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INTRODUCTION: RELIGION AND WAR

Ron E. Hassner and Isak Svensson

The literature on religion and war can be divided into the broader topic of the religious roots of violence, analyses of current trends in religion and war (relying primarily on quantitative data), and the narrower topic of religion and terrorism.

In the first category are scholars who, relying on historical case studies, explore the nature of religious violence and the conditions under which it emerges. For example, **Daniel Philpott**, whose influential work on the religious roots of international relations (IR) we introduced in the first volume, seeks to understand why religious groups turn to violence in some setting but not others. He emphasizes two variables: Differentiation and political theology.   Differentiation describes the relationship between religious bodies and state institutions, and focuses on the question: To what extent are they autonomous or hold authority over the other's political prerogatives? Political theology relates to a religious group's ideas about legitimate political authority. They concern opinions about the state's right or obligation to intervene in religious matters, the civic obligations of believers, and the appropriate relationship between the two. These ideas may be located in doctrinal teachings and texts but will be adapted to particular circumstances and will influence how religious leaders treat the state. Political theology also provides the ideological basis for the legitimate use of force.

Philpott distinguishes between high and low differentiation and between consensual and conflictual differentiation, yielding four types. Conflictual integrationism is the most unstable of the four. In this setting, a regime with an integrationist political theology suppresses religion, denying its autonomy and its political participation. If this suppressed movement resists and radicalizes its own integrationist stance, it may turn violent, transforming a country's institutional configuration to one of conflictual differentiation. Far more stable is consensual integrationism, an arrangement in which religion and the state rule together and mesh their institutional authorities. But this setup, while stable, is undemocratic and illiberal. Most stable and uncontested is consensual differentiation, which guarantees religious freedom, even for religious minorities. These in turn are expected to respect the liberal state, along the lines of Alfred Stepan's "twin tolerations".

To demonstrate the utility of this framework, Philpott debates its implications in two spheres, democratization and political violence. He finds not only that differentiation and political theology shape religion's role in each issue area but also that their influence in both areas is conceptually linked. The sorts of differentiation and political theology that lead religious actors to encourage democracy are the same ones whose absence tends to result in religious support for political violence, and vice versa.

As we shall see, international relations scholars have explored data on current world conflicts in order to discern patterns in the relationship between religious identity and conflict. For example, in Volume 4 of this series, *Religion, IR and Methodology*, we present a few of the most important empirical and statistical works on civilizational differences as a cause for conflicts around the globe. Historians can also teach us a great deal about the role of religion in conflict. In much of this work, the emphasis is not merely on identities and motivations, as it is in IR, but on a far wider range of practices

and implications. For example, **David Bachrach** is far less interested in whether crusaders were motivated by religion in embarking on their campaigns than he is in the manifold ways in which religion colored their rituals and battles. Religion was apparent in the symbols worn by the crusader, the ceremonies they partook in prior to embarking, their war cries, the role of relics on the battlefield, the presence of priests among the fighting troops, and the frequency and impact of miracles. Crusading knights may or may not have internalized the notions of martyrdom and plenary indulgence that were to have motivated their pursuits but they participated in ceremonies and ritual processions regardless. Indeed, the trials and tribulations of their ambitious enterprise across the sea may have done as much to shape their religion as religion did to launch the Crusades in the first place. Prophecies, miracles, divine relics and auspicious rituals appeared at moments of crisis: They did not so much motivate the Crusaders' actions as be motivated by them, providing solace and hope when the knights needed them most.[1]

Religious rituals played an even greater role in Aztec warfare, as **James Aho** beautifully illustrates. Here is a case of warfare that has become deeply ritualized, not just in causes and goals but in meanings and mechanisms. The "flower war" was religious in its entirety. It was timed with the religious calendar and its purpose, capturing human sacrificial victims, colored every aspect of the fighting, including the restraint required to capture live victims and the ritual bonds forged between captor and captive. It culminated in rites in which enemies were offered as sacrifices to the gods, their flesh eaten, and their skins worn. This is religious violence in its most distilled form and a far cry from the superficial religious façade that adorns many so-called "religious conflicts" today.

French historian **Natalie Zemon Davis** explores the role of religion in a different violent setting, mob riots. Her essay seeks to describe the nature of religious riots in French cities and towns in the 1560s and early I570s and to investigate their religious legitimation alongside their participants and targets, particularly the differences between Protestant and Catholic rioters. She shows that this mob violence was not random nor driven by economic or political motives but arose to fulfill specific religious needs. Religious riots were meant to demonstrate the falsity of the adversary's doctrine by means of dramatic demonstrations, such as the stuffing of pages from heretical bibles into the mouths and wounds of enemy corpses to refute the power of the other's sacred artifacts. More importantly, these attacks were designed to rid the community of "dreaded pollution" and thus restore the unity of the body social. They involved either rites of purification, designed to cleanse churches of offending practices, for example, or rites of desecration, such as destroying Catholic communion wafers or burning Protestant bibles, designed to shift items revered by the adversary from the sacred to the profane realm, where they belonged.

Differences between Catholic and Protestant practices led to interesting variations in the timing and execution of riots, yet the violence initiated by both camps was driven by similar concerns: Riots occurred when communities believed that political authorities were failing in their duties to protect their congregations. Consequently, violent mobs often imitated the sorts of punitive measures usually performed by magistrates, performing mock trials on their victims or dispensing with them in a manner that

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[1] Another important analysis of the Crusades, Horowitz's study of religion and conflict duration, is included in Volume 4.

resembled the public execution of criminals, for example. Mobs initiated violence to restore social cohesion and purity by either urging the political authorities to perform their duties or by wresting political control out of the hands of authorities and performing social purification of their own.

Ron Hassner's *Blasphemy and Violence* relies on Zemon's argument to explain a different set of riots, the widespread riots that broke out in several states in 2005 in response to the publication of Danish cartoons that depicted the Prophet Muhammad. The cartoons provoked protests in 43 Muslim-majority countries but in nine Muslim states these protests escalated to violence. Following in Philpott's footsteps, Hassner argues that neither a political logic nor a purely religious logic can account for this global pattern. The riots did not occur in particularly authoritarian states, as those who claimed that they were orchestrated by anti-Western regimes argued. Nor did they occur in all states dominated by radical Islamist movements. Indeed, deadly riots occurred in relatively democratic states, like Indonesia and Lebanon, and they failed to take place in several states with powerful Islamist movements, like Egypt.

Drawing on insights from the sociology of religion, Hassner bucks the trend of rationalizing religious violence and instead posits that outrage in response to blasphemy motivated rioters who were alarmed by the moral threat that the cartoons posed. This threat was particularly acute in democratic and democratizing Muslim states that refused to ban or censor the cartoons but that permitted public protest by Islamic movements. Unlike authoritarian states, who banned all public outrage, states characterized by political rights and civil liberties responded haphazardly to the demonstrations, leading to confrontations between security forces and angry rioters. In sum, riots occurred were a particular political setting overlapped with a specific religious setting. This finding can be generalized beyond the Muslim world: We should expect reactive religious violence wherever fundamentalist movements are confronted by transgressive acts in a political environment that permits protest but fails to protect the religious principles of the movement. This might explain why, for example, Jewish violence against Sabbath desecrators is confined to Israel or why Protestant violence against abortion clinics is confined to the United States.

Building on the findings from these historical and contemporary case studies, several IR scholars have applied statistical tools to uncover broader patterns in the relationship between religion and war, focusing on the effects of religion on the number, severity and duration of wars. **Monica Toft** notes the high percentage of rebel groups in recent civil wars that identify with Islam and seeks to uncover the sources of Islam's high rate of representation in these wars. Her explanation combines historical, geographical and structural factors. She argues that the absence of significant religious warfare in the Middle East, to match the so-called "Wars of Religion" in Europe, means that the region did not experience the broad differentiation of politics from religion that became the norm in the West. The locations of sacred sites and oil reserves form additional sources of tension. The doctrine of jihad, Toft argues, provides the ideological underpinning of these wars.

Threatened elites thus face a temptation to reframe issues of contention as religious issues in order to attract supporters, a process she terms "religious outbidding". When such outbidding occurs, religion becomes a salient characteristic of the conflict. She argues that such civil conflicts, in which religion has become a central issue, have

increased over time, a worrisome trend because these civil wars are more destructive than wars fought over other issues, result in more casualties and noncombatant deaths, and last longer. Therefore, she recommends incorporating religious preferences into bargaining processes and reducing the West's reliance on the Middle East oil.

Susanna Pearce, in turn, explores the effects of religion on conflict intensity in territorial conflicts. Are religious conflicts more deadly than other conflicts? Pearce focuses on two dimensions in order to measure religious conflicts: "issue based" conflicts in which contentious revolves around religious themes, as well as "identity based" conflicts, in which participants display diverging religious identities. Drawing on quantitative methods, she shows that, by this definition, religious conflicts tend to be moderately intense, while non-religious conflicts diverge into less intense and far more intense groupings. However, when the relevance of religion to a particular conflict is taken into account, this relationship disappears, suggesting that an issue-based approach may be more useful than an identity-based approach. The implication of her study is that it is not sufficient to study only the identity-perspective, but that religious issues need to be taken into account as well.

How does religious identity affect the levels of violence that states direct at their own societies? **Indra de Soysa and Ragnhild Nordås** show that, contrary to common perception, countries with a Catholic majority suffer the highest levels of political repression whereas the Muslim populations and members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference experience lower levels of political terror. To arrive at the findings, the authors create a political terror scale (PTS) that is based on reports by Amnesty International and the United States' State Department. They argue, however, that the impact of religion on repression thus "washes out" when regional variables, political or economic factors are included in the analysis. Democracy, per capita income, oil wealth, and involvement in civil war have a much more decisive impact on state terror than religion. Insofar as the relationship between religion and political repression is concerned, religion is merely a proxy for geographic region, with Islam representing the Middle East and Catholicism standing in for Latin America.

Isak Svensson studies intrastate armed conflicts in order to explore whether conflicts with religious dimensions are less likely to be settled through negotiations. He suggests that religious conflicts are indeed less amenable to compromise because belligerents perceive the conflicting issues as indivisible. When competition for the state is imbued with religious significance, the stakes are perceived as more difficult to divide without loss of value and substitutes for the state become more difficult to locate. This increased subjective value and the lack of substitutes will create a perception of indivisibility, which in turn hampers typical conflict resolution mechanisms and hinders negotiated agreements. Unlike Toft, Svensson assigns religious value not to every dispute analyzed but to every party to a dispute, yielding dyadic data. And in contrast with Pearce, he studies not only territorial conflicts, but conflicts to control governments as well. He finds that the first of these variables, differences in religious identity, does not systematically affect the chances of a negotiated settlement. But in intrastate conflicts between the years 1989 to 2003, durable peace agreements were less likely if at least one side made explicit religious demands, so the religious dimension of internal armed conflicts does affect the likelihood of compromise.

A third research program in the field of religion and violence is work on religion and terrorism. The study of religion and terrorism precedes the study of religion and war by over a decade, initiated in good part by **David C. Rapoport**. Though the term terrorism is modern, Rapoport claims that religion played a more important, consistent, and destructive role in earlier periods of history, as exemplified by the Thugs (India, 13th-19th century), the Assassins (Middle East 11th-13th century), and the Zealots (Judea, 1st century C.E.). Modern movements display a range of religious characteristics. In nationalist-separatist or revolutionary movements, such as the Shining Path, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), or the Earth Liberation Front, religion, traditionally understood, plays no role at all. In others, members of the group identify with a religious movement (IRA, ETA, EOKA, Tamil Tigers) but that movement provides little rationale or content for their terror campaign. In yet others, religion has a significant impact on methods and goals or even provides the ultimate objective, as in Hamas, the Lord's Resistance Army, and Aum Shinrikyo. In these movement, revelation or sacred text constrain the movements in its choice of goals and means leading to outcomes that are distinct from secular terrorist organizations.

In the most extreme cases, terrorists "perform" their acts for a deity that is said to determine their ends and means. Here, as in the Aztec wars, victims and even perpetrators are sacrifices to the divine and the violence imitates a primordial violence. Where this happens, religion can proscribe the choice of targets, the choice of weapons, the manner of dress, timing, locations, who is immune from attack, or how the attacker is to prepare for his act. This, so Rapoport, leads to a fixity in goals and methods that can help distinguish religiously-inspired terrorist movements from the learning process that characterizes modern movements. Religiously-inspired movements may seek to transform the world, bring it into balance, or redeem it through martyrdom. The violence is used to bring about the fulfillment of a divine promise. Members may hope for religious redemption, a reward in the afterlife, or the fulfilling of a religious obligation. In these cases, tactics are determined not just by pragmatic considerations but for its symbolic impact, as in attacks on a holy place. The weapon and strategy might be determined by religious precedence. Moreover, religion may function as a recruitment mechanism, a means of forging a group identity, and of fostering devotion to the cause.

In an ambitious literature review of contemporary work on suicide terrorism, **Martha Crenshaw** notes both the great strides made and the large gaps remaining in this research program. This research is still in its early stages, marked by definitional confusion, contradictory findings and weak data. The three primary questions posed by the phenomenon have yet to be answered decisively: Why do organizations consider suicide bombing to be effective, why do communities support this tactic and why do individuals engage in it? Crenshaw showcases the difficulties in arriving at a general definition given the variety of targets (civilian, military, political), means, or varieties (voluntary and coerced, successful and failed, etc.) involved.

Organizational approaches to the study of suicide terrorism, such as Robert Pape and Mia Bloom's work, propose that suicide terrorism is more than just an effective tactic.[2] Rather, it is uniquely suited for coercing democratic adversaries and outbidding

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[2] Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); and Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005).

rivals. The difficulties in obtaining reliable data and coding successful campaigns, Crenshaw argues, makes it difficult to assess these argument and the large set of exception (attacks against non-democracies, organizations without rivals, organizations that mix suicide and non-suicide terrorism) raises doubts about the causal logic proposed by these theories.

The role of religion in suicide terrorism is similarly difficult to assess, since secular organizations also engage in this tactic. Religion motivates certain individuals, particularly when it offers redemption, a religious-historical model for emulation, or where loss of dignity is equated with sin. Some movements encourage a cult of martyrdom, others mobilize support around perceived offense to their religion. But religion is merely one ingredient in a large mixture of individual motivations that are difficult to disentangle, ranging from peer pressure to personal trauma. Discovering how significant an influence religion has on a terror organization will influence policy responses and may affect the willingness of these organization to compromise.

In the decade that followed the attacks of 9/11, suicide terrorism has assumed global proportions and has proliferated outside the Middle East and South Asia. **Assaf Moghadam** offers two explanations for this trend: The evolution of al-Qaida into a global terrorist actor and the growing appeal of its guiding ideology, Salafi jihad. Whereas ordinary Salafis believe that God's word should be spread proselytizing, Salafi jihadists advocate violent jihad, including suicide operations against civilians and even fellow Muslims. Moghadam finds that Salafi jihadists are the largest identifiable religious group responsible for suicide terror attacks between 1981-2008, initiating nearly forty percent of all attributable attacks. These groups also lead in terms of the total number of casualties and deaths from attacks. He concludes that globalized missions differ in their setting, motivation, spread and targets from more localized suicide missions.

Whereas Moghadam explores the spread of suicide terrorism, **Peter S. Henne** is interested in the lethality of suicide terrorism, puzzling over the effects of religion on the number of deaths in attacks. Drawing on social movement theory, he argues that terror groups employ religion as an ideology to justify their mission and to gain adherents. Employing quantitative data, he shows that groups equipped with a religious ideology yield more destructive attacks, measured in deaths per incident. This finding holds true even when other organizational and structural variables are taken into account.

In tension with Moghadam's and Henne's analyses, **Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson** call to question the very distinction between religious and secular terrorism, both conceptually and empirically. They argue that the term religious terrorism groups together actors so diverse, with behavior that is often difficult to distinguish from secular actors, so as to mislead about motives, causes and behaviors. The authors trace the genealogy of the term and its political uses and issues a warning call about the delegitimizing effects of continuing to use the term "religious terrorism".