermining factors as transnationalism and religion, because they so narrowly define the dynamics that can influence the system in the first place. The question realists will be forced to face in the near future is whether they are self-marginalizing their paradigm by choosing such a narrow focus.

Possibilities exist to expand the realist paradigm, however, through which transnational religion might be better grasped. This potential lies in Kenneth Waltz's

exploration of a state's "capabilities." Waltz himself puts little stock in the actual composition of a state's capabilities, emphasizing instead simply that the unequal distribution of capabilities affects the international system. Might it not be possible for realists to explore the particulars and the dynamics of those capabilities?

Even within the realists' favorite realm of security, a state's capabilities include more than the mere size of a state's military and the effectiveness of a state's weaponry. In states with voluntary military personnel, realists could explore which religious dynamics encourage and which discourage enlistment. Does the answer rest simply within a religion's particular theology (such as the pacifism of the Quakers) or might it include the religious composition of the enemy state? How does Huntington's conception of civilizational rallying affect a state's military and financial capabilities? Furthermore, the current willingness of individuals from various countries to fight in conflicts wherever their co-religionists are deemed to be threatened seems to significantly alter a state's capability for using military force effectively. If realists expanded no other facet of their paradigm, a comprehensive investigation of the composition of states' capabilities would enable realism to better understand the confounding dynamics of transnational religion working in the world today.

The challenge transnational religion poses to liberalism is a very different one. The glaring problem is liberalism's secular bias and its uniform application of the essentially Western view of the necessity of the separation of church and state on countries, events, and political circumstances where such a view is invalid. Ironically, realism actually has an advantage in this regard, because it can determine state actions and one's response to those actions no matter the regime. Conversely, liberalism has

concerned itself with the nature of the regime since its very foundation, exemplified in the writings of Kant. The western liberal democratic tradition has been exposed in recent decades as an ideology in and of itself, and liberal theorists must be careful not to compromise their objectivity as scholars.<sup>1</sup>

Liberalism does have extensive capabilities, however, for evaluating the impact of transnational religion, most evident in its well-developed literature on transnationalism. Liberal theorists also frequently reference “soft power,” which can include cultural factors such as religion. It is likely that liberal scholarship on the effects of transnational religion will increase as political religion continues to make itself heard, but it remains to be seen whether liberal scholars can do so in a value-free way, and admit religion’s potential for peace and stability, in addition to its significant capacity for inciting or legitimating conflict.

Constructivism is most able to accept and incorporate transnational religion and its effect on international relations because it evaluates the system as an organic whole. Constructivism’s greatest advantage is that it can grasp and analyze factors that are hard to conceptualize through positivist lenses. Religion is such a factor. Because all major world religions include assertions that are impossible to falsify, religion is not completely “rational” or quantifiable. Constructivism provides a useful framework for discussing such unempirical aspects of religious belief. However, it is also important to note that the goal of the social sciences should *not* be to evaluate religious truth claims but to measure

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<sup>1</sup>This is particularly evident in the international conversation regarding human rights, wherein non-Western countries have serious concerns about the supposedly “universal” validity of human rights, which were conceived of, developed in, and imposed by the West. Fernando R. Teson deals with this issue in “International Human Rights and Cultural Relativism,” in *Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action*, 2d ed., ed. Richard Pierre Claude and Burns H. Weston (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 42-51.

the observable effects of religion on society. Sociologists of religion have developed methods of measuring the observable effects of religion on society on which the discipline of international relations could expand. IR scholars could analyze the ways in which transnational religion affects relations between peoples across state borders, relations between states and even relations between different transnational religions.

Constructivists can readily acknowledge transnationalism because their primary unit of analysis is the individual, not the state, while also recognizing the importance of the state as a socially-constructed political entity. The difficulty scholars face is making constructivist analysis more accessible and useful to policy-makers. While the works of the “soft” constructivists are increasingly accepted as “supplemental to” or “amenable to” the prevailing paradigms, rule-based constructivism requires a change of framework, perspective, and terminology. Without significant development within the paradigm, constructivism’s complexity, its highly technical language, and the resistance it faces from the positivist-dominated field of IR, make it unlikely that constructivism has the means or weight to supplant realism or liberalism in the near future.

Taken together, the IR theories under consideration in this work all have to deal in some way with the status of the state among the many actors in international affairs. William Robinson warned that transnational corporations could cause the collapse of the state-based international system, and many scholars have wondered if transnational religion might have the same effect.<sup>2</sup> If religious adherents communicate, travel, worship, and fundraise irrespective of state lines, might this not undermine the authority of the state?

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<sup>2</sup>Jeff Haynes, “Transnational Religious Actors and International Politics,” *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 2001): 143-158.

Most scholars of international relations do not expect the impending collapse of the state-based system due to transnational phenomena. In fact, depending on the ways in which a citizenry interprets the role of religion in their civic life, transnational religion can act in particularly national ways. For instance, Mark Juergensmeyer demonstrated how religion's unique ability to legitimize a political regime has led in some instances to the marriage of religion and nationalism.<sup>3</sup> On a more subtle level, religious tenants are often intricately woven into a state's history, ideology, and self-image in the form of civil religion.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Huntington also expects the persistence of the state system. In *Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington simultaneously recognizes the significance of transnational religion to world politics and maintains the continued existence and dominance of the state. He makes the bold prediction that conflicts in the post-Cold War world will be predominantly along civilizational lines and, as such, demarcations of the international political order should better reflect those civilizational dividing lines. However, he still asserts that "Nation states are and will remain the most important actors in world affairs."<sup>5</sup>

Susanne Hoeber Rudolph also provides key insights into the expected continuation of the state system. She notes that while the growing sphere of transnational civil society may signal a thinning of state authority, it by no means replaces it. Instead,

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<sup>3</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>For an exploration of civil religion see Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

<sup>5</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006), 36.

transnational groups, and especially transnational religions, provide alternative meaning systems to those provided by the nation-state. Furthermore, transnational religious groups absorb functions previously enacted by the state. This does not mean that transnational groups assume the responsibility of providing for the physical security of their adherents, which remains a responsibility of the state. Instead, transnational religions interact with the state to arrange safe passage for pilgrims, they influence political and even market norms, act as a community advocate and sometimes legitimate and escalate violent conflicts. According to Rudolph, transnational religions “may have authority and even power; they do not have sovereignty.”<sup>6</sup>

On what foundation, then, should scholars build towards a vision of international relations that includes transnational religion? Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler believe religion is best integrated into the existing theories because, for them, religion is not “the driving force” behind international relations, though it can be influential.<sup>7</sup> They expect religious studies in the realm of political science and world studies to advance in a similar way to studies of ethnicity and nationalism, since they share the common concern of identity. Furthermore, they recommend developing a standard definition of religion on which basis more quantifiable studies could be conducted.

Scott M. Thomas bypasses the IR paradigms and sees an opportunity for reform instead at the level of international society. For Thomas, the way in which international society is conceived will influence the way relations between states is conducted; the

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<sup>6</sup>Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Introduction: Religion, States and Transnational Civil Society,” in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>7</sup>Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 166.

overriding problem being the challenge of cultural relativism.<sup>8</sup> It is increasingly clear that Western culture and morality is not as “universal” as Western scholars and citizens might like to believe. On the other hand, the world’s societies have found grounds on which to agree in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, among them respect for the dignity of the human being. Unfortunately, the conversation is stuck. It seems to Thomas that international society only exists as a “thick” construct if culture is understood thinly. Conversely, if one considers the many deep ways in which the world’s cultures do differ, any existing “international society” appears to be very thin.

Thomas calls, then, for the “thick” practices of the world’s religions, such as practices regarding order and justice, to be incorporated in the world system, instead of the “thin” level of cultures’ rules and procedures. Relying on Alasdair MacIntyre’s social theory, Thomas states:

the Grotian legacy of the separation of theology from ethics and the reduction of the thick practices of international relations (embedded in the social traditions of world religions and civilizations) to thin practices (as procedural rules) has undermined the basis for the social bond that made them binding in international society.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps as a call directly to liberalism, then, Thomas advocates for the religious values of particular communities to be supported, not suppressed. The overlap across state and cultural borders, which acts to thicken international society, will occur when we refuse to accept the moral boundaries we receive from the community that constructs our identity.

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<sup>8</sup>Scott M. Thomas, “Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, ed. Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 21-53.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas, “Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously,” 42.

Rudolph mirrors Thomas's sentiments, and has herself called for the development and recognition of a "deep pluralism." Rudolph shows how religion can help provide for a community's physical and cultural survival, by acting as a system of collective identity and obligation. She asserts, "States cannot, without the means of society, construct the ties that bind humans together in obligation."<sup>1</sup> As noted in Chapter Five, Vendulka Kubálková proposes the development of a subsection of IR to be devoted wholly to religion.<sup>2</sup> In order to correct the habitual omission of religion from the discipline, Kubálková proposes an International Political Theology be developed parallel to the subfield of International Political Economy.

As a final proposition I would encourage IR scholars to look to the actual practice of international relations by contemporary state leaders, diplomats, and non-governmental personnel who are dealing with transnational religion first hand in their line of work. In 1994, Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson wrote of the need for diplomats and domestic ministries of foreign affairs to consider the role of religion in devising and implementing policy.<sup>3</sup> This book has since become required reading by the U.S. Foreign Service Institute, who trains all American diplomats.<sup>4</sup> Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has mirrored Johnston's calls for the religious training of American civil servants and the recognition of religion's importance in devising foreign

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolph, "Introduction: Religion, States and Transnational Civil Society," 6.

<sup>2</sup> Vendulka Kubálková, "Toward an International Political Theology," in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, ed. Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 79-105.

<sup>3</sup>Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup>Douglas Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy, Trumping Realpolitik*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

policy.<sup>5</sup> Johnston is also founder and president of the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD), which uses faith-based diplomacy in places such as Sudan and Kashmir to bridge the religious and the political as part of a larger effort to diffuse situations of communal conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito, editors of one of the most inventive and farthest-reaching volumes on religion and IR, assertively state “It is not enough to acknowledge the resurgence of religion and then vow to study this phenomenon through the existing categories of International Relations theory.”<sup>7</sup> The Western domination of IR scholarship combined with the discipline’s secularist foundations ensure that a mere tweaking will be insufficient. As the influence of Islam in Europe grows, as the leadership of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches continue to assert moral visions that are critical of militant secularism, as new emotional and charismatic forms of religiosity continue to inspire legions of believers across the Americas, as missionaries continue to incite political opposition, and most importantly, as religion continues to provide a sense of identity and cosmological significance to individuals and societies worldwide, International Relations scholars will find it hard to ignore transnational religion imposing itself on their previously secluded discipline.

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<sup>5</sup>Madeleine Albright, *God, the Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

<sup>6</sup>Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy*, 7-9. See also the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy at [www.icrd.org](http://www.icrd.org).

<sup>7</sup>Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito, “The Return from Exile: An Introduction,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 12.

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