

FEATURE INTERVIEW: DOMINIC JOHNSON IN CONVERSATION WITH STAIR

In this interview, Jacklyn Majnemer sits down with Dominic Johnson, Alistair Buchan Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford and author of *God is Watching You: How the Fear of God Makes Us Human*. Professor Johnson discusses his new book and how the belief in god has promoted cooperation within human groups throughout history.

STAIR: *What are the central arguments of your book, God is Watching You?*

DJ: The book argues that religion offers a remarkably powerful way of promoting cooperation – possibly the most powerful method ever discovered by human societies.¹ And, equally remarkably, virtually all societies have found it. Cooperation in groups is hard to achieve because there are always “free-riders” (or “cheats”) who reap the spoils of public goods but do not contribute anything themselves – this is the so-called collective action problem central to numerous aspects of economics and political science. We know from experiments and the real world that one way to solve this problem is punishment, because if non-cooperation is punished, then it can raise the cost of cheating above the cost of contributing (and thus, even cheats are deterred). However, while today we have courts and police to detect and punish free-riders, in the past we did not have any formal institutionalised punishment. But we did have religion, with its gods, spirits, and ancestors, and many of those supernatural beings, across cultures and across societies, appeared to have punished anti-social or free-riding behaviour. Indeed, the book argues that this might be partly what religion is “for,” in terms of an evolutionary adaptation. Religion stepped in to solve the thorny problem of cooperation.

STAIR: *What inspired you to write on this topic? What puzzles does this book address?*

DJ: The book was inspired by the fact that while punishment was being

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touted in the literature as a major solution to the problem of cooperation, it remained far from clear who would actually carry out the punishment. At the time (in the early 2000s), no one was talking seriously about the possible role of beliefs in *supernatural* punishment. Such beliefs are ancient and widespread, and thus may have been an important influence on cooperation, not just today or in recent centuries, but in fact way back in human evolution. This aspect of religion might even have been instrumental in facilitating the expansion of human societies from small-scale foraging bands to civilisations of millions.

A further inspiration was simply that, for many people, religion itself is a puzzle. This is especially true for an atheist trained as a biologist, like me. How can we explain something that is patently costly in terms of time, energy, resources, and opportunity costs, involves beliefs in invisible agents and other untestable ideas, and often appears to have detrimental outcomes for believers themselves?

However, it turns out that this is precisely where an evolutionary perspective can shed new light on what appears to be irrational or counter-intuitive behaviour. Many aspects of human behaviour – not just religion – seem puzzling at first glance, from emotions and cognitive biases that violate rational choice, to aggression and competition that risk injury or death. An evolutionary perspective makes sense of such apparently costly behaviours, because it highlights the fact that human behaviours are largely the outcome of physiological and cognitive mechanisms that were laid down over the last two million years or more of human history. They are behaviours designed to deal with the adaptive challenges of life in small-scale foraging groups in a social and physical landscape very different to that of today. We should not expect human behaviour to be well adjusted to modern life in mass, urbanised, technologically advanced societies. Rather, we should expect many instances of “mismatch,” where our evolved responses can lead to mistakes or suboptimal behaviour. We are intelligent and highly flexible beings, but whatever the influence of culture and intelligence, we are also in large part at the mercy of our biology.

Applying this lens back to religion, perhaps its costs, often so apparent today, mask significant benefits that were important to the survival and reproduction of individuals and their groups in our past (and may in fact continue to bring net benefits today, under the right circumstances). This is an empirical question, and one that in recent years anthropologists, psychologists, and evolutionary biologists have been beginning to gather data on and test. My book is partly an effort to synthesise these two decades or so of research, and the general finding is that religion is an incredibly powerful promoter of cooperation, and

despite its costs (or according to some accounts, precisely because of these costs, in order to demonstrate credible signals of commitment), may have been a vital driver of cooperation in our past.

STAIR: How does religion facilitate/explain cooperation?

DJ: There are many ways to promote cooperation. Sometimes it is not hard to explain at all if there are mutual benefits to each party from cooperating. For example, even my greatest enemy and I could agree to cooperate to move a heavy rock blocking the entrance to a cave we were stuck in. However, cooperation among groups of individuals is hard to explain and achieve, even when they are friends, and especially when they are large groups of anonymous strangers who might never meet again. This is because of the “collective action problem,” in which everyone may recognise the benefit of cooperating, but also has an incentive to free-ride on the efforts of others. To maximise one’s payoff, one can let others do the work and enjoys the benefits of their endeavours. Often, we will all benefit from the cooperation whether we contribute to it ourselves or not. Because of this inherent problem, cooperation often never gets off the ground (e.g., clearing up litter, or resolving climate change).

Religion offers a remarkable solution to the problem, because even if others will not or cannot punish free-riders (itself representing yet another so-called “second order” free-rider problem), people may be deterred from cheating if they fear the retribution of other-worldly, supernatural agents. The burden of punishment could be shifted onto God (or, in small-scale societies, onto gods, spirits, and ancestors). It doesn’t matter whether supernatural agents are real or not, if people fear them, this belief can in principle deter selfish behaviour. Empirically, billions of people around the world do fear supernatural punishment—especially for anti-social behaviour or norm violations. Thus, religion offers an effective way to circumvent the perennial game theoretical obstacles to cooperation.

For this to work, gods have to punish certain kinds of behaviours rather than others. Often, people think that supernatural punishment is arbitrary, like in the book of Job, or among indigenous societies, where there can be capricious spirits or witches that can be contracted to take revenge on others. However, while all these complications exist, by far the much more common pattern is that supernatural beings punish bad behaviour—they punish self-interested behaviour or violations of social norms. In short, gods enforce behaviour that is beneficial to group cooperation, not behaviour that advances the interests

of the individual. This is precisely the kind of god that a game theorist might recommend.

In the book I survey the evidence from pre-industrial and hunter-gatherer societies (those like the ones in which humans evolved in the Pleistocene), ancient civilisations, modern world religions, and even laboratory experiments. All of them indicate that supernatural agents are widely believed to punish selfish behaviour, and people know and expect this and tend to alter their behaviour accordingly.

As humans transitioned from small-scale foraging bands into large settled societies with the advent of the agricultural revolution around 10,000 years ago, the role of religion appears to have become particularly important. Gods explicitly appeared to become moralising, and these morals became powerful obligations that widely dispersed people were meant to follow. Not all of them did, of course, but it created cultures in which religion was a powerful undercurrent pushing people towards social cooperation.

Interestingly, religion may have special features that make it *more* effective at deterring cheats than secular forms of punishment. For example, gods can be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. In short, they have characteristics that make them way more powerful than police or CCTV. Gods are always watching—and can thus deter selfish behaviour even when people are entirely alone and would never be found out. Again, gods seem to offer a compelling game theoretical solution to the problem of cooperation. In the book I compare secular and supernatural punishment side by side and note that, as long as people believe in both, it is supernatural punishment that has a greater intrinsic power. In the ideal-type case of the Christian God, God is always present, always watching, cheating is always detected (even in thought not just in deed), and punishment can be eternal. No police force can match that.

People often wonder if this is not a “Western” idea or theory, in which we unduly focus on supernatural agents like gods, which are actually absent in certain eastern religions like Buddhism. However, it turns out that impersonal forces such as karma have similar consequences. Bad deeds accumulate negative karma, and good deeds accumulate positive karma. This affects how one is reincarnated, so there are powerful incentives to behave well—to suppress self-interest and be generous and cooperative instead. Indeed, in many ways karma is even more powerful and mechanical because there is no negotiating with “it,” as one can sometimes do with God. One cannot ask karma for forgiveness.

STAIR: *You emphasise the role of punishment, rather than rewards, for explaining religion's role in promoting cooperation. Why are sticks more effective than carrots in this case?*

DJ: Modern views of Christianity often argue that a punishing God is a vestige of older forms of belief, and confined mainly to the Old Testament. By contrast, modern Christianity is held to be more about rewards, or not even any transactional relationship but rather unilateral love and grace. That may be true, at least in Western liberal churches, although it raises interesting questions about the circumstances in which a punishing God was more effective or salient in earlier times. One might argue that cooperation was more difficult or more in demand in biblical times than now, and that is why God's punishment was so prominent in the minds of believers and those who wrote the Old Testament. But the bigger point is that the supernatural punishment theory is about *all* religions, not just Christianity or indeed any of the major world religions. There are estimated to have been 10,000 religions across human cultures and history, and the acid test for a general theory of religion is the characteristics of religion in general, not of any one of them in particular, however prominent they may have become. As noted above, across religions and across history, punishment stands out as an important leitmotif.

But there are other reasons to focus on punishment. First, in game theoretical terms, punishment has an intrinsic leverage. Rewards are obviously the reason people want to cooperate in the first place—to attain some reward. But they cannot get there on that positive incentive alone. We know from the collective action problem and our own life experience that rewards, such as getting fitter or eating more healthily, do not in themselves succeed in making us do so. To engineer cooperation in groups, we have to raise the costs of free riding, and that is why deterrence mechanisms such as punishment are key. Rewards may encourage many of us to cooperate, but only punishment can deter all from cheating.

The same logic can be seen at the larger scale of groups and societies. We can see around us that all societies have institutions of punishment, however law-abiding their citizens in general might be. Punishment must be there to deter and catch the inevitable residual cheats, otherwise the system breaks down. Punishment is a keystone that holds the arch of society together.

Finally, whatever we might *think* we think about punishment, it turns out that we are psychologically predisposed to privilege negative rather than positive information. Reviews of psychological studies

find that a “negativity bias” dominates memory, emotion, perception, decision-making, and cognition, making us more responsive and attentive to negative rather than positive information. Therefore, even if we hear or believe that a given religious doctrine is generally positively orientated, we are likely to be more influenced by its negative aspects.

STAIR: *Is religion really a “public good” or do its benefits disproportionately accrue to political elite?*

DJ: One might think that supernatural punishment is a scare tactic invented by leaders and elites to subdue the masses into fear and compliance. There is certainly sometimes evidence of exactly this, in which rulers use or exploit religion as a tool for coercion, as Marx argued. However, it is important to recognise that this is not always the case, and many rulers from Louis 14th to the Pope himself are clearly deeply religious people who fear God as much as any of their subjects. But even where it is the case that leaders promote fear of the gods, this ironically supports the point: even those with the greatest power of all find it expedient to utilise religion to improve social cooperation—because it works.

STAIR: *Is religion an essential element of well-functioning societies?*

DJ: Religion is clearly not essential in any overt form for society to function, as secular societies such as the UK or Scandinavian countries seem to be doing fine largely without it. However, this is not a simple conclusion, because, firstly, religion is not entirely gone from these societies and in fact continues to underlie many of their cultural and social norms, and secondly, religion may still help to improve and sustain cooperation even in societies where a large proportion are now atheists. The role of subsections of religiously inclined people in a population, and their example, may have subtle effects on maintaining social cooperation, but this is something we do not yet know much about.

Perhaps what is clearer is that many people *think* that religion is vital for social cooperation. Humanists explicitly deny this, with billboards saying things like “We don’t need God to be good.” But in many countries around the world a majority of people seem to think we do. For example, a 2008 poll by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life asked people: “Is it necessary to believe in God in order to be moral?” Only 22 per cent thought so in the UK, but the figures are much higher in other countries, for example 57 per cent of Americans said “yes,” as did 66 per cent in India, 82 per cent in Nigeria, 84 per cent in Turkey,

and 99 per cent in Egypt. Whatever the humanists and philosophers say, in large parts of the globe a majority of people think religion is crucial for morality. This belief is likely to affect their attitudes, votes, and behaviour—whether it should do or not.

In the past, however, I argue that religion probably *was* an essential element of well-functioning societies (or at least, religion played a critical role in those that succeeded). People have long noted that as human societies expanded, religions tended to get “bigger” too (gods become more powerful, and beliefs shared over larger areas). Evidence bears out this general pattern. For example, in a cross-cultural study of 186 pre-industrial societies around the world, I found that more morally involved gods were significantly associated with the size that these societies reached.² The problem is that these are correlational findings, so we don’t know whether one may have caused the other (perhaps greater social hierarchy and leaders pushed bigger gods, to help control or rule larger societies over larger territories). However, the evolutionary perspective on religion forms an interesting prediction here, because it suggests that, if religion really is an important promoter of social cooperation, it might have been instrumental, or at least assisted, in solving the collective action problems inherent in human societies.

Some recent empirical studies bring remarkable new light to this possibility. Biologists have long used phylogenetic family trees to explore the origin and spread of traits across related species over evolutionary time. If one has a detailed enough family tree, one can make statistical inferences about when traits emerged in the past, and which traits came first and which came later. Usually, we don’t have any such finely detailed tree to compare traits in human societies, but one exception is the diverse Polynesian cultures that spread out across the Pacific islands over the last few thousand years. Anthropologists have painstakingly recorded differences in languages among these societies, and from this constructed a family tree of how these societies have splintered and given rise to new ones (and estimated when those cultural splits occurred). Recently, a New Zealand team used this language phylogeny to test whether the religions of these societies tell us anything about how they developed socially.³ The researchers were able to show that not only were beliefs in supernatural *punishment* explicitly associated with social cooperation, but that in fact these beliefs *preceded* the emergence of larger and more complex societies. Here, then, was the first ever empirical evidence that religious beliefs might have been a causal contributing factor in human societies becoming larger and more complex. Religion is not just an outcome of human social cooperation, but might actually have been a driver of it.

STAIR: *How does this inform the current debate surrounding the apparent link between religion and violence?*

DJ: For me, the current debates about religion put the emphasis on the wrong side of the coin. Discussions of Islamic fundamentalism or inter-faith conflict tend to emphasise the divisive and violent outcomes of religion. But these are only part of the full range of outcomes. Of the more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the world, for example, nearly all of them are peaceful, law-abiding citizens. The same goes for any other religion. So how does religion affect those ordinary people's behaviour? Perhaps it more usually promotes social benefits. Once you say it, it sounds obvious, but you'd hardly guess given some of the rhetoric in the media. More powerful and more common than instances of religious extremism and aggression is the diversity and magnitude of social cohesion, unswerving solidarity, and cooperation that is manifested in religious groups. This is probably why it emerged in the first place, spread so easily, and has come to prominence among all cultures ever known. Even the bad outcomes of religion, such as martyrdom, in themselves speak to the incredible power that religion has to suppress self-interest and promote cooperation towards a larger group of believers. No secular idea has ever been so powerful.

STAIR: *Why is looking at the development of religions over history so important for understanding religion today?*

DJ: This is a good question. If we look *today* at behaviours and note that they are destructive, we find ourselves puzzled by apparently costly and destructive behaviour (e.g. terrorism). However, the long view puts these into context. While they may have negative outcomes today in the modern world, precisely the same behaviours can be seen to be highly adaptive in the very different small-scale societies in which humans lived for 99 per cent of our history. Just as with many other (evolved) psychological dispositions, human behaviours reflect adaptive responses to environmental stimuli that were favoured by natural selection because they helped us to survive and thrive in our prehistoric past. What we have to pay attention to is whether our current environment is conducive or contrary to human nature. Often, it is the latter, and religion is a case in point. The challenges and scale of modern social and political life can exacerbate religious motivations and behaviours that cannot possibly bring the desired effect.

STAIR: *What are the present-day implications of your theory, especially regarding international affairs?*

DJ: The dark side of religion's power to promote cooperation is the closed borders to which it is confined. Religion works to promote cooperation *within* the group of shared believers, not beyond it (we are not scared of other people's gods). Hence, within a given social unit of religion there is some level of hierarchy and order, promoting cooperation instead of anarchy and keeping in check those that step out of line (just like domestic politics and government is able to do within the state). But *between*-groups that do not share the same beliefs, there is no overarching god to compel different groups to cooperate with each other, and indeed often part of the mistrust among societies is the mistrust expressed towards each other's religions. So just like the distinction between domestic and international politics, religion is something that helps to create order and cooperation within states, but makes *international* relations an especially difficult and dangerous problem.

An example of this tension can be seen in a recent study published in *Nature*, which conducted field experiments in eight different non-western societies around the world. Subjects had to decide how to allocate valuable resources either to themselves or to another person, in a clever game designed to keep their preferences anonymous.⁴ While all people allocated some of the resources to themselves, the extent to which they gave some to others depended not only on their own religious beliefs, but also the beliefs of the recipient. People were significantly more likely to give money to strangers—even distant strangers—that shared the same religion. The effect was stronger among people who believed in a punishing supernatural agent. So religion, and especially supernatural punishment, seems to make people generous to others, but only if they share the same god.

A key question arising in the book is that, if religion is a promoter of cooperation and an effective deterrent against cheats, then to whom does the deterrence apply? What is the social unit within which religion works? Clearly, while people might fear their own god, they do not fear the gods of other people. A Polynesian does not fear Zeus or Ra, for example. A recent cross-cultural study by Yasha Hartberg explored this problem systematically.⁵ Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom spent her life studying how indigenous cultures around the world have succeeded in cooperating over long periods of time to share common pool resources (often much more successfully than we do today). Hartberg and colleagues asked a new question, which was how *religious* beliefs may affect these efforts. In a sample of 48 detailed ethnographies of

such societies, they found a recurrent theme in that religious beliefs—and specifically beliefs in supernatural sanctions—were vital methods of deterring people from violating social norms surrounding the protection and use of the resource. For example, the Shona of Zimbabwe believed that “a snake with special powers guards the sacred forest and that trespassers who see it may get lost, may become insane or may even die.” As odd as any one manifestation of such beliefs may sound, the general pattern repeated itself across these societies. Across their sample, they found that 27 of the societies relied on supernatural sanctions *alone* to enforce cooperation, 12 relied on a combination of both supernatural and secular sanctions (where secular sanctions were, interestingly enough, not sufficient to secure cooperation on their own), and just one relied only on secular sanctions (the remaining eight were unclear or lacked enough data to tell). In short, religion, and specifically belief in supernatural punishment, turns out to be a recurrent feature of successful indigenous systems of social cooperation. This is a lesson that we might find useful to relearn for ourselves, or to at least examine how and why it is so effective, as we struggle to achieve cooperation in our increasingly secular societies.■

Notes

¹ Dominic Johnson, *God Is Watching You: How the Fear of God Makes Us Human*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

² Dominic Johnson, “God’s Punishment and Public Goods: A Test of the Supernatural Punishment Hypothesis in 186 World Cultures,” *Human Nature* 16 (2005): 410–446.

See also Dominic Johnson, “What Are Atheists For? Hypotheses on the Functions of Non-Belief in the Evolution of Religion,” *Religion, Brain & Behaviour* 2 (2012): 48–70.

³ Joseph Watts, Simon J. Greenhill, Quentin D. Atkinson, Thomas E. Currie, Joseph Bulbulia and Russell D. Gray, “Broad Supernatural Punishment but Not Moralizing High Gods Precede the Evolution of Political Complexity in Austro-nesia,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London: Biology* 282 (2015).

⁴ Benjamin Grant Purzycki, Coren Apicella, Quentin D. Atkinson, Emma Cohen, Rita Anne McNamara, Aiyana K. Willard, Dimitris Xygalatas, Ara Norenzayan and Joseph Henrich, “Moralistic Gods, Supernatural Punishment and the Expansion of Human Sociality,” *Nature* 530 (2016): 327–330.

⁵ Yasha Hartberg, Michael Cox and Sergio Villamayor-Tomas, “Supernatural Monitoring and Sanctioning in Community-Based Resource Management,” *Religion, Brain & Behaviour* 6 (2014): 95–111.

SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE IN BRITISH COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS

Jason Klocek

Abstract: Counter-insurgency forces across a variety of contexts have been criticised in recent years for insufficient attention to the role of religion in insurgency wars. The consensus view of this critique alleges that military planners, at best, misunderstand the impact of religious identities and beliefs on guerrilla forces and, at worst, ignore them all together. In this article, I challenge this conventional wisdom by tracing the routine efforts of British forces to understand the impact of religion during conflicts in Mandatory Palestine, Cyprus, and Kenya. Drawing on original data collected from the colonial archives, I demonstrate how security personnel repeatedly obtained and evaluated religious intelligence in three key issue areas: combat operations, information operations, and demobilisation. My findings have significant implications for the study of both religious violence and civil wars. First, they illustrate how binaries that construe state actors as secular and non-state actors as religious are often oversimplified. Second, they point to how religion affects conflict in meaningful, and oftentimes unanticipated, ways. While not necessarily the cause of a particular rebellion, religious sensibilities often shape how counterinsurgents combat guerrilla forces.

Introduction

The year 1947 proved to be an acutely challenging time for British security forces fighting Jewish insurgents in Mandatory Palestine. While ministry officials in Whitehall debated how best to withdraw from a losing battle, military personnel on the ground struggled to keep peace in a progressively more stressful conflict environment.² The total number of insurgent attacks, for instance, increased by thirty percent in the first half of that year compared to the previous twelve-month period.³ And, in response, curfews, cordons, and collective punishments were regularly enforced.

Despite this increased tension, road restrictions throughout Man-

datory Palestine were suddenly lifted for one night on 13 September 1947. At first glance, this seemingly random decision appears to contradict security concerns at the time. However, the British had a strategic aim in mind. By suspending the driving curfew, residents of Jewish settlements could travel to larger cities and stock up on items needed to celebrate the upcoming Jewish New Year, or *Rosh Hashanah*. The security forces hoped this gesture of goodwill would improve relations with the local population.⁴

The sensitivity of British troops to the role of religious beliefs and practices during conflict is not without historical parallel. A close examination of reconnaissance efforts over the past century suggests that modern militaries frequently collect, analyse, and act upon religious intelligence. For example, the French War Ministry monitored the communications of Muslim units on the Western front during World War I, with a special interest in letters that conveyed reactions to the campaign against Ottoman Turkey and the caliphate movement.⁵ During World War II, the Allied Powers considered the religious and cultural significance of sacred sites when planning bombing campaigns, particularly in Italy.⁶

Similar efforts have persisted throughout the post-war era. Egyptian decision makers timed their opening attack of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War to coincide with the Jewish high holiday of *Yom Kippur* because they believed the Israeli military would be slow to mobilise a response.⁷ Indian authorities, in turn, considered the religious importance of the Golden Temple in Amritsar prior to an attack against militants of the Khalistani movement holed up there in the late 1980s.⁸ More recently, the US Department of Defense organised intelligence teams to gather information about religious attitudes in Afghanistan and identify opportunities for coordination with local spiritual leaders.⁹

The above illustrations suggest that militaries are often aware of the challenges and opportunities presented by religious beliefs, identities, and practices in security environments. Yet, despite these common practices, scholars and policymakers alike repeatedly criticise decision makers for ignoring the role of religion in contemporary armed conflicts. Indeed, a near consensus has emerged in recent years, contending that military planners, at best, misunderstand the role of religion, and, at worst, ignore it all together.¹⁰

In this article, I challenge this conventional wisdom by tracing the routine efforts of British forces to assess the impact of religion on counter-insurgency (COIN) operations during the early post-war period. Drawing on original data collected from the colonial archives in the United Kingdom, I demonstrate how security personnel repeatedly obtained and analysed information about religion in three of the most common activities undertaken by counter-insurgent forces:

combat operations, information operations, and demobilisation.¹¹

I pay particular attention to conflicts in Mandatory Palestine, Cyprus, and Kenya for two primary reasons. First, they provide a set of most-likely cases to test the commonly held view that military planners overlook religion.¹² Not only was communism the main ideological concern at the time, but British security forces also represent the type of highly professional military the conventional wisdom predicts will ignore the religious dynamics of conflict. Second, the prominence of religion varies considerably across each case.

I define religious intelligence as the branch of cultural intelligence responsible for obtaining and analysing information about sacred beliefs, rituals, and symbols and their affect on combat operations.¹³ This typically involves evaluating what sacred phenomena are relevant in a given context, how salient they are for specific religious communities, and how they will affect the behaviour of combatants and/or local populations.¹⁴ Past research suggests that three such phenomena are particularly salient for religious intelligence analysts: sacred space, sacred time, and sacred authority.¹⁵

This article contributes to the study of both religious violence and civil wars. First, it demonstrates how the binaries that construe state actors as secular and non-state actors as religious are oversimplified. A close examination of British efforts at religious intelligence reveals that rebel groups are not alone in appreciating the challenges and opportunities presented by sacred phenomena. Second, this article illustrates how religion affects conflict in meaningful, and oftentimes unanticipated, ways. While not necessarily the cause of a particular rebellion, religious dynamics often shape how counter-insurgents combat guerrilla forces.

What this article does not do is evaluate the success or failure of religious intelligence efforts. I include episodes in which the British both demonstrated respect for and offended the religious sensibilities of local populations, but I do not evaluate their overall effectiveness. I also refrain from suggesting who should conduct religious intelligence in modern militaries. Rather, as mentioned above, my goal is to illustrate that such efforts occurs more often than conventional wisdom suggests.

The remainder of this article proceeds in three sections. In the first, I summarise past research on the role of religion in conflict. In the second, I trace out the religious intelligence gathering efforts of British security forces during the early post-war period in the three key issues areas previously mentioned: combat operations, information operations, and demobilisation. To conclude, the third section considers implications for future scholarship.

A burgeoning literature has developed on the role of religion in conflict over the last decade and a half. The majority of this research attends to the influence of religion on rebel behaviour and its subsequent impact on conflict outcomes. For example, studies have investigated how combatants' religious beliefs and identities impact the duration, lethality, and termination patterns of civil wars.¹⁶

Far less attention, however, has been paid to the impact of religion on military planning and operations. Much of the analysis, such as it exists, tends to be polemical, rather than empirical. For instance, fierce debate emerged among commentators in 2007 about how well the revised US counter-insurgency manual (FM 3-24) incorporated lessons learned from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁷ The manual's harshest critics argued that it misapplies examples from Vietnam by leveraging political models of nationalist struggles to contemporary insurgencies that are, they contended, essentially religious.¹⁸ In particular, they argued that the passion religion arouses, along with its stringent dogma, require counter-insurgent forces to adopt more coercive tactics than the new guidelines acknowledge.¹⁹ Additional criticism suggested that the new field manual fails to consider the transnational element of contemporary insurgency wars, especially a global Islamist dimension.²⁰

In contrast to this normative trend, a few researchers have also examined the impact of religious beliefs, practices, and symbols on professional soldiers. The subject of military chaplains has received particular attention. Several studies, for instance, document changes in the composition of the American military chaplaincy, along with its changing role, over the past half-century.²¹ Others adopt a more comparative perspective.²² A common concern of both approaches is the tension of reconciling the demands of military norms with those of a chaplain's faith.

Further scholarship has drawn attention to the impact of religion on service personnel, more generally, and in less obvious areas of military operations. For example, a newly edited volume reviews the influence of religion on the demography, organisation, training, leadership, and operations of nine modern armed forces.²³ Another recent project explores how everyday religious practices shape battlefield decision-making in contemporary interstate wars.²⁴

In the end, these studies, primarily historical in nature, provide an important foundation for the study of religion in modern militaries. Most importantly, they turn attention away from the religious beliefs of rebels and toward the impact of religion on professional soldiers. Their focus, however, also remains narrow. They identify a number of previously overlooked ways religion shapes the organisation and be-

haviour of modern militaries, but they also shed relatively little light on how decision makers within these institutions think about the beliefs, practices, and identities of those they fight.

The one notable exception within this strand of research is work by Ron E. Hassner.²⁵ Most relevant to this study, he has identified three types of sacred phenomena as particularly important to religious intelligence analysts: sacred time, sacred space, and sacred authority. The first refers to holy periods in which a religious movement commemorates key events of its past, such as *Passover* for Jews or *Diwali* for Hindus.²⁶ The second, sacred space, includes religious centres perceived by believers to be imbued with a particular divine presence.²⁷ For many Christians this might be the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. For Muslims, Mecca is an obvious example. Finally, sacred authority is the ability of a religious leader to compel obedience based on a reputation for religious expertise and charisma.²⁸ Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama stand out as contemporary examples of this phenomenon. Ultimately, Hassner argues that these sacred phenomena are central to any efforts to collect and analyse the religious dimensions of conflict.

In the following section, I draw on Hassner's conceptual framework to outline the religious intelligence efforts of British security forces during the early post-war period. My analysis suggests that these efforts occur, at least in these cases, more often than conventional wisdom suggests.

Religious Intelligence in British COIN Operations

In the two decades after World War II, British security forces mounted no fewer than ten major counter-insurgency campaigns.²⁹ Three, in particular, stand out for their religious dynamics. The first involved a violent uprising by Jewish resistance groups in Mandatory Palestine from 1944–1947. This was one of the first post-war struggles for national liberation and culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel.³⁰ The second conflict took place a decade later and less than 500 kilometres across the Mediterranean Sea. From 1955 to 1959, the British faced a guerrilla group known in English as the *National Organisation of Cypriot Struggle* (EOKA), which fought ostensibly for the unification of Cyprus with mainland Greece. The third struggle pitted British security forces against the Mau Mau movement in Kenya from 1952–1960. In contrast to the other two cases, British security forces achieved a military victory in East Africa.

These are especially useful cases to investigate the pervasiveness of religious intelligence for two primary reasons. First, they provide a set of most-likely cases to test the commonly held view that military planners overlook the religious dynamics of conflict. Since they

coincide with the start of the Cold War, communism, not religion, was the dominant ideological concern at the time.³¹ Moreover, British security forces represent the type of highly professional military that conventional wisdom predicts will not collect religious intelligence.³² Accordingly, if the theory holds anywhere, it should do so in these cases. Evidence to the contrary, in turn, will cast strong doubt on the consensus view.³³

Second, the prominence of religion varies considerably across these cases. In Kenya, British officials construed religion, especially oath taking rituals, to play a critical rule in the formation and resiliency of the Mau Mau movement.³⁴ In Cyprus, they perceived it to have a more intermediary role, with the Orthodox Church providing important moral and material support to the insurgents.³⁵ And, in Mandatory Palestine, they saw religion as a peripheral issue. It defined local populations, but not the major activities of the underground groups.³⁶ Still, as I will demonstrate, irrespective of the salience of religion, British security forces routinely collected, analysed, and acted upon religious intelligence.

To facilitate my analysis, I employ a structured focused comparison across three issue areas: combat operations, information operations, and demobilisation.³⁷ For each topic, I ask two primary questions. First, to what extent did security forces gather and analyse information on sacred phenomena? In line with Hassner, I pay particular attention to how military planners thought about sacred time, space, and authority. Second, how did they believe these phenomena would impact military operations? As mentioned previously, I look at instances that both bolster and undermine security forces' efforts.

I draw on original data collected from the colonial archives in the United Kingdom to address each of the above questions. The majority of this information—which includes incident reports, telegrams, and operational assessments—comes from the War, Foreign, and Colonial Office files housed at The National Archives in London.³⁸ I also incorporate those documents that were part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's "migrated archive", which have only been available to the public since 2013.

Finally, before proceeding, a brief word on how I define the key actors in each conflict. By security forces, I mean the colonial officials stationed in each location, members of the three armed services, the regular police and Special Branch, and the auxiliary police and special constabulary.³⁹ I refer to the actors that organised and conducted armed resistance against these security forces as underground, rebel, or insurgents groups, interchangeably.⁴⁰

I. Combat Operations

One area in which British security forces regularly considered the role of religion was during combat operations. This is particularly true for tactical and operational decisions. The former refers to military planners' deliberations on how best to deploy and use armed units within a specific area of responsibility, including a particular battle or engagement, while the latter focuses on the coordination of armed units within a specific theatre of war.⁴¹ Security forces noted the role of at least three sacred phenomena during such undertakings.

The first involved a shared concern about sacred time, which again refers to key historical events that a religious movement commemorates. Officials in Mandatory Palestine, for instance, remained sensitive to the prospective impact of the Christmas season on conflict intensity. A 1946 report from the 317 Airborne Intelligence Unit warned of the potential for increased tension between British and Jewish forces in late December.⁴² Another evaluation from the same unit warned that the underground group known as *Irgun* might use the Passover period to regroup.⁴³ In both cases, officials responded by advising security personnel to be particularly vigilant. However, no specific regulations were formally imposed.

An awareness of sacred time did, however, sometimes directly influence military planning, most notably during the Tel Aviv Curfew of 1946. Following the King David Hotel bombing, security forces cordoned and searched the city for four days. It is considered one of the most extreme tactics adopted by the British during the conflict, as it also included the mass arrest of some 1,100 residents. Yet, even in this critical and unprecedented operation, religion did not go unnoticed. The curfew was lifted by 15:00 on Friday, 2 August 1946 so that Jewish residents would have enough time to prepare for the approaching Shabbat observance.⁴⁴

Officers in other locations also observed the significance of sacred time. Similar to their counterparts in Palestine, Kenyan officials noted the potential influence of the Christmas period. However, rather than anticipating increased tension between British troops and locals, they anticipated a surge in attacks by rebel forces during the holiday.⁴⁵ The influence of sacred time did not go unnoticed in Cyprus either. For instance, a 1958 security report warned there might be an increase in attacks against security forces around Greek Easter.⁴⁶

A second religious issue commonly noted by security forces was that of sacred space, which again includes sites perceived by believers to be infused with a divine presence. In both Mandatory Palestine and Cyprus, officials suspected that rebel groups hid weapon caches and other supplies in religious buildings. And, in both cases, this affected how they conducted cordon and searches. In the former, the

Great Synagogue in Tel Aviv was a primary target during the previously mentioned curfew in July 1946.

In Cyprus, religious structures in the Troodos Mountains were of strong interest during a major offensive ("Operation Pepperpot") in June 1956. As summarised by one observer, "[c]hurches and monasteries were now turned upside down by the security forces looking for weapons and ammunition."⁴⁷ This was by no means an isolated event. Similar searches continued well into the conflict. In February 1957, for instance, Operation "Whiskey Mac" included the search of another mountain monastery and a number of nearby villages.⁴⁸

Kenyan officials also noted the role of sacred sites, but they paid more attention to their religious function than their instrumental role. Most notably, officials expressed both admiration and frustration over the influence of Mount Kenya, an area where security forces often achieved military, but not political, success.⁴⁹ Absent any empirical support, the British attributed this latter failure to the fact that the area, as the "home of their god," exerted great influence on the Kikuyu people.⁵⁰ The region was eventually marked as a "Prohibited Area," within which anyone found could be shot on sight.

Sacred authority, or a religious leader's ability to leverage their expertise and charisma to influence believers, was a third area in which security forces collected and analysed information during military engagements. In Cyprus, the British were especially anxious about the influence of Orthodox priests, whom they believed Cypriots were accustomed to following "without question."⁵¹ Indeed, it was partly for this reason that they assumed the arrest and deportation of the head of the church, Archbishop Makarios III, in 1956 might decapitate EOKA.⁵² This tactic, however, failed and led to considerable unrest on the island.⁵³

In Kenya, several officials construed spiritual leadership to be a linchpin of the Mau Mau movement.⁵⁴ Jomo Kenyatta, in particular, was often singled out. A 1960 historical survey commissioned by the War Office summarises the consensus view: "The strength of the Mau Mau stems from the fact that in the unscrupulous hand (of such a powerful demagogue as Kenyatta) it has achieved a unifying force by combining primitive tribal superstition and fear with political and economic aspiration."⁵⁵ The importance given to Kenyatta is puzzling given his detention in 1952 meant his direct influence on the forest gangs was limited.

In addition, local witch doctors also stood out as important during the conflict.⁵⁶ They played a central role in oathing ceremonies, especially the blood sacrifices that members were required to complete to officially join the Mau Mau.⁵⁷ Security personnel construed these figures as so pivotal that weekly intelligence reports often included a separate estimate of their numbers.⁵⁸

In sum, British security forces routinely took note of at least three types of sacred phenomenon when making tactical and operational decisions: sacred time, space, and authority. This information shaped, to a certain degree, how they fought in each conflict. It also influenced the propaganda war that complemented each struggle. And, it is to this topic I now turn.

II. Information Operations

Information operations are a second area in which British security forces regularly considered the role of religion. This refers to the wide range of communication networks under a security force's control that is designed to inform and influence a target audience.⁵⁹ During the early post-war period, it comprised a more limited range of activities than today. Yet, many of the same mediums remain familiar, including radio, film, and pamphleteering.

In each of the three cases focused on in this article, security forces engaged in propaganda campaigns that were as, if not more, intense than the physical fighting. Here, I focus specifically on the religious factors that the British identified as most relevant to their campaigns to win the "hearts and minds" of local populations.⁶⁰ As with combat operations, three sacred phenomena stand out.

The first centres on sacred time. While officials were particularly attuned to the vulnerability posed by religious dates during combat operations, they also recognised the possibility of exploiting their relevance to bolster public support. In addition to the strategy highlighted at the start of this article, British officials occasionally acknowledged attacks by rebels that coincided with holy days in the hope that they might drive a wedge between the general population and insurgents. For example, when Irgun attacked the Haifa police headquarters on 29 September 1947, security forces noted that this coincided with the second day of the *Feast of Tabernacles*.⁶¹

Officials in Cyprus demonstrated a similar awareness to religious dates, but with an eye towards the opportunities they provided for EOKA to mobilise local support. A 1957 report on the approaching commemoration of *Oxi day*, which celebrates Greek resistance to Fascist Italy during World War II, is a typical example. It warned that the ceremony could put people in a frame of mind "most amenable for the propaganda in the Church services."⁶²

During the tensest periods of the conflict, officials tried to counter these opportunities by limiting or prohibiting public assemblies and processions on or around holidays.⁶³ For instance, the government cancelled all celebrations, and imposed a curfew on towns and large villages on 21 March 1956, which coincided with the *Feast of the Annunciation* and Greek Independence Day.⁶⁴ Other regulations were

more general. It was, for instance, illegal to fly the Greek flag or to ring church bells except at times of regular church services during the Emergency Period.⁶⁵ Such prohibitions sat uneasily with locals and often led to demonstrations.⁶⁶

Sacred space is a second religious issue that security forces often took into account when planning and conducting information operations. In Mandatory Palestine, for instance, officials were sensitive to the possibility of inciting public outrage by desecrating holy sites. To this end, they wrote and distributed pamphlets on the proper procedure for searching synagogues and mosques.⁶⁷

Officials also compiled a set of guidelines on the use of heavy weapons that took into consideration the potential backlash from damaging holy places.⁶⁸ This directive listed the major religious and cultural sites in the region and ranked them according to how much importance local commands should give to avoiding damage during combat operations.

In Cyprus, officials faced a rather robust propaganda machine. This included the efforts of a high-ranking EOKA member, Archimandrite Constantinos Lefkosiatis, charged with developing a “spiritual supply service” for its ranks.⁶⁹ In addition, the *Political Committee of the Cyprus Struggle* (PEKA) issued leaflets extolling the memory of dead fighters, and organised memorial services for them in churches across the island.⁷⁰

Accordingly, security forces on the island often faced the type of critique officials in Palestine sought to avoid. For example, the previously mentioned search of monasteries in the Troodos Mountains provided a pivotal opportunity for EOKA to call into question the behaviour of security forces. In a number of leaflets, they not only accused security personnel of planting arms and ammunition in order to incriminate the clergy, but they also alleged that the British brought “dogs into the churches and into the altars where they licked the holy sacraments.”⁷¹ In the end, the British reply was rather anaemic. They focused more on touting the economic benefits of British rule rather than demonstrating the type of sensitivity to local sacred sites that their counterparts tried to show in Mandatory Palestine.

Sacred authority was a third religious issue that British security forces considered when planning and conducting information operations. Indeed, this stands out as a particularly evocative issue in each conflict. In Mandatory Palestine, prominent rabbis publicly criticised the conduct of security forces on more than one occasion. The arrest of a well-known rabbi in Jerusalem on the Sabbath in July 1946, for example, set off a storm of criticism in the local press.⁷² And, the Chief Rabbinate of Haifa condemned the searching of Jews on Saturdays as late as February 1948.⁷³

It remains unclear, however, how much importance officials gave

to these critiques. At least one intelligence report expresses concern over the chief rabbi of Tel Aviv's attendance at the funeral of a rebel group member in March 1946.⁷⁴ It cautioned that such an appearance might lead locals to believe the religious hierarchy endorsed the rebellion, and it encouraged officials to publicly announce the contrary. However, this stands out as a relatively isolated example.

In Cyprus, clerics not only questioned British activities, but also openly supported the objectives of EOKA. According to a 1958 report by the chief of the imperial general staff, "[b]oth EOKA, and its political counterpart PEKA, owe their hold on the population very largely to the support of the Church, which provides the brains, the planning, and operates the finance, without which neither organisation could function for long."⁷⁵ A 1960 War Office summary of the conflict echoed these sentiments arguing, "most priests regarded themselves as religious 'crusaders'".⁷⁶ Accordingly, officials in Cyprus determined that if they could "attack the political and religious basis of EOKA, we shall in the end reach a settlement."⁷⁷ This was easier said than done.

On the one hand, colonial officials made frequent announcements through the Cyprus Broadcasting Service "to break what has so long been an Enosis monopoly of propaganda—through the priests, through the local Greek press and through Athens radio".⁷⁸ On the other hand, security forces were also constrained in how directly they could deal with the clergy. The general preference of most officials was to detain subversive priests, but a 1955 memo reveals that such measures were considered impractical "because it would lead to serious disturbances and it is doubtful whether they could be here [held] securely in custody."⁷⁹ In the end, security forces regularly monitored the preaching of prominent clerics, especially the bishops of Kyrenia and Kitium, for seditious rhetoric couched in religious language.⁸⁰ However, they rarely acted directly on such intelligence.

Sacred authority played an equally important role during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. In particular, officials frequently commented on the importance of Jomo Kenyatta in legitimising the movement. As one typical example, take a 1952 telegram from the Governor of Kenya to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The communiqué reports, "Kenyatta has allowed his name to be inserted blasphemously in hymns and prayers as part of the strongly anti-Christian movement...in favour of the Mau Mau religion."⁸¹ The governor concluded that, as a result, Kenyatta had convinced most Kikuyu to follow him.⁸²

British officials expressed similar concern over a self-styled "Archbishop" that worked under the auspices of the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association. They believed he had a connection to Kenyatta and ordained priests "for a newly formed Kikuyu African Orthodox Church which was intensely Kikuyu and political."⁸³

Yet, similar to their counterparts in Cyprus, Kenyan authorities

had difficulty launching an effective counter-propaganda campaign against these religious authorities. This includes a somewhat unconventional response to the ostensible influence of Mau Mau oaths. In 1952, the Information Services office developed a plan to make a Laurel and Hardy film that mocked the tribal rituals. In defence of this project, the district commissioner of Kiambu province wrote to the head of that office, "I know that you feel that such a humourous film might be dangerous from the aspect of it being looked upon by the African as 'getting at' something analogous to their religion. However the Guthiurura ceremony is of the black magic category and it is not in the least analogous."⁸⁴ This defence carried little weight, in the end, and the project was abandoned. It does, however, typify elements in the British security forces that were prone to caricature local religious beliefs and practices. Indeed, many security personnel viewed the Mau Mau as irrational primitives that could not divorce politics from religion.⁸⁵

In sum, British security forces routinely took note of the role of sacred time, space, and authority when planning and conducting information operations. This religious intelligence shaped, to a certain degree, how they framed and distributed their message.

Of course, exceptions did exist. Most notably, the pessimistic attitude of many British officials towards the Mau Mau was not uniformly shared. Some, especially those that served in the detention camps, saw a much greater opportunity for changing the hearts and minds of rebels in Kenya than their counterparts on the battlefield. It is to this third issue area, I now turn.

III. Demobilisation

Demobilisation is a third area in which British security forces regularly considered the role of religion in the insurgency wars they fought during the early post-war period. This refers to the process of converting "combatants who pursue their objectives through force to civilians who pursue their objectives through other means."⁸⁶ Today, this often includes a phase of reinsertion into the general public, which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants.

In the context of the early post-war period, however, the primary focus was on activities that took place inside detention camps. In some cases, like Kenya, the British made a concerted effort to "rehabilitate" their prisoners. In others, such as in Cyprus, they focused more on extracting information from captives and then returning them, unarmed, into the civilian population. In both instances, security forces noted the role of at least three sacred phenomena.

Sacred time, for example, continued to arouse the attention of British personnel. In Mandatory Palestine, officials observed that

certain holidays provided an opportunity for leaders to reach out to members held in local prisons. For example, British intelligence noted that leaders of Irgun visited the prison in Acre over the Passover holiday in 1947.⁸⁷ This put them on alert during future religious commemorations.

In Cyprus, religious dates played a role in the release of detainees. Then-governor Sir Hugh Foot, for instance, discharged several hundred prisoners prior to the Christmas season of 1957, ostensibly as a measure of good will and in the hope that the conflict was winding down. This, however, turned out to be overly optimistic. Following inter-communal conflicts in July 1958, the number of detainees increased four-fold.⁸⁸

Sacred space was another consistent topic of interest. The Central Prison in Jerusalem stands out as an especially interesting example. Throughout the conflict, the prison housed between 250 and 500 inmates at any one time, which included both Jews and Arabs. British officials divided these prisoners into separate cells based on their religion. And, they permitted Jewish detainees to convert one cell into a synagogue room on Shabbat and holidays, while Muslim inmates used the exercise yard for prayer.

Even more noteworthy is how British beliefs about Judaism influenced the function of the prison. The facility housed many death-row inmates, but few were killed there. Rather, the majority of the members of the Jewish underground sentenced to death were transferred to Acre for execution.⁸⁹ This was because the British believed Jewish executions in the holy city would incite public outrage.⁹⁰

Sacred authority remained a third, and perhaps the most important, religious issue often considered by British personnel in detention camps. In Cyprus, for instance, officials frequently lamented the hold spiritual beliefs had over the majority of EOKA members, even those that experienced rather harrowing interrogation methods. For example, an officer interviewing captured rebels in 1957 expressed surprise at “the marked religious fervor with which members of this gang have sustained their morale.” He goes on to observe, “[s]ome are quite convinced that ‘God and the Virgin’ have hitherto protected them from capture.”⁹¹

As mentioned previously, the influence of Archbishop Makarios stood out as particularly troubling to security forces on the island. They believed, for instance, that EOKA members developed considerable loyalty to this prominent and charismatic religious leader. And, that these bonds proved difficult to break. Responding to an inquiry about the rehabilitation of captured rebels at Pyroi Camp outside Nicosia, an official concludes, “[e]very detainee is still 100 per cent for Enosis and 100 percent for obeying the Archbishop.”⁹²

Kenyan officials, in contrast, tried to leverage the influence of sa-

cred authority to break Mau Mau oaths. While the brutality of British detention camps in East Africa has been well documented in recent years, less attention has been given to the spiritual rehabilitation programmes conducted there.⁹³ These efforts relied on voluntary teams organised by Anglican churches and evangelical revivalist communities. They aimed to “rehabilitate” Mau Mau fighters and sympathisers through “Christian values.”⁹⁴ Authorities at Athi River, for instance, experimented with a number of techniques to weaken detainees’ Mau Mau sympathies. One of the more unusual involved teams that preached for several hours a day on loudspeakers in the hope of convincing prisoners to confess their connection to rebel gangs.⁹⁵

Indeed, confession became a dominant theme throughout Kenya’s rehabilitation camps. In more than one place, this took the form of “cleansing services,” which bore a family resemblance to Christian confessional rites.⁹⁶ The stated objective of these ceremonies was to remove “from the individual’s mind and soul the poison of the more advanced Mau Mau oaths.”⁹⁷ To give a feel for the prevalence of these rituals, 493 female prisoners were “cleansed” in this way in 1956.⁹⁸

There is little doubt that many officers thought these rituals had a positive effect. One for example recounts, “[t]heir physical appearance and health improves, their eyes become clear, their address direct and confident, their skin begins to shine and their hair blackens.”⁹⁹ And, while the revivalists at Athi Camp were dismissed by 1956, other African clergymen and British missionaries continued to lead cleansing services at various detention centres throughout the conflict. Yet, despite this popularity, most detainees resisted these attempts at indoctrination until they were physically coerced into confessing. This brutality no doubt exacerbated divisions between the security forces and locals, and it also possibly radicalised the relatives and friends of those interned.¹⁰⁰

In sum, British security forces remained well aware of some of the challenges and opportunities presented by sacred phenomena in the detention and demobilisation of captured rebels. Sacred time, space, and authority influenced both how they organised and treated detainees.

Conclusion

A leading historian of British counter-insurgency operations recently argued that the two most important factors in determining how the British conducted their military campaigns against guerrilla forces in the colonies were what they “thought were their enemies’ aims, and what strategies they believed would be effective in defeating them.”¹⁰¹ In this article, I have traced how religious intelligence played a role in such determinations.

Drawing on original data collected from the colonial archives, I demonstrated that military planners repeatedly obtained and analysed information about religion in three key areas: combat operations, information operations, and demobilisation. From Mandatory Palestine to Cyprus to Kenya, British forces paid particular attention to the three religious phenomena of sacred time, sacred space, and sacred authority.

It is beyond the scope of this article to suggest how widely similar efforts at gathering religious intelligence occur in other contexts. However, by showing that such efforts were routine in a set of cases that favoured the conventional wisdom, this study casts strong doubt on the commonly held view that modern militaries routinely overlook religion.

These findings also underscore the need for more systematic investigation of the phenomenon of religious intelligence. Other ideologically-driven conflicts fought by the British, such as in Malaya, Aden, and Dhofar, stand out as one helpful starting point. Another direction would be to expand the focus to efforts by other armed forces, such as the French in Algeria, the Soviets in Afghanistan, or recent US-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Three more general lessons can also be drawn from this analysis. First, this article challenges scholars to look beyond the analytic binaries that all too often construe rational, secular state forces struggling against irrational, religious insurgents. A close examination of religious intelligence efforts by British counter-insurgent forces reveals that both sides remained aware of the challenges and opportunities presented by sacred phenomena. Moreover, each sought to understand, and even leverage, these to varying degrees.

Second, this study illustrates how religion affects conflict in meaningful, and oftentimes unanticipated, ways. Contemporary analysts overwhelmingly focus on whether or not religion is the cause of a particular war. This misses, however, the many subtle ways religion shapes armed conflict. As this study demonstrates, religion was not the cause of rebellions in Mandatory Palestine, Cyprus, or Kenya, but sacred phenomena did shape how counter-insurgents understood and fought guerrilla forces in each location.

Third, my findings point to how contemporary military forces can improve the quality of their religious intelligence efforts. British forces may have been more aware of their opponents' religious sensibilities than conventional wisdom suggests, but this analysis was typically conducted in an ad hoc manner that not infrequently resulted in inaccurate or incomplete conclusions. To avoid similar pitfalls, modern counter-insurgents need to improve the training of their analysts and establish appropriate channels to coordinate the flow of information and ensure critical intelligence is brought to senior policymakers'

attention.¹⁰²

In the end, this study points to new directions for the study of religious violence and irregular warfare. Most importantly, it suggests the value of shifting the focus from how religion influences rebels to its impact on military planning. Looking at only one side of the battlefield misses the many ways religion shapes contemporary warfare.■

Notes

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² Although Prime Minister Attlee abandoned his position of a wholesale withdrawal in January 1947, deliberations persisted among ministers over the following months on how best to extract security forces without damaging British prestige or endangering the security of Middle East oil supplies. See David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 188–189.

³ This estimate is based on the monthly rate of attacks by Jewish underground groups as reported in David A. Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-7* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 196.

⁴ The National Archives (TNA) WO 275/77. Memorandum by the 6th Airborne Division to the 1st and 3rd Parachute Brigades, September 11, 1947.

⁵ Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 86.

⁶ For example, prior to the bombing of Rome, officials deliberated the consequences of damaging historical and religious buildings, especially in and around Vatican City. TNA AIR 8/438. Rome: An Open City, September 24, 1943.

⁷ Muhammad Abdel Ghani El-Gamasy, *The October War: Memoirs of Field Marshal El-Gamasy of Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 181.

⁸ C. Christine Fair, “The Golden Temple: A Tale of Two Sieges,” in *Treading on Hallowed Ground: Counterinsurgency Operations in Sacred Spaces*, ed. C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37–65.

⁹ David West, “Strategic Engagement and Advisement at the CENTCOM Center of Excellence,” in *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement*

and *Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments*, ed. Eric Patterson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 129–46.

¹⁰ Madeleine Albright, *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006); Robert A. Seiple and Dennis Hoover, *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹¹ As typical counter-insurgent activities, these issue areas serve as a plausibility probe to illustrate the broader empirical relevance of my claims. On the value of this method for theory development, see Jack S. Levy, “Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–18.

¹² On using most likely cases to disconfirm a prevailing theory, see Harry Eckstein, “Case Studies and Theory in Political Science,” ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 94–137.

¹³ This is line with the only other analysis in the security studies literature on religious intelligence. See Ron E. Hassner, “Religious Intelligence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 5 (2011): 684–710.

¹⁴ Sacred things are set apart and surrounded by prohibitions, and the beliefs and practices that regulate their access aim to unite adherents into a single moral community. See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49.

¹⁵ Hassner, “Religious Intelligence,” 686.

¹⁶ On duration, see Michael C. Horowitz, “Long Time Going: Religion and the Duration of Crusading,” *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): 162–93 and Monica Duffy Toft, “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War,” *Security Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 34–69. On lethality, see Susanna Pearce, “Religious Rage: A Quantitative Analysis of the Intensity of Religious Conflicts,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 3 (2005): 333–52 and Jonathan Fox, “The Rise of Religious Nationalism and Conflict: Ethnic Conflict and Revolutionary Wars, 1945–2001,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 6 (2004): 715–31. On termination, see Ron E. Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009) and Isak Svensson, “Fighting with Faith Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 6 (2007): 930–49.

¹⁷ For notable proponents of FM 3–24, see John Nagl, “Constructing the Legacy of Field Manual 3–24,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 58 (July 2010): 118 and Colin H. Kahl, “COIN of the Realm—Is There a Future for Counterinsurgency,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2007): 169–76.

¹⁸ Bing West, “Securing Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 1 (January/February 2008): 199–200.

¹⁹ Frank G. Hoffman, “Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 71–87; Edward Luttwak, “Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice,” *Harper’s Magazine* 2 (February

2007): 33–42.

²⁰ Steven Metz, “Rethinking Insurgency” (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, June 2007); David J. Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005): 597–617.

²¹ Anne Loveland, *Change and Conflict in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps since 1945* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2014); Eric Patterson, ed., *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement and Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

²² Stacey Gutkowski and George Wilkes, “Changing Chaplaincy: A Contribution to Debate over the Roles of US and British Military Chaplains in Afghanistan,” *Religion, State and Society* 39, no. 1 (2011): 111–24; Doris L. Bergen, ed., *Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

²³ Ron E. Hassner, ed., *Religion in the Military Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²⁴ Ron E. Hassner, *Religion on the Battlefield* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

²⁵ Ron E. Hassner, “Fighting Insurgency on Sacred Ground,” *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006): 149–66.

²⁶ Hassner, “Religious Intelligence,” 693.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 696.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 699.

²⁹ See French, *The British Way*, 8.

³⁰ For a detailed analysis of how the Jewish underground defeated the British and set in motion a chain of events that culminated in the creation of the State of Israel, see Bruce Hoffman, *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947* (New York: Knopf, 2015).

³¹ Insurgencies with Marxist-Leninist rebel groups (i.e., Malaya, Aden, Dhofar), of course, represent an important area of additional study since religious intelligence gathering need not be restricted to ideologies that draw from the major world religions. However, I exclude these cases from this analysis in order to focus on cases in which it should be more likely for the conventional wisdom to hold.

³² An argument could be made that the British were particularly sensitive to the role of religion in violent rebellions due to previous episodes in their colonies, most notably the Indian Mutiny (1857–58). However, other Great Powers are not without their own religiously-framed uprisings. For example, France faced guerrilla bands with strong loyalty to the Catholic Church and support from local clergy during the Napoleonic Wars in southern Italy (1806–11), Spain (1808–14), and Tyrol (1809). Russian forces were, in turn, pitted against Muslim tribes during the Murid War (1830–1859) in the Caucasus and the Basmachi Revolt (1916–1926) in Central Asia. Finally, Chinese forces faced opposition by a Christian millenarian movement during the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) and by Muslim ethnic groups in and around Xinjiang Province during the Dungan Revolt (1862–77). See Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents Since 1750* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 5–7 and Anthony

James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004)

³³ For more on the logic of most-likely cases, see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 120-123.

³⁴ TNA FCO 141/6417. Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of MM: Volume I (Ch I-V), January 1960.

³⁵ TNA WO 33/2736. History of EOKA, Organisation and Activities 1954-1959, 1960. TNA CO 926/961. The Church and Terrorism in Cyprus, December 15, 1956.

³⁶ Religion did not seem to be of direct importance to underground movements in Mandatory Palestine with one exception. British officials often noted a link between the Stern Gang, or Lehi, and religious dimensions of the conflict. TNA WO 275/58. Division Intelligence Summaries No 1-36, Jun 46 – Mar 47; TNA WO 275//108. Palestine Press Review, July 17, 1946.

³⁷ On this method, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 67-72.

³⁸ Documents housed at the Imperial War Museum, the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College London, the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University, and the Israel State Archives further supplement my analysis.

³⁹ This conceptualisation characterises most studies on British security forces during the postwar period. See Paul Dixon, ed., *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); J. Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); French, *The British Way*.

⁴⁰ This also follows the convention of recent studies on British insurgency wars. Of course, supporters on either side often adopt more polemical labels, such as terrorists or freedom fighters. For a helpful discussion on this issue, see French, *The British Way*, 9-10.

⁴¹ Thomas H. Killian, "Decision Making and the Levels of War," *Military Review* 80, no. 6 (2000): 66-70; Edward N. Luttwak, "The Operational Level of War," *International Security* 5, no. 3 (1980): 61-79.

⁴² TNA WO275/79. 317 Airborne Field Security Section Report, December 26, 1946.

⁴³ TNA WO275/79. 317 Airborne Field Security Section Report, April 23, 1947.

⁴⁴ Israel State Archives. 2/4/1/1051. Curfew Imposed on Tel Aviv, July 1946.

⁴⁵ TNA CO 822/447. Weekly Situation Appreciation, December 17, 1952.

⁴⁶ TNA CO 926/680. Weekly Political Situation Reports, April 16, 1958.

⁴⁷ Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, Private Papers of I.W.G. Martin, Papers relating to his work as an interpreter in Cyprus, 1957-1958; Imperial War Museum (IWM). Private Papers of I.W.G. Martin. Letters from Cyprus, June – August 1958.

⁴⁸ TNA WO 305/15. Report on Operation Whiskey Mac, March 15, 1957.

⁴⁹ TNA FCO 141/6207. Office of the District Officer, Mathira District to The Dis-

trict Commissioner, Nyeri, December 4, 1954.

⁵⁰ IWM. Private Papers of Major W H Thompson. *Only the Foothills*, 40.

⁵¹ TNA CO 926/447. Report by Archdeacon Goldie, 1955.

⁵² An initial report noted the disorganisation of EOKA following the deportation of the Archbishop. However, this soon proved to be overly optimistic. See TNA FCO 371/12388. Cyprus and enosis.

⁵³ For example, Greek-Cypriots called a three-day general strike. See Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120.

⁵⁴ The extent to which this and the other religious dynamics emphasised by security officials factored into the organisation and conduct of the Mau Mau is, of course, questionable. Several studies suggest that the settlers and local colonial administration largely constructed and emphasised these characteristics to delegitimise the rebellion. Many of the military and security officials who came to Kenya after the State of Emergency was declared accepted this tribal and religious framing of the conflict, although some, like General Erskine, held to the view that the Mau Mau were a rational movement with political aims and a military strategy. It is these views of military officials that I aim to capture in this article. See John Lonsdale, "Mau Maus of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya," *The Journal of African History* 31, no. 03 (1990): 393–421; Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33.

⁵⁵ TNA FCO 141/6417. Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of MM: Volume I (Ch I-V), Ch. V, 97.

⁵⁶ TNA FCO 141/6589. The Evolution of the Oath.

⁵⁷ Members of EOKA in Cyprus were also required to take a religious oath in front of an Orthodox priest when they joined the organisation. See David French, *Fighting EOKA: The British Counter-Insurgency Campaign on Cyprus, 1955-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 67.

⁵⁸ TNA FCO 141/5704. Appreciation of the Security Situation Likely to be Faced During the Period October 1, 1956 – March 31, 1957.

⁵⁹ "Joint Publication 3-13 Information Operations" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, February 13, 2006). See also Norman Emery, "Information Operations in Iraq," *Military Review* 84, no. 3 (2004): 11–14.

⁶⁰ While a similar process at the international level is, undoubtedly, also important, it lies beyond the scope of this study.

⁶¹ TNA WO 275/46. Attack on Haifa Police HQ, September 29, 1947.

⁶² TNA FCO 141/4309. Precautions Against Disturbances at Political Anniversaries and Celebrations: OXI Day, September 7, 1957.

⁶³ TNA FCO 141/4448. Emergency Regulations (Cyprus), 1957 – 1958.

⁶⁴ Andreas Varnavas, *A History of the Liberation Struggle of EOKA 1955-1959*, trans. Philippos Stylianou (Nicosia, Cyprus: Foundation of the EOKA Liberation Struggle, 2004), 150.

⁶⁵ TNA FO: 371/123865. The Cyprus Gazette No 3893, December 1, 1955.

⁶⁶ Demonstrators in Nicosia, for example, marched with a portrait of Makarios on

Oxi Day 1957. See Holland, *Britain and the Revolt*, 208.

⁶⁷ TNA WO 275/13. Combined Military and Police Action for Platoon Commanders and Junior Police Ranks, June 1947.

⁶⁸ TNA CO 968/96/2. Letter from the Colonial Office, August 20, 1945.

⁶⁹ French, *Fighting EOKA*, 67.

⁷⁰ TNA CO 926/671. Reports by Cyprus Intelligence Committee (fortnightly reviews), 1957; TNA CO 926/672. Reports by Cyprus Intelligence Committee (fortnightly reviews), 1957. See also French, *Fighting EOKA*, 8.

⁷¹ TNA CO 926/671. PEKA leaflet 129/57, March 8, 1957.

⁷² TNA WO 275/108. Palestine Press Review, July 17, 1946.

⁷³ TNA WO 275/72. Letter from the Chief Rabbinate of Haifa, February 20, 1948.

⁷⁴ TNA CO 537/1708. Situation Monthly Report, March 2, 1946.

⁷⁵ TNA DEFE 13/7. Report by Chief of the Imperial General Staff on His Visit to Cyprus. November 23-27, 1958.

⁷⁶ TNA WO 33/2736. A History of EOKA 1954-1959.

⁷⁷ TNA DEFE 13/7. Report by Chief of the Imperial General Staff on His Visit to Cyprus. November 23-27, 1958.

⁷⁸ TNA FCO 141/4280. Notes by the Head of Information Department, Colonial Office On a Visit to Cyprus, September 22-25, 1954. See also French, *Fighting EOKA*, 171.

⁷⁹ FO 371/123865. Draft Reference to the Law Officers, December 30, 1955.

⁸⁰ TNA FO 371/123876. Outward telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, March 9, 1956; TNA FO 317/117677. Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, December 2, 1955; TNA FO 371/123918. Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, August 18, 1956; TNA FCO 141/3155. Political Intelligence: Bishop of Kitium, January 18, 1958. .

⁸¹ TNA FCO 141/6594. Governor of Kenya to Secretary of State for the Colonies, October 9, 1952.

⁸² Given Kenyatta's arrest in 1952, this evaluation is questionable. Rather, it is more likely that the leaders of local forest gangs and the independent African Christian churches played a more direct role in rallying rebels around the figure of Kenyatta.

⁸³ IWM. Private Papers of Major W H Thompson, *Only the Foothills*, 69.

⁸⁴ TNA FCO 141/5876. District Commissioner's Office, Kiambu to The Chief Native Commissioner, March 24, 1952.

⁸⁵ This popular view is evocatively captured in an official War Office summary of the conflict: "There can be no compromise, no common ground between Mau Mau and the rest of the civilized world." TNA FCO 141/6417. Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of MM: Volume I (Ch I-V), Ch. V, 97.

⁸⁶ "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Report of the Secretary General, UN Doc. S/2000/101" (New York: United Nations, 2000). See also Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 4 (2007): 534.

⁸⁷ TNA CO 537/3854. Report of the Board of Enquiry, May 4, 1947.

⁸⁸ See David Bonner, *Executive Measures Terrorism and National Security Have the Rules of the Game Changed?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1988), 169.

⁸⁹ Aviva Bar-Am and Shmuel Bar-Am, "The Pre-State Struggle Remembered at the Underground Prisoners' Museum," *The Times of Israel*, April 16, 2013.

⁹⁰ This is not to say that death sentences were always carried out at the Acre Prison without incident either. On July 28, 1947 the superintendent of the prison refused to carry out the execution of three detainees. See TNA CO 537/2292. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 30, 1947.

⁹¹ TNA CO 926/678. Weekly Political Situation Report, April 20, 1957.

⁹² TNA FCO 141/3641/69. Pyroi Camp "X", Release of Detainees Report No. 2, 29 June 1957.

⁹³ On this brutality, see Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005); Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau*.

⁹⁴ Timothy H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004)170.

⁹⁵ Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, C.1935-1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 237.

⁹⁶ TNA CO 822/794. Rehabilitation Progress Report, 1955; TNA WO 276/457/10. The Mau Mau Riddle, 1955.

⁹⁷ TNA FCO 141/5595. Progress Report on the Implementation of Eighteen Point Statement of Policy, February 3, 1955.

⁹⁸ Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism*, 238.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 55.

¹⁰¹ French, *The British Way*, 58.

¹⁰² Recent US-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that such training and coordination remains largely absent in modern militaries. While combatant commanders relied heavily on the US Army Chaplaincy to engage with local communities and advise on the religious dynamics of each conflict, chaplains received limited instruction on these roles. See Jason Klocek and Ron E. Hassner, "Contemporary Challenges and Future Opportunities for U.S. Chaplains," in *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement and Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments*, ed. Eric Patterson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 201-14.

IS THE ISLAMIC STATE ISLAMIC OR NOT? THE DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE TO DEFINE THE ISLAMIC STATE

Tore Hamming

"Now let's make two things clear: ISIL is not 'Islamic.' No religion condones the killing of innocents, and the vast majority of ISIL's victims have been Muslim. And ISIL is certainly not a state."

- U.S. President Barack Obama

The Islamic State has managed to conquer territory in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. The group is establishing state institutions, killing innocent civilians, battling the Assad-regime and other rebel forces, and increasingly targeting Western interests through its attacks on Western soil.² Still, as suggested by President Obama's statement above, one of the main debates surrounding the Islamic State is to what extent it is *Islamic* or not. The Western and Arab world alike are caught between two interpretations: either the Islamic State is an example of religious extremism, or it is an irreligious movement that should be considered outside the abode of Islam.

Irrespective of conclusions reached, the majority of arguments are often premised on an essentialist view of religion. The argument typically holds that religion, in this case Islam, has a core essence that the Islamic State either deviates from — in extremist fashion — or is unrelated to. Well-aware that the analytical perspective risks being perceived as provocative, this paper applies a social constructivist approach to analyse the debate on the religious character of the Islamic State, thus rejecting the idea at the centre of essentialist notions of religion.³ A social constructivist approach moves the debate away from a strict focus on whether the Islamic State is Islamic or not, as this essentialist debate is ontologically mistaken. Instead, this paper pays attention to the polyvalent view of religion and the discursive struggle to *define* the Islamic State, the actors involved and their motivations.⁴ Taking this perspective on the debate, the ambition is, on the one hand, to eschew a Luhmanian dichotomy of Islamic versus non-Islamic and, on the other side, to contribute to the wider debate on Jihadi groups like al-Qaida and the Islamic State and how we perceive them. The intended contribution is therefore both theoretical and empirical. The aim is to challenge mainstream views of militant

Islamist groups and to add nuance to the debates about these groups by recasting their actions as a political struggle for authority and legitimacy hiding behind a benevolent objective of defining Islam for the sake of religion.

Those attempting to place the Islamic State on a spectrum of religions generally fall into one of three groups. Along the lines of Obama, some critics label the Islamic State as an irreligious movement outside of Islam.⁵ Others label them as religious extremists who are either too literal or too selective in their interpretation of Islamic sources, but nonetheless Islamic and thus bestowed with the legitimacy it entails.⁶ Lastly, Islamic State fighters themselves claim to represent the purest form of Islam, what in Salafi discourse is referred to as the saved sect (*al-Firqat an-Naajiyah*), as opposed to what they consider to be the general deviant practice of most of the world's Muslims.⁷ In the debate between these three groups, it becomes evident that discursive framing efforts are governed by the logic of in-group praise and out-group critique as a way of bolstering one's own legitimacy while rejecting that of others. Before addressing this debate, the article will initially discuss definitions of religion and faith, including how differences in religious interpretation are generally accepted. Based on this discussion it will examine the Islamic State and its relation to religion before finally analysing the discursive struggle to define the movement and its *Islamic-ness*. In conclusion, the article will place the debate in a broader context of the struggle for legitimacy and authority, which is playing an increasingly important role in relation to militant Islamist movements.

Defining Religion and Faith

Defining religion is a contentious matter, which readily gives rise to conflict. The *Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* compares the attempt to define religion to that of the blind man trying to define an elephant; we end up with a plurality of quite diverse definitions.⁸ Religious actors, secularists, and atheists alike have all engaged in debate over what religion is and what it is not. Generally, however, religions as separate belief systems are not clearly delineated, which makes it a challenge to decide to what extent a movement is religious or not. A characteristic feature of monotheistic religions like Christianity and Islam is the presence of a religious textual corpus and several — often quite diverse — religious denominations, all claiming some sort of relationship with that textual corpus. For example, Christianity is not solely defined by its holy scriptures or the orthodox practices of long-living doctrinal traditions such as Catholicism or Protestantism, but also by so-called “new religious movements” such as Pentecostalism. These denominations or faith communities all participate in produc-

ing, reproducing, and challenging the boundaries of the religion in question. If taken to the extremes, one would argue that a religion is what its followers make of it.

The figure below is an illustration of the structure of a fictive religious field. It shows how the field is comprised of several denominations and faith communities and how some of these communities overlap, while others find themselves on the fringes of how the religion is perceived by the majority. These *outliers* on the border of the circle are often perceived as far from orthodoxy, sometimes even outside the scope of the religion in question, or potentially as a threat to the religion. Depending on who is asked, examples would include the Yazidi, the Ahmadiyya, and followers of a Jihadi doctrine. Actors in the field (e.g. what is perceived as the *Islamic field*) have, over time, changed the boundaries of the religion either by expanding or reducing its general perception. Thus, despite the continuity of religious tradition and practice, religions should be considered dynamic. What was orthodox Islamic practice in the time of the Prophet Muhammad is not necessarily regarded as orthodox today.

From a constructivist perspective, groups and individuals within the Islamic field are not defined in relation to an essence of Islamic doctrine or faith, but through an inter-subjective discursive struggle to define religion and their own position. Although this position will be heavily attacked, especially by people with a religious conviction, the argument is that a religion is entirely constructed socially by its adherents, critics, secularists, and so on. Reaching a static definition of religion is thus impossible as it is historically contingent and constructed through a continuous struggle. This leaves us in a situation where we cannot label something as irreligious simply because it is outside the orthodox interpretation.

This contingency is exacerbated by the fact that, in Sunni Islam, there is no central authority as we know it in Catholicism, represented by the Pope, or in Shia Islam, where the Ayatollahs occupy this role. As a result, there is no authority to define — contested or uncontested — what constitutes Islam and what, on the other hand, should be considered outside the scope of the religion. In Sunni Islam, differences in creed, doctrine and jurisprudence are generally accepted, taking the form of separate denominations or faith communities. A plurality of thought and faith within Sunni Islam is accepted as long as it does not represent a threat to the authority of political and religious actors. Despite lacking a single central institution of authority, Sunni Islam does have centres of traditional religious authority represented by religious scholars (*‘ulama*) or, more specifically, in institutions like the prestigious Al Azhar University in Egypt and national muftis. However, these sources of traditional religious authority have lost much of their influence in recent decades as globalisation, modern IT

technology, and media have led to the fragmentation of authority.⁹

The constructivist view of religion is not new and is echoed by the late Harvard scholar Shahab Ahmed who refused to perceive of Islam — or any other religion for that matter — as a monolith. In his search to answer the question of ‘what is Islam?’ Ahmed outlines two approaches.¹⁰ The first approach is to talk about an array of “local Islams” where Islam is “whatever Muslims say it is”.¹¹ The second approach, advanced by Ahmed, introduces the notion of “Con-text of revelation”, referring to the totality of the “Islamic lexicon of means and meaning” since the birth of Islam. Following this approach something should be considered Islamic if it relates to this historical Islamic lexicon, including the Islamic scriptural corpus, and connects with it.¹² As will be demonstrated below, no matter which of the two approaches one subscribes to, it would be hard to argue that the Islamic State is not Islamic.

The Islamic State and Religion

In his recent article *Does ISIS really have nothing to do with Islam? Islamic apologetics carry serious risks*, published in the Washington Post, Shadi Hamid argues that the Islamic State does indeed have something to do with Islam.¹³ A more nuanced version of this claim is advanced by Hizb ut-Tahrir member and now counter-extremism activist Maajid Nawaz.¹⁴ It is evident from the Islamic State’s publications, videos, and the speeches of its leaders, that there is a strong relation to the Islamic textual corpus and Islamic tradition. The group’s ideology finds its foundation in Islamic theology even if the majority of the world’s Muslims disagree with its interpretation. Claims that the Islamic State is irreligious thus appear to be more motivated by political objectives to delegitimise the group.

The senior leadership of the Islamic State is trained in diverse Islamic sciences, and are well-versed in the Quran and Sunna. Despite their youth, prominent members like spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami and Head of the Fatwa Committee Turki al-Binali (also known as Abu Humam al-Athari) often reference Islamic scripture in their speeches and statements.¹⁵ Al-Binali, a Bahrani, who was also a staunch supporter of the al-Qaida in Iraq before it established the Caliphate, is a former student of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, generally considered the foremost religious authority within Sunni Jihadism.¹⁶ The self-proclaimed Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has a PhD degree in Quranic Studies from Baghdad University, which gives him a level of religious credentials superior to that of other revered Jihadi leaders like Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.¹⁷

The covert nature of the movement makes it difficult to assess the cohesiveness of the religious orientation of its members, but it

can be assumed that the Islamic State — like most other religious movements — is not homogenous and that levels of religiosity differ markedly among its members. Nonetheless, it is certain that the vast majority of Islamic State members find their religious foundation in the tradition of a Salafi-inspired doctrine.¹⁸ The presence of former Baathists from the Saddam era is often cited as proof that the Islamic State is in fact a nationalist endeavour and thus more political than religious in nature. The problem with this argument, however, is that it fails to consider that the Ba'ath Party witnessed a religious turn in the 1990s as a result of Saddam Hussein's "Faith Campaign" and thus the religiosity of many former Ba'ath members should be considered sincere — as several accounts of how senior Ba'ath members started to frequent the mosques in Iraq demonstrate.¹⁹

Similar reasoning is used regarding foreign fighters. Many foot soldiers or lower level members have little if any knowledge about Islam as the anecdotes of foreign fighters buying *Islam for Dummies* books on their way to Syria are testament to.²⁰ There have been stories about how Islamic State fighters do not pray and recently the defence lawyer of Saleh Abdeslam, a French national who was part of the Islamic State attack in Paris on 13 November 2015, claimed that his client's knowledge of the Quran was limited to an online summary.²¹ A central question in this regard is: "what does it take to be considered a Muslim?" A general answer would be that it depends on a person pronouncing and believing in the *shahada*, the Islamic confession, and lives in accordance with the five pillars of Islam, although the latter is increasingly rare. From this simplistic view, it is fair to argue that Islamic State members are as religious as many other proclaimed Muslims, whom we readily acknowledge as part of the faith.

Another important point that did not receive sufficient attention in the debate about al-Qaida is that we need to accept that the Islamic scriptures are vast, as they include both the Quran and the Sunna (collections of statements and deeds attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and his early followers) and that the great magnitude of the religious corpus leaves plenty of room for interpretation. As William McCants correctly points out, if one wants to find justification for violence—also of the extreme kind—it is absolutely possible.²² This is not particular to Islam, but characteristic of all major monotheistic religions. This is a source of controversy as it creates space for religious interpretations that do not correspond with global norms—and in some cases, international law—and consequently are not easily accepted. Despite our unwillingness to accept certain interpretations, however, this does not make them less religious (or Islamic in this case). Since claiming to have established its Islamic caliphate on 29 June 2014, the Islamic State has, on numerous occasions, crossed the limits for what is considered legal and acceptable while legitimis-

ing it through references to Islamic scriptures. Such acts include beheadings, burning people to death, and enslavement of women and ethnic minorities. Labelling these heinous actions as un-Islamic is nonetheless problematic as they indeed do find their justification in interpretations of Islamic texts. Aymenn Jawad al-Tamini, an expert on the Syrian insurgency, captures the essence and complications of this whole debate, stating that “to argue that ISIS isn’t ‘Islamic’ in a normative sense is to argue, to some degree, that Salafism isn’t a branch of Islam and that jihad isn’t a noble concept in the religion, arguments that are false and misleading, and severely hinder attempts to understand these movements properly”.²³ Despite the general perception of Salafism as an extremely conservative, and by some labelled medieval, Islamic doctrine, it is nonetheless a fully legitimate doctrine, which generally is considered as part of Islam.

Describing the Islamic creed of Jihadism, scholar Nelly Lahoud argues that it should be considered as “a specific dogmatic strand within the Islamic tradition,”²⁴ thus highlighting its place within the sphere of Islam. From a *religion market* perspective,²⁵ this would mean that what is termed Jihadi-Salafism and, more specifically, the creed of the Islamic State, is simply another product on the shelf on offer to interested consumers within the Islamic landscape. The religious doctrine of the Islamic State is only shared by a small minority within Islam, but it is not something entirely new, as its creed has a long genealogy in Islamic tradition. Thus, rather than regarding the Islamic State as an irreligious movement, it should be considered as one competing religious discourse in the overall struggle over how Islam is defined and perceived in current times.

The Discursive Struggle to Define the Islamic State

As explained in the previous section, the discussion of the religious character of the Islamic State tends not to be about or related to substance, but rather governed by political motivations. When we hear Barack Obama or Sunni religious authorities say that the Islamic State is not Islamic, it should be considered part of a discursive struggle where the involved actors either seek to deny the Islamic State legitimacy or add to it.

The debate on the relationship between so-called *extremist* groups and religion is not a new one. After 9/11 political and religious actors, both in the West and among Muslim communities, sought to delegitimise al-Qaida by arguing that religion does not support terrorism, the killing of civilians, women and children, and, as a result, the group should not be regarded as Islamic.²⁶ Rather, al-Qaida was presented as a terrorist organisation that capitalised on Islam and used the religion as a tool to promote its extremist views. Another example is an

Egyptian group, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Although its official name was *Jama'at al-Muslimin* (The Muslim Group), it was generally known as (and still is) *Jama'at al-Takfir wal-l-Hijra* (The Group of Excommunication and Emigration) due to its extremist views on excommunication of other Muslims.²⁷ We know from discourse and framing theory that language matters. Thus, as a way of countering actors we politically disagree with, we constantly engage in discursive struggles, or in some cases smear campaigns, to delegitimise them. In itself this is not a problem and is regarded a normal political practice, but it does become problematic when it disturbs our perception of the actor in question.

Unsurprisingly, the list of actors criticising or even denouncing the Islamic State is incredibly long. The critique by governments worldwide, including states like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, is well known. Such verbal attacks from liberal and secular actors were to be expected and probably only have a limited effect on the general perception of the Islamic State. The main motivations for governments to denounce the Islamic State and like-minded groups are security concerns, threats to their own authority or what could be defined as endeavours to protect the religion and international political norms.²⁸ The following two paragraphs will instead focus on how other Muslim authorities have reacted to the emergence of the Islamic State and to its actions. Traditional institutions of Islamic authority have all criticised the establishment of the caliphate and its brutality, but interestingly in very different ways and to varying extent. The Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shawqi Allam, who is also the head of the Dar al-Ifta, argues that the Islamic State is not an *Islamic state* and that the group is founded on an “incorrect” understanding of Islam.²⁹ In even stronger words Allam’s Saudi Arabian counterpart, Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh, who himself is viewed as a Wahhabi extremist by many, argues that the Islamic State is not part of the Islamic faith and should be considered “enemy number one of Islam.”³⁰ As Islamic State scholars often question the Saudi religious establishment due to its support of the Al Saud monarchy, such fierce response from the Saudi Grand Mufti is a direct response to the challenge to authority. However, arguably the most important source of authority within Sunni Islam, the Grand Imam of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Ahmed al-Tayeb, has been less eager to take a clear stand on the Islamic State. In language resembling the parlance of a well-trained diplomat, Sheikh Tayeb has refused to denounce IS as un-Islamic or to issue a ruling calling them apostate – despite Al-Azhar’s opposition to the Islamic State’s extremism.³¹ The strongest sign yet of Muslim opposition to the Islamic State is arguably the *Open Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri, alias ‘Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’: And to the fighters and followers of the self-declared ‘Islamic State’*, which is a concerted effort

of more than 120 Muslim religious scholars to counter the Islamic State's claim to religious legitimacy. The letter, published in 2014, is a twenty-four-point critique of the group, and focuses on refuting its relation to Islam. The group of scholars counts prominent signatories, including the current and former muftis of Egypt and the Nigerian Sultan of Sokoto. In their letter to the Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the scholars state that the Islamic State "is flagrantly un-Islamic in its behavior. ISIS's treatment of women, religious minorities, non-combatants, as well as its employment of gratuitous violence and aggression, is found by the scholars to be fundamentally out of step with traditional Islamic belief and practice."³² It is important to note that, not only is the Islamic State threatening the security of some states in the Muslim world, it is also challenging the authority of Sunni scholars. Already experiencing a decline in influence, these traditional authorities thus have an interest in countering the Islamic State's interpretation of Islam, as it directly undermines their own position and influence.

A look at the discourse inside Sunni Jihadism shows a similar wave of scathing attacks from within the Jihadi field itself. Initially hesitant after the proclamation of the caliphate, al-Qaida leader al-Zawahiri has subsequently adopted a more critical posture towards the Islamic State. In an audio series titled "The Islamic Spring Series," consisting of eight recordings, al-Zawahiri unambiguously rejects the Islamic State's caliphate and proceeds to question the legitimacy of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi himself.³³ Al-Zawahiri is supported in his critique by several of the most respected Jihadi-Salafi scholars. Abu Qatada al-Filistini and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, two al-Qaida affiliated scholars who are generally considered the most important Jihadi ideologues alive, have both fiercely condemned the Islamic State and raised doubts about the process of establishing the caliphate and the authority of its most prominent figures, questioning their Jihadi credentials and Islamic knowledge.³⁴ In a statement on May 18, 2015, a group consisting of Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaida's affiliate in Syria), Ahrar ash-Shaam (the biggest Salafi militant group fighting in the Syrian insurgency), and independent Syria-based scholars likewise condemned the extremism of the Islamic State, claiming that it fights others Muslims and destroys their mosques.³⁵ Other important Jihadi-Salafi ideologues have joined the criticism.³⁶ However, the critique from within Jihadi-Salafism generally stops short of denouncing the Islamic State as un-Islamic as this would potentially provoke a similar criticism of themselves. Hence, they need to balance their criticism much more in order not to push away their constituents, while at the same time distancing themselves from the Islamic State. This delicate role is illustrated below in al-Zawahiri's previous praise of the caliphate.

To summarise, Western and secular critiques of the Islamic State focus on the movement's extremism and violent actions, framing it as a terrorist organisation. Islamic actors, on the other hand, engage in a more substantial debate, questioning the Islamic State's foundation, including its caliphate claims and excessive use of *takfir* (excommunication) through vilification (demonising competing popular intellectuals) and decredentiaing (raising questions about the expertise of rivals) framing strategies.³⁷

Initially, after establishing the Caliphate, the Islamic State expended considerable effort to establish its authority and legitimacy within Jihadi circles. Central to these efforts was building the reputation of leading figures within the movement, especially the self-proclaimed Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the official spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-'Adnani al-Shami, and chief ideologue Turki al-Binali, through exaltation (praising in-group popular intellectuals) and decredentiaing, framing strategies that emphasised their Jihadi credentials and Islamic knowledge. An example is Turki al-Binali's biography of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.³⁸ The attitude of other jihadi groups towards the Islamic State is more ambiguous. Even though jihadists from the al-Qaida network and independent scholars have generally been critical of the Islamic State, they have also supported the group's struggle in Syria and Iraq against secular forces. Lately, such statements of support have decreased — if not entirely disappeared. However, early on in the conflict, and even after the caliphate declaration on June 29, 2014, al-Qaida leaders praised the struggle against deviant regimes and Western forces. For example, al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri praised the Islamic State's attack in Paris on November 13, 2015, labelling it a "victory for all the Mujahedeen and all Muslims."³⁹ Another example is the early support by a senior al-Qaida affiliated ideologue named Abu-I-Mundhir al-Shinqiti, who initially supported the Islamic State's caliphate before later adopting a critical position.⁴⁰ The double role of other jihadists, like al-Zawahiri, proves the point of the discursive contestation; in order to be considered legitimate from a Jihadi-Salafi perspective, he needed to support the Islamic State's struggle for the Islamic *ummah*. The Islamic State is fighting the same enemies as al-Qaida and for the same ideological reasons. Moreover, the two movements have emerged from similar theological and ideological foundations. As a result, it has not been straightforward for al-Zawahiri to criticise and discredit the caliphate, as he has been forced to balance his discourse so as not to precipitate a major exodus of al-Qaida supporters and sympathisers.

The above discussion has sought to illustrate how actors engage in the discursive struggle to define the Islamic State based on their political and religious motivations. If religion, as every other phenomenon, is a social construct and the product of what its adherents claim

it to be, the argument that the Islamic State is not Islamic does not make sense. As illustrated above, the Islamic State has a strong connection to Islam as a religion and as a textual corpus. However, it is also evident that its interpretation of religious texts differs substantially from Islamic orthodoxy. The debate to define what exactly the Islamic State is thus appears to be determined by the actors' political interests.

The general critique of "Islamic apologists" — people who argue the Islamic State is outside of Islam — is that they lack knowledge about the Islamic State movement, and thus fail to understand the movement's foundation in Islamic scripture and tradition. Although this is certainly the case for some western analysts and commentators, it seems more likely that, rather than insufficient knowledge, the rejection of the religious nature of the Islamic State is due to an unwillingness to bestow the movement with the legitimacy that such a label brings along. One almost amusing, if not particularly serious example of this discursive struggle is the intense debate among governments and in the media about what name to call the Islamic State. While the easy option would simply be to refer to the movement by the name it employs itself (as has been the case with al-Qaida), governments, in particular, have adopted several other names for the movement as a means to delegitimise it. These include: ISIS (*Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*), ISIL (*Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*), and Daesh (*ad-Dawlat al-Islāmiyah fi-l-Irāq wa-sh-Shām*), which is the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham. In addition, French media has generally referred to the movement as *Groupe État Islamique* (Islamic State Group), while Al Jazeera Arabic refers to it as *Tanzim ad-Dawla* (the State Organisation). The main debate on labelling the Islamic State centres on finding a name that does not provide it with unnecessary legitimacy either by calling it a state or Islamic. Hence, Western leaders argue that we should use the acronym Daesh, as the movement itself detests this name, and because the acronym (they claim) does not bestow it with legitimacy. Understanding the actual meaning of the acronym, it is perplexing how Daesh should be any better than ISIS, ISIL or for that matter, the Islamic State. The real reason for the popularity of the use of Daesh in the Arab world as a critique of IS stems from its negative connotations if pronounced slightly different.⁴¹ This, however, is a weak basis for the Western world to favour the name and it is unlikely to succeed in denying the Islamic State legitimacy, for the Arabic acronym contains both the words *state* and *Islamic* and references to Iraq and Syria (the latter through the "Shaam" reference).

Conclusion: A Struggle For Legitimacy and Authority

Leaving behind the idea of an essentialist understanding of Islam, and religion in general, we see how the debate about whether the Islamic State is Islamic or not is provoked by political motivations. This article strives to contribute to the debate on how we discuss groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaida and to emphasise the imperative to be cautious in our discursive efforts as we risk preventing a proper understanding of the phenomenon we seek to counter. When Barack Obama says the Islamic State is not Islamic, it is simply because he does not want it to be Islamic — based on political motivations — and not because the group does not have anything to do with Islam. By branding the movement as un-Islamic or as religious extremists, opponents of the Islamic State hope to rob the movement of the little legitimacy and authority it has, while the Islamic State itself is engaged in a campaign to convince the Muslims across the world that they are the true representatives of Islam.

An easy conclusion from the debate on the Islamic State's *Islamicness* is that the Islamic doctrine the group adheres to and promotes is outside the scope of what is tolerated by international politics and international law, and that it deviates from orthodox Islamic doctrine and interpretation. This, however, does not make it less Islamic in character, but rather places it as a challenger in the continuous struggle to define what Islam is and, as a result, how the religion develops. Western actors' main objective is to delegitimise the Islamic State as much as possible; not only in order to legitimise its own military engagement in the region but, perhaps more importantly, to strengthen the general opposition to the Islamic State and likeminded groups. Within Islam the struggle adopts a different logic. Here the debate is mainly about who defines what Islam is and what it is not. As several scholars working on Islamic authority have pointed out, traditional sources of authority in the Sunni world are losing their influence due to an increasing decentralisation or fragmentation of Islamic authority.⁴² A consequence is that individuals, including Jihadi scholars and leaders, suddenly find themselves in a situation where they can challenge to be considered part of the "new Islamist intellectuals" and thus gain authority to not only speak on behalf of Islam, but also participate in the process of defining Islam and its symbols.

As the sphere of Islamic authority has opened up and become increasingly accessible, it has at the same time become more politicised. Sunni militants, Islamists, Islamic moderates and liberals, and Western seculars are all participating (often from irreconcilable positions) in the political negotiation process of defining the religion. As this article has tried to highlight, the debate on the Islamic State is a clear example of such a discursive negotiation process, which is lacking

Notes

¹ Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on ISIL," *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1>.

² See Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The Evolution in Islamic State Administration: The Documentary Evidence," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): 117–29.

³ Klaus Rasborg, "Socialkonstruktivismen I Klassisk Og Moderne Sociologi," in *Videnskabsteori I Samfundsvidenskaberne: På Tværs Af Fagkulturer Og Paradigmer*, ed. Lars Fuglsang and Poul Bitsch Olsen (Gyldning: Roskilde Universitetsforlag, n.d.), 349–88. My understanding of social constructivism and discourses is mainly inspired by the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, see more Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Post-Marxism without Apologies," *New Left Review* 166 (1987): 79–106.

⁴ For a discussion of the ontology of defining religion, see André Droogers, *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Peter B. Clarke (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 265–267.

⁵ Murtaza Hussain, "Why the Islamic State Is Not Really Islamic," *The Intercept*, 2014, <https://theintercept.com/2014/09/26/isis-islamic/>.

⁶ Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>; Alastair Crooke, "Obama Is Wrong That ISIS Is 'Not Islamic,'" *Huffington Post*, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/obama-isis-not-islamic_b_5843830.html.

⁷ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "Is ISIS Islamic, and Other 'Foolish' Debates," 2015, <http://jihadology.net/2015/04/03/guest-post-is-isis-islamic-and-other-foolish-debates/>.

⁸ Clarke, *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*.

⁹ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Peter Mandaville, "Globalization and the Politics of Religious Knowledge: Pluralizing Authority in the Muslim World," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (2007): 101–15.

¹⁰ Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

¹¹ Elias Muhanna, "How Has Islamic Orthodoxy Changed Over Time?," *The Nation*, 2015, <http://www.thenation.com/article/contradiction-and-diversity/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Shadi Hamid, "Does ISIS Really Have Nothing to Do with Islam? Islamic Apologetics Carry Serious Risks," *The Washington Post*, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/11/18/does-isis-really-have-nothing-to-do-with-islam-islamic-apologetics-carry-serious-risks/>.

¹⁴ Maajid Nawaz, "How to Beat Islamic State," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-to-beat-islamic-state-1449850833>.

¹⁵ See for example Abu Muhammad Ad-Adnani, *The State of Islam Will Remain*

Safe [Speech Transcription], Al Furqan Media, 2011; Abu Muhammad Ad-'Adnani, *What Comes to You of Good Is from Allah [Speech Transcription]*, Al Hayat, 2014.

¹⁶ Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>; Cole Bunzel, *The Caliphate's Scholar-in-Arms*, 2014, <http://www.jihadica.com/the-caliphate's-scholar-in-arms/>.

¹⁷ Will McCants, "The Believer: How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer Became Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Leader of the Islamic State," 2015; Turki Al-Bin'ali, *Stretch Forth Your Hands To Give The Bay'ah To Al-Baghdadi*, 2014, <https://ansarukhilafah.wordpress.com/2014/12/21/stretch-forth-your-hands-to-give-the-bayah-to-al-baghdadi/>.

¹⁸ Salafism, often described as a retrograde religious doctrine, should at its most general level be understood as a return to the foundation of religion and the practices of *al-Salaf al-Salih* (the pious ancestors; referring to the *Sahabah*) as their practices had not been altered by innovations, which Salafis so critically denounce. A central aspect of Salafi identity is their self-perception of being the saved sect *al-firqa al-najiya*,¹⁰ thus indicating the superiority of their doctrine to others. For more, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (May 2006): 207–39; Roel Meijer, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2009).

¹⁹ Kyle Orton, "Saddam's Former Loyalists Are Leading ISIS — as True Believers," *National Review*, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/421370/saddams-former-loyalists-are-leading-isis-true-believers-kyle-orton>; Kyle Orton, "How Saddam Hussein Gave Us ISIS," *The New York Times*, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/23/opinion/how-saddam-hussein-gave-us-isis.html?_r=0.

²⁰ Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, "Be Afraid. Be A Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *Brookings Policy Paper*, No. 34, November 2014.

²¹ Kim Willsher, "Belgium extradites Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam to France," *The Guardian*, 2016: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/27/belgium-extradites-paris-attacks-suspect-salah-abdeslam-to-france>

²² William F. McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 150.

²³ Al-Tamimi, "Is ISIS Islamic, and Other 'Foolish' Debates."

²⁴ Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

²⁵ Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

²⁶ Julian E. Zelizer, "Bush Was Right: We're Not at War with Islam," CNN, 2010, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/09/13/zelizer.bush.muslims/>; For poll showing decreasing support for Usama bin Laden and al-Qaida see Pew Research Institute, "Osama Bin Laden Largely Discredited Among Muslim Publics in Recent Years," 2011, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-largely-discredited-among-muslim-publics-in-recent-years/>.

²⁷ Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*.

²⁸ Ideology and religious interpretation are not the determinants for government action against groups like the Islamic State. Numerous examples show that government action or terrorist classification are a result of direct threats against

the security or authority of dominant actors like government, whereas a passive approach has been adopted on several occasions, the lack of Western involvement in the fight against the group previously known as Boko Haram being one example.

²⁹ Shounaz Meki, "Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta: ISIS Extremists Not 'Islamic State,'" *Al Arabiya*, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/24/Islamic-authority-Extremists-no-Islamic-State-.html>.

³⁰ Reuters, "Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Denounces Iraq's Islamic State Group," 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-saudi-mufti-idUSKBN0GJ11S20140819>.

³¹ Ahmed Fouad, "Al-Azhar Refuses to Consider the Islamic State an Apostate," *Al Monitor*, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/azhar-egypt-radicals-islamic-state-apostates.html>; Raymond Ibrahim, "Egypt: Highest Islamic Authority Refuses to Denounce the Islamic State as 'un-Islamic,'" *Jihad Watch*, 2015, <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2015/12/egypt-highest-islamic-authority-refuses-to-denounce-the-islamic-state-as-un-islamic>.

³² Group of Islamic Scholars, "Open Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, Alias "Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi" and to the Fighters and Followers of the Self-Declared "Islamic State" (2014) <http://issuu.com/openlettertobaghdadi/docs/arabic_english_open_letter_to_baghd?e=14632537/10405725>; Another example is Murtaza Hussain, 'Why the Islamic State Is Not Really Islamic' (*The Intercept*, 2014) 26 September.

³³ MEMRI, "Al-Qaeda Leader Al-Zawahiri Rejects ISIS Caliphate, Predicts Imminent 'Islamic Spring,'" *MEMRI JTTM*, 2015, <http://www.memrijttm.org/al-qaeda-leader-al-zawahiri-rejects-isis-caliphate-predicts-imminent-islamic-spring.html>; Yasser Okbi, "ISIS vs. Al-Qaida: Zawahiri Says Baghdadi Is Not the Leader of the Muslim World," *The Jerusalem Post*, 2015, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/ISIS-Threat/ISIS-vs-al-Qaida-Zawahiri-says-Baghdadi-is-not-the-leader-of-the-Muslim-world-421090>.

³⁴ Abu Qatada Al-Filistini, "Cloak of the Khalifah," *Al Muwahideen Media*, 2014; Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, "A Call to the Ummah & Mujahideen," 2014.

³⁵ See for example the statement authored by various Jihadi factions in Syria "Statement of the Muhajireen of Shaam Regarding Baghdadi's group" published 18 March 2015, <http://justpaste.it/mfy9>.

³⁶ Examples include a refutation series "Al-Baghdadi is an overpowering ruler!" by the Saudi independent Jihadi-Salafi scholar Abdullah al-Muhaysini (for part one of the refutation out of a total of six, see here <http://justpaste.it/Refutation1>) and long-time al-Qaida ally Hani al-Siba'i "A Declaration of Disownment and Divergence from the Ideology and Actions of ISIS" published 28 December 2014 by Al-Maqreze Centre for Historical Studies Publications.

³⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and Al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," *International Review of Social History* 49, no. S12 (December 2004): 159–77, doi:10.1017/S0020859004001683; For another example of the use of framing strategies, see Joas Wagemakers, "Contesting Religious Authority in Jordanian Salafi Networks," *Perseverance of Terrorism: Focus on Leaders* 117 (2014): 111–25, doi:10.3233/978-1-61499-387-2-111.

³⁸ Al-Bin'ali, *Stretch Forth Your Hands To Give The Bay'ah To Al-Baghdadi*.

³⁹ Gilad Shiloach, "Al Qaeda Chief Praises Paris Attacks, Declares War Has Just Begun," *Vocativ*, 2015, <http://www.vocativ.com/256588/al-qaeda-chief-praises-paris-attacks-declares-the-war-has-just-begun>.

⁴⁰ Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, 2015, p. 28, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>.

⁴¹ Examples include “Fahish” (“committer of heinous crimes”), “Dahis” (the one who hits others with a vehicle), “Daeick” (crumbler, crusher), and “Dahish” (surpriser, shocker), see <http://www.northeastern.edu/news/2015/11/3qs-what-using-the-name-daesh-rather-than-isis-or-isil-really-means/>

⁴² See endnote 9 above.

Patrick Finnegan

Abstract: The question of the extent of religious motivation for the Troubles (1969-1998) has existed for as long as the conflict itself. Many participants as well as external commentators have offered various opinions. This piece attempts to contribute to this debate by introducing previously unused theories to explain the situation, namely military cohesion. This article also argues that attempts to understand the conflict through any single viewpoint, be it religious, political, or ethnic, is futile. Instead these three viewpoints need to be combined in order to fully understand the conflict. This article argues that a combination of ethnic mobilisation, territory sacralisation, and republican martyrdom provide a means through which a political conflict between two religiously defined ethnicities can be understood in relation to present day conflicts.

Introduction

This paper seeks to answer two questions. First, was the Troubles a religious conflict? Second, to what extent were paramilitaries religiously motivated? To facilitate this, a distinction needs to be made between “religion” as ethnic identity and “Religion” as doctrine, worship, or theology. This paper will argue that “religion” played a central role in the Troubles as it marked ethnic identity, rather than “Religion” as doctrine. The importance of religion to the Troubles with regards to ethnic identity became particularly important as a mobilising force for political action on a communal level, especially before the paramilitary organisations in question professionalised.¹ Particular reference will be made to territory sacralisation, sectarian assassination within loyalism, and republican martyrdom. Before this can take place, a number of definitions are needed. These include the phenomenon of religious and ethnic conflict, and a detailing of the development of the Catholic minority and Protestant majority. This paper will be

separated into two sections. Firstly, the paper will focus on a theoretical discussion regarding ethnic/religious conflict and communal mobilisation. Secondly, these theories will be applied to the Troubles, which will provide evidence to show that the conflict was religious in the sense that it was a conflict between two ethnic identities with their associated political beliefs, based on their religious label, rather than a conflict based upon confessional difference. The final section of this paper will apply the ideas presented by Anthony King concerning combat motivation to the Northern Ireland conflict.

What is Religious Conflict?

In order to proceed, two elements of the discussion must first be addressed: (1) differentiating “Religion” from “religion” and, (2) defining ethnic and religious conflict. The distinction between “Religion” and “religion” can be seen as the difference between practicing a set of beliefs in the hope of salvation and the label that can be ascribed to someone based on their upbringing or communal values. Regarding religious conflict the following definitions have been presented in the literature; Fox states:

(1) it is between groups who belong to different religions; (2) it is between groups that belong to different denominations... (3) the issues in the conflict include...issues, such as state religion policy or the role of religion in the regime...one or both of the parties involved in the conflict must make some form of religious demand or have some form of religious goal. This can include changing the nature of the government in that it either increases or decreases its support for religion or the extent of religious exclusivity in the state.²

De Juan also presents a combination of definitions for religious conflict:

...it can be considered “religious” in the actual sense of the term as the cause of the conflict consists of differences in religious agendas, values, and doctrinal interpretations. The second is focused on religious elites’ attempts to maximize their influence and access to material resources within their

religious community. Consequently, it is not the conflict itself that is to be considered religious. Rather, worldly conflicts about financial resources and power take place within religious communities...it is not the cause of these conflicts that is religious but the arena in which they take place.³

The above definitions present a variety of ways conflict can be viewed as religious. Of particular interest is the belief that a religious conflict can be a struggle between denominations of the same over-arching religion, in this case Catholicism and Protestantism. Importantly, the conflict can also be waged for an "increase or decrease" in the state's relation to a particular religion, or that religious beliefs can be used to campaign for "access to material resources" or "financial resources." In the context of Northern Ireland (NI), this scenario would be applicable, as part of the core impetus of the conflict was the Catholic community's seeking to redress the Protestant nature of the government or the unrest which developed as each community competed for resources which for many at the time was seen as a zero-sum competition.

Arguments that claim that the conflict was not religious or sectarian due to the fact that the violence did not have a spiritual nature have taken too narrow a definition of the term "religious conflict".⁴ These arguments attempt to explain religious conflict through acts of faith or belief in a higher order, rather than whether or not violence was directed at members of another community based on ethno-sectarian identity. This paper argues the latter: violence was directed at people of a community denoted by its "religion," not because they practiced certain beliefs. With this understanding forming the basis of this argument, it will be illustrated that the politicised "religion" of a person, associated with the "colonised" native Irish and the "planter" Protestant British, as one republican argument put forward, provided the motivation for their involvement with paramilitarism or the motivation for a paramilitary group to target them.⁵ As Barnes states in regard to the role of organised religion in NI at the time:

The current Troubles are dated from the late 1960s, which is precisely the time when most cultural historians identify increasing secularization in Northern Irish society and a shift away from traditional orthodox belief and religiously sanctioned forms of personal morality. From the 1960s, both formal and

informal measures of religiosity reveal a decline in religious participation and church involvement. In fact, as religion's hold on society weakened in the 1970s, the Troubles intensified.⁶

From such statements we can see that "Religion" was not a significant concern in everyday life and by extension the paramilitary activity carried out by members of each community. However, as will be shown, "religion" played a significant role in determining ethnicity throughout the area and conflict. With this understanding of religious conflict, it can be seen that the Troubles did have a religious aspect, but this motivation does not go far enough to illustrate all the factors that drove the conflict. In order to further explain the motivation behind those involved in the Troubles, an understanding of ethnic conflict is needed.

What is Ethnic Conflict?

As with religious conflict, there are a number of competing definitions of ethnic conflict. Kaufman provides the following answer to the question of what constitutes the cause of ethnic conflict: "The simplest answer is political power in a disputed territory. Most of the conflicts involve a regional minority...the insurgent ethnic group wants to take over government of the whole country...Only rarely are these conflicts 'religious' in the sense of one group trying to impose its religion on another."⁷ Others, specifically those involved in the "new wars" debate, also provide an explanation of the conflict. "New wars" are founded on four main principles: a direct relationship with globalisation, the rise to prominence of new actors, the prevalence of identity politics, and new forms of violence.⁸ While these central themes seem to fit the context of the Troubles, labelling the conflict in NI, or Ireland as a whole, as "new" seems inaccurate. The Troubles had very long historical roots, within which one can find complexities regarding identity politics, international links, non-state actors, and diverse forms of violence. However, these theories, although flawed in some ways, are useful in defining what form conflict based upon identity, ethnic or otherwise, may take:

The aim is to control the population by getting rid of everyone of a different identity...by instilling terror.
Hence the strategic goal of these wars is to mobilize

extremist politics based on fear and hatred. This often involves population expulsion through various means, such as mass killing and forced resettlement, as well as...intimidation. Terrorism...can be understood as a variant of the new strategy – the use of spectacular, often gruesome, violence to create fear and conflict.⁹

Bellamy also provides a rationale for terror in these types of conflicts: “The rationale of ethnic cleansing is that it is much more economical to be ruthlessly severe, brutal and public about the murder of a few people from the group you want to remove, forcing the rest to comply with your wishes, than it is to physically remove or kill them all”.¹⁰

Wolff presents the following definition: “‘conflict’ describes a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible, yet from their individual perspectives entirely just, goals...ethnic conflicts are a form of group conflict in which at least one of the parties involved interprets the conflict, its causes, and potential remedies along an actually existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide.”¹¹ Continuing, Wolff states the importance of external factors to the conduct of these conflicts: “the range of conflict parties extends further beyond states and state organizations to diasporas of economically better-off brethren elsewhere in the world, willing and able to support their ethnic cousins’ struggle with money, arms, and political lobbying.”¹² Wolff also deals with the impact that labelling and communal mobilisation have on those involved in the conflict: “people are prepared to kill and to die because they see themselves as ethnically different from others, because they are told that this is a difference of life and death, and because they often only too willingly accept such ‘explanations’”.¹³

From these definitions it is possible to see a number of salient aspects of what can be considered ethnic conflict: at least one party views the conflict as involving ethnic identities, the victims of violence are predominantly civilian in nature and the violence is directed towards the political homogenisation of the environment. However, the question of what this has to do with religious conflict needs to be clarified. This can be done when one realises that in the context of NI, religion and ethnic identity were interwoven within one another. English takes this interweaving as the core of the Troubles: “To imagine that there was no causal link between someone’s religious background and their politics was to misunderstand the nature of modern Irish politics.”¹⁴ There may be some individual exceptions but

as Banton writes: Every Protestant is expected to be a unionist, every Catholic, a Republican, and vice versa.”¹⁵

Ethnic Mobilisation

Banton’s work is also useful when trying to understand the Troubles particularly in their dealings with how ethnic or racial identities can be mobilised for political-communal action. Through his work it is possible to understand how groups attempt to inflict violence upon one another based on aspects of an identity other than those that are physically apparent.¹⁶ Indeed, Banton provides a useful definition of an ethnic group upon which to base the case study: “First it had to have a long shared history, of which the group was conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it kept alive, and second it had to have a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance.”¹⁷ Importantly, he states that ethnic identity “varies in time and space and cannot easily be abstracted from its setting.”¹⁸ Banton’s work, however, is most useful in explaining how different groups compete with one another and how they are mobilised: “Ethnic mobilisation is a form of larger-scale collective action by which people seek ends they cannot attain by individual action. It can also be a form of collective action by which members or elites pursue their individual ends with the sometimes reluctant support of followers who have less interest in the desired outcome.”¹⁹ He is not alone in this belief. We can see this by again referencing the work of Wolff: “...when ethnicity becomes politically relevant and determines the life prospects of people belonging to distinct ethnic groups, it is possible to mobilize group members to change a situation of apparently perpetual discrimination and disadvantage or in defence of a valued status quo”.²⁰

Application to the Troubles

By using the above discussion of ethnic and religious conflict as a frame for researching the Troubles, it is possible to illustrate that the conflict between two communities was one based on ethnic mobilisation focused upon prescribed religious labels. The following discussion will develop the details of the outline above and include the creation of the Catholic minority and the role of religion within paramilitary organisations. It will end with a discussion as to the motivational influence of religion on those involved.

The state of NI was founded during the Irish War of Independence with the passing of the Government of Ireland Act (GOIA) in 1920. The partition of Ireland into North and South was completed to ensure that the unionist population mainly based in the overwhelmingly Protestant northeast of the island would not become a minority within an Irish state ruled by Catholic nationalists. The border between the Irish Free State and NI was “essentially worked out between Westminster and the Ulster Unionist Party...The defining feature of the new entity was its demographics: it was two-thirds Protestant and one-third Catholic, the guiding concept in deciding its borders having been that it should have a decisive Protestant majority.”²¹ This is in contrast to another border drawn in the post war period: Upper Silesia. “Whereas in the Upper Silesian partition the national preferences of the local inhabitants had been given precedence over the economic unity of local industry, this complication did not arise in...Ulster.”²² However, although the unionist population, and particularly their leaders, could enjoy majority status, allowing them to “actively discriminate[] against Catholics in the allocation of jobs and housing, over political rights...,” they “...lived in a state of political nervousness, constantly fearing British policy might move to support a united Ireland. They also remained deeply suspicious of the almost half-million Catholics who found themselves within the boundaries of the new Northern Ireland.”²³

This fear resulted in the continued existence of the “siege mentality.”²⁴ A definition of which can be found in McGaughey’s work: “a paradigm of the perceived historical repetition with the Protestant community caught in a never-ending cycle of alleged menace, paranoia and salvation.”²⁵ The historical sense of the conflict held on both sides of the sectarian divide ensured that compromise would be difficult at any stage. This siege mentality would be a strong motivator for loyalist paramilitaries and is an important aspect in understanding how religion, with its associated ethno-political identity, contributed to the decision to take part in the conflict. While some members of the unionist community claim that PIRA attacks along the border were attempts at ethnic cleansing or worse, genocide, they did not amount to the scale generally associated with these classifications. As well as this, these attacks were not intended as “extermination rather than coercion,” as Kalyvas defines genocide.²⁶ At this point it is important to mention the work of Bourke, particularly “Languages of Conflict and the Northern Ireland Troubles.”²⁷ Although Bourke rejects the

use of terms such as tribal or ethnic conflict to describe conflicts such as the Troubles, due to the lack of emphasis on the political aspects of the conflict that these studies often entail, this piece is not attempting to deemphasise the political aspect at all. Rather, it is seeking to argue that, in the case of the Troubles, the ethnic, religious and political dimensions are inseparable when considering what provoked the conflict and what motivated those who took part.²⁸ Also an important difference to this approach from that of Spencer is the combination of three important elements, which combined to form identity in the Troubles, rather than the two elements of politics and religion. The third element is ethnicity.²⁹ To sum up the Northern Irish situation immediately prior to the outbreak of the Troubles it is possible to use the words of Wolff with which he describes how ethnicity should not play a role in society: "...even though everyone has an ethnic identity, this does not mean that every aspect of people's lives has to be organized on the basis of ethnic in-groups and out-groups, or that access to jobs, education, and public office will be determined according to ethnic membership."³⁰ In the period between the 1920s and the late 1960s, at least in the minds of the minority, this state of society existed.

The years leading up to the Troubles placed the minority population in a subordinate position to that of the majority. Safeguards that had been put in place during the GOIA had been removed to ensure Protestant domination of the civic structures in a number of areas. The most prominent was in the the city of Derry, where a nationalist majority population returned a Protestant council through gerrymandering and manipulation of electoral system design.³¹ Indeed, throughout the years between the creation of the Northern Irish state and the outbreak of the Troubles, low-level violence was persistently present. This communal violence was attributed to a continuation of "us" versus "them" thinking in each community. The government, with its foundation in the unionist community, did not assist in the creation of harmonious communal relations. Indeed, one account when considering the periods where violence seemed to be drawing to an end put it thus: "By pandering to Protestants, the... government further alienated Catholics... The two communities could not forget the riots, the shipyard expulsions, the burning houses, the bombings, the kidnappings and the assassinations." It continues: "As the violence receded, the conflict mindset persisted in the form of conspiracy theories. They described a society marked by a binary divide between patriots and a diverse—often incongruous—collection of traitors."³²

The continuation of the communal divide and the discrimination that it precipitated eventually led to the creation of a civil rights movement based on strategies of the African- American Civil Rights Movement —the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA). This organisation sought civil rights, not Irish unification: “It was part of a loose campaign to overthrow the sectarian system that neglected the Catholic minority to the status of second-class citizens.”³³ Indeed, many involved in the earlier periods of the campaign deliberately sought to avoid any connection to traditional republicanism.³⁴ However, the continued campaign resulted in activating the Catholic community politically, resulting in the resurrection of many of the old objectives that had since become less of a priority to the population as a whole as well as to mainstream republicans: “The leftists had acted like sorcerer’s apprentices: they had unleashed powerful forces that they little understood and that ultimately mastered them. As the old conflict over national and communal identities started to come to the fore, hopes for a peaceful settlement also vanished.”³⁵ As the fight for civil rights increased throughout the state, the government and the unionist population reacted in an increasingly violent nature, resulting in the Belfast pogroms and the outbreak of the Troubles. This reaction stemmed from the fact that many in the unionist establishment believed that “the violence associated with the civil rights campaign reflected traditional nationalism.”³⁶ Indeed, this may have been due to the participation of known nationalists or republicans within the civil rights movement, or that “its activists were largely perceived to be republicans by broad sections of grass-roots Protestants, especially among those influenced by the rhetoric of the Reverend Ian Paisley.”³⁷ However, while thinkers critical of the accepted knowledge of the Troubles can point to factors such as republican participation in NICRA as evidence of its latent traditional Irish nationalism, it could be argued that by using the tri-partite understanding of identity presented in this paper, the inclusion of these individuals and groups is logical. This paper argues that identity in NI comprised ethnicity, religion, and politics. Certain individuals active in one branch of this identity, whether it was in nationalist politics concerning the border or other aspects, would naturally become active in ethnic issues, such as campaigns against discrimination.

Sacralisation

The pogroms are perhaps the best example of attempts at ethnic cleansing mentioned in the opening section of this paper. However,

they also serve to illustrate how the idea of sacralisation of territory played a role in the Troubles. One of the areas in which one can find the role played by a religiously infused identity in the Troubles is the theme of the sacralisation of territory. During the Troubles through to the modern day, there has been a distinct process of “enclaving”: the deliberate concentration of one particular community within a certain area with the attempt to promote security, community solidarity, and the “cleansing” of the territory now considered to be “ours.”³⁸ This process can be seen in the initial pogroms against the Catholic population of Belfast and later voluntary or forced movements within the city, which could potentially be seen as the aim of “new war” activity. The impact that living within these enclaves on residents is laid out by Shirlow:

...the physical process of ethnicising space via the sancturisation of ethnicity led to the subjective coding of the ‘other’...as...sources of deviance, transgression, and marginality...the segregation of ethnic residence was not merely a retreat from an aberrant outside. Instead, residential segregation engendered the mobilisation and reproduction of violence via spatial instruments.³⁹

What Shirlow essentially means here is that the process of territorial enclaving, which is brought about by ethnic mobilisation, itself breeds further enclaving – the process becomes cyclical and self-enforcing.

These enclaves served a number of purposes. Materially they provided residents with an area that can be defined as the collective “self,” differentiated from the collective “other.” Of particular interest in this regard are the symbolic and material conditions associated with “no-go” areas. Established by republican and loyalist groups, these areas served a number of functions. Firstly, they provided residents with a secure border to prevent attack from outside the community. Secondly, they prevented the day-to-day running of the state allowing those in control to increase their capabilities through recruitment, training, stockpiling, and so on. Finally, these areas acted as a symbol to the opposing group of how their rivals were being openly defiant and continued as a dangerous threat to their existence. Bruce details how the establishment of nationalist “no-go” areas affected the unionist community: “Apart from the practical advantages “no-go” areas gave to the IRA, their existence was a powerful symbolic affront to Protes-

tants. The rebels were able to live outside the law.”⁴⁰ These politically active, ethno-sectarian groups had deliberately established themselves as opposites to one another and the establishment of these areas was another example of this. Unionists portrayed themselves as “law abiding citizens,” while the nationalists had established territories that were no longer under the rule of law. In response to the establishment of permanent no-go areas, loyalist groups would also establish temporary no-go areas in order to intimidate the rival community, assure their own community of their capabilities, and make use of no-go areas as a bargaining tool with the government.

There are other examples of how territory was important to the organisations in question. One example of this was housing, which had been used before the conflict to ensure electoral success in certain areas to ensure unionist domination. Housing was seen as a core grievance for NICRA, so much so that “housing was used as a stick with which to beat unionism.”⁴¹ As highlighted by Gudgin, as a result of majority governance before the Troubles “almost uniquely in the western world, Northern Ireland Protestants are not trusted to form a government in circumstances in which they gain a clear majority of votes in democratic elections.”⁴² Also important are Gudgin’s findings about the actual distribution of public housing during the period. He presents statistics highlighting that proportionally Catholics received a greater share of public housing. Where this housing was located and its quality may have been concerns, but the proportion allocated was in their favour. However, and perhaps more importantly, the opinion that Catholics were being discriminated against was more prevalent than the facts concerning distribution of housing.⁴³ This highlights the importance of perception in this struggle.⁴⁴ It may be true that Catholics received a disproportionate amount of public housing quantitatively speaking, but this does not mean that they did not believe that they were being discriminated against. As Gudgin states, these figures illustrating the over-supply of housing to Catholics were not public knowledge. It also begs the question of why so many Catholics needed public housing. The answer is found in the claim most often accompanying that of housing discrimination: discrimination in employment. Hewitt provides us with information important to understanding of the continuing perception of discrimination: the role of communal education and family.⁴⁵ He details how the role of nationalist politics, often emanating from the home, was central to understanding why the Troubles erupted the way it did, compared to other areas of ethnic tension.⁴⁶ While others feel that the emphasising the continuation of the traditional conflict between

the communities of NI is not sufficient to explain the Troubles, it is the belief of this author that while the traditional conflict is not the sole important factor, it is vital to the understanding of the period.⁴⁷

An example of the importance of housing to communal tension was the vacant housing in the Lenadoon area. During the early Troubles, large numbers of people left their homes, voluntarily or otherwise, which left many houses empty. It soon became common practice for families to squat in empty houses. Eventually the UDA issued a statement claiming that any Catholics who were housed legally or illegally in formerly Protestant housing would be burned out.⁴⁸ It was during the 1972 ceasefire that the issue came to a head at Lenadoon. Homeless Catholics were trying to occupy houses in the area, formerly occupied by Protestant families who had been intimidated out of their homes. UDA coordinated loyalists prevented Catholics from occupying the empty houses. The Provisional-IRA soon announced: "...they would themselves take action if the army had not facilitated such movement into the flats."⁴⁹ The army deployed in an attempt to prevent violence, but the truce ended after rioting broke out and rubber bullets were fired. Following this, the Provisional-IRA opened fire. The motivation behind the UDA's actions was two-fold: first, to deny the rival population territory and, second, to break the ceasefire between the Provisional-IRA and the security forces.⁵⁰ For this paper, the territorial issue is more important. Lenadoon provides an example of the intercommunal activities during the conflict and how territory became "sacred." Territory considered to be of importance to either community was to be protected. If that was not possible, it should be destroyed to prevent its corruption and use by the "other." It is important to point out that as with "religion" the term "sacred" does not apply to any particular aspect of personal faith. Rather it represents a communal status of "ours" rather than "theirs." In this case empty houses are better destroyed than occupied by the rival community. Once again these communities and their territories were divided along the lines of an ethnicity that was largely defined by religion, even though the spiritual aspect of religion played almost no role.

Paramilitaries

While the above detailing of Northern Irish society has highlighted some general trends about the role played by ethno-sectarian-political identity, this paper will now focus on the violent groups within Northern Irish society. This will be used to illustrate how significant

religious identity motivated violent action. In regard to the loyalist paramilitaries it will be argued that religion was a central tenet when it came to the targeting of attacks on members of the rival community. In regard to the nationalist group, the Provisional-IRA, the examination presented will focus on the influence of martyrdom.

Assassination

This section will provide a brief overview of the debate surrounding the sectarian assassination campaigns carried out by both sides of the ethnic divide. This paper will then argue that these attacks were indeed religiously motivated, in that “religion,” not “Religion,” was a significant reason behind the targeting of individuals.⁵¹ Once this has been done, a discussion about martyrdom will be undertaken. An example of the debates surrounding this issue can be seen in the academic debate between Bruce, Dingley, White and Patterson. In discussions such as this one, the argument centres on the question of whether republicans were sectarian or whether their violence was as sectarian as the loyalist paramilitary groups. Proponents of IRA sectarianism generally put forward the argument that due to the majority Protestant nature of their victims compared to the number of Catholic victims, republicanism is sectarian.⁵² Others argue that IRA violence was not deliberately sectarian, the religion of security forces did not matter, and their relation to the security apparatus that did.⁵³ This paper holds that many of the debates surrounding this topic discuss religion using too narrow a definition of the concept. Many view the issue as one of “Religion,” rather than one of “religion,” where the faith of the participants is assumed to be the central factor instead of the ethno-political-sectarian identity of the victim.⁵⁴ It is the belief of this paper that the assassination campaigns carried out by the loyalist paramilitaries were conducted offensively in order to terrorise the Catholic population into submission. Whereas the republican killings, while still aimed at intimidation of the opposing community, were of a more retaliatory nature, this in itself is not new or radical. What this paper seeks to add to this debate is that these killings were part of the internal motivation of those involved, which will be discussed in the final section summarising motivation.

Martyrdom

Religion played another role in the conflict: martyrdom. The notion of dying for one’s community has had a profound impact throughout

Irish history. We can see evidence of this in the volunteering of individuals for potentially suicidal actions, and the later veneration of these individuals as martyrs. Hunger striking as a form of self-immolation has been described as: “another means, possibly a weapon of last resort, of those nurturing a sense of oppression and frustration in their attempts to resist.”⁵⁵ In short, the hunger strike was seen as a final weapon to be used when all else had failed. It allowed the weaker combatant the opportunity to alter the context of the conflict: “Dying for the cause and accepting the need for certainty in one’s commitment required not just elevating this commitment to levels of the sacred, but being clear and certain about what this would mean in terms of suffering and loss.”⁵⁶ It would no longer be a conflict of the physical realm, as a military conflict, but instead would become a spiritual contest, as a battle of wills.⁵⁷ As Pape states in his work on suicide terrorism: “suicide terrorism is aimed at political coercion...Suicide terrorist campaigns are primarily nationalistic not religious.”⁵⁸ In the specific case of the hunger strikes of 1981, this pitted republican volunteers against the British government in a contest for political status while the international community watched. The international community was waiting to see if the British government would allow prisoners to die from starvation.⁵⁹ In other words, “this shifts attention to an ultimate humiliation and accusation which is that in letting one die when one is in a position to help prevent this death one lacks humanity and so becomes animalistic...an object of disgust.”⁶⁰ It is also within the topic of martyrdom that we can see some examples of how the Catholic faith impacted upon republicans, such as during their consideration of the 1916 Rising: “They were all martyrs for our Catholic faith, the true religion: religion and politics fused together by the blood of the martyrs. I was prepared to be a martyr, to die for this true Catholic faith.”⁶¹

Bobby Sands

Hunger striking may seem counterproductive, but once historical context is considered, that assumption changes. The theory was that the striker would hold a position of moral superiority over their opponent and the fear of social or economic consequences would force their hand into giving in to the striker’s demands.⁶² By examining the diary of Bobby Sands, another link in the chain of “the doomed young Irish republican,” written during his strike, we can see how religion influenced at least one of the strikers.⁶³ Throughout the diary Sands makes repeated mention of religious service, and the social contact

this service provided, as well as the numerous visits of priests. Indeed, the first line in the diary highlights the importance of faith: "I am standing on the threshold of another trembling world. May God have mercy on my soul."⁶⁴ The importance of God is also seen when he states that the rights of a united Ireland are "God given."⁶⁵ Sands' writing gives us insight into how others in prison also dealt with their faith. When he had entered the third day of his strike he wrote: "The boys are now saying the rosary twice every day."⁶⁶ He claims that he has begun to pray more and that he and God are "getting on well this weather" and that his hunger will be sated when he receives a "great feed up above."⁶⁷ He is undertaking a political struggle but is doing so through a religious practice, which brought members of the Catholic clergy into direct contact with republicans as mediators. Yet it also resulted in conflict as republicans felt that these clergymen "tried to undermine the strike."⁶⁸ While it is not possible to ascribe his faith to all strikers, it is possible to see how their actions could have been influenced by their faith. For example, Laurence McKeown makes no mention of religious faith motivating him.⁶⁹ While the personal faith of some strikers allowed them to complete their strike, the outcome they were seeking was political. It was not an attempt to either convert or coerce the opposition on religious grounds. However, the repeated acts of suicide throughout republican history often "reinforced communal stability but also reinforced difference and separation in relation to the Protestant other."⁷⁰

Hero Veneration

Throughout the history of Irish republicanism, hero-veneration and the creation of cults of personality have had a significant position within the literature focused on the movement. This was equally so during the Troubles. Indeed, there were some who fostered direct links between contemporary volunteers to heroes of previous episodes of Anglo-Irish conflict.⁷¹ It is also the self-immolation or the self-sacrifice of previous leaders and volunteers in the name of republicanism that bound the later generation directly with those who came before them. The 1981 strikers saw themselves as direct descendants of the hunger strikers of the revolutionary period and particularly of the rebels of the 1916 Rising. Although there were more recent examples of republican martyrs such as Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg, the leaders of 1916 featured most prominently. As Sands states: "I am a political prisoner because I am a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and

an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land.”⁷² Eamon Collins has illustrated this point and its impact on later strikes:

The hunger strikers had done what the men of the Easter Rising had done: they had known that their deaths would not defeat the British immediately, but they had anticipated that their sacrifice would help create a mass movement of Irish resistance. In another sense they helped to renew the legitimacy of the IRA campaign: the IRA no longer had to hark back constantly to 1916 or 1919 to reaffirm the legitimacy of their struggle. The hunger strikers provided them with a whole new iconography of martyrs to exploit.⁷³

It is generally acknowledged that this link provided a motivation and justification for those involved. What generally goes unobserved, however, is the role of guilt.

By guilt, this paper does not imply that those involved necessarily did something “wrong.” Rather it can be argued that the linking of the later stage in the conflict with an earlier phase enforced certain moral expectations amongst those involved. Such expectations can be seen in the continual emphasis placed upon the practice of “blood sacrifice” in Irish nationalism. The 1981 hunger strike was different than previous strikes. Earlier episodes had been conducted with all of the prisoners beginning at the same time. However, the 1981 strike was staggered, and strikers would begin separately to ensure the strike would last for as long as possible.⁷⁴ Importantly, this approach ensured that once the first striker had died, then the remainder would be obliged to see out their strike to honour the memory of their comrade’s sacrifice: “Not only was the sense of interdependence undermined by this arrangement but very soon the pressure would all be the other way, not to end the protest but to stay on it, even to death.”⁷⁵ This aspect of the strike can be referred to as guilt, felt by those joining the strike. For these people, the pressure to see the strike through to the end would have been immense: “Those following Sands carried the weight of his dead body on their shoulders. To end their own protest would be a betrayal of his death and as the toll in the Maze increased, the burden grew exponentially heavier.”⁷⁶

This paper began by posing the following question: to what extent were Northern Irish paramilitaries motivated by religion? The paper then provided context and definitional information as to the nature of religious/ethnic conflict in general, and how it was conducted throughout the Troubles. However, we must clarify what we mean by motivation. This can be done by utilising the definition of motivation provided by King:

“...soldiers need political motivation in order to fight effectively. They need to feel collectively that their sacrifices promote the shared interests of their nation (and are recognized by citizens at home as doing so). This motivation is...heightened when their enemies are seen to represent a genuine threat to their community, its territories, or its way of life.”⁷⁷

There are several particularly important elements of this statement. By slightly amending this statement through the changing of one word, it is possible to incorporate the work on ethnicity into this definition. This brings it closer to the realities of the Troubles. By replacing “nation” with “ethnicity” the statement then reads: “...soldiers need political motivation in order to fight effectively. They need to feel collectively that their sacrifices promote the shared interests of their ethnicity.”

The idea of political motivation, which is “necessary to bind primary groups to organizational goals,” can be used to understand the role of religion as a motivator for paramilitary actors.⁷⁸ Of particular interest to this argument is that many of the mass armies of the twentieth century, upon which the paramilitary forces in question were later based, “sought to unite their troops around common forms of social identity and civic obligation; they sought to indoctrinate their soldiers with a sense of national mission in order to motivate them politically.”⁷⁹ In the context of our analysis, the national mission was interwoven with political/religious identity and both of the communities, generally considering themselves to be of different nationalities—Irish and British—held “incompatible, yet from their individual perspectives entirely just, goals.” That being said, there were some instances throughout the Troubles in which republicans tried to incorporate unionists into an expanded definition of “Irishness.” One example is the Éire nua federal plan for Irish unity, which

eventually failed.

The above definition of political motivation can guide us in making sense of the factors driving conflict during the Troubles. One section of this definition was the wish of those involved to “promote the shared interests of their nation.” Just as important was that they were “recognised by citizens at home” in doing so. In the context of the Troubles, with a unionist state perpetually under siege, those involved needed to be able to show that they were acting in their community’s interests, which in turn would fulfil their need for gratification in doing so. In other words, for loyalists they could defend the status quo by dealing with rebellious Catholics. For nationalists and republicans this meant being able to defend their community against the predation of the state and loyalist paramilitaries. However, one of the main issues with this desire to defend one’s community is that “the history of communal violence in Ireland had well established the principle that the best form of defence is attack.”⁸⁰

Further complicating the situation for loyalists were difficulties in waging a “pro-state” terror campaign.⁸¹ Pro-state groups will have a much smaller group to target and compete with the authorities for recruits, resources, and so on. In terms of the definition of motivation outlined above, what was needed was to show that pro-state groups were killing nationalist paramilitaries—those actively disrupting the status quo. To those involved in loyalist groups their aim was to defend the state: “From the Peep o’ Day Boys to the UVF, protestant violence has been defended as constitutional on the ground that, unlike the violence of the IRA, it seeks to uphold the protestant state... The men of the UVF, new and old, knew that their actions were ‘illegal’, but they would have vehemently denied that they were ‘unconstitutional.’”⁸² If it was impossible to target those actively engaged in republicanism then their supporters, all of whom were identified by their “religion,” had to be targeted. As one account puts it: “They were random in the sense that the particular victim was not especially selected, but there were two clear purposes to the murders: to revenge IRA attacks on the state and on individual Protestants, and to deter further attacks: ‘if we hadn’t done something, they’d have been all over us. We had to stop them. Tribal survival. We had to hit back’.”⁸³ Loyalists needed to show that they were taking the problem of the Catholic population seriously when the state was “unwilling or unable to defend them.”⁸⁴ Republicans needed to show that they were defending Catholics at the communal level while bringing unification closer, which would achieve its goals at the political level. While some at the grassroots level may have become involved in republicanism in

order to act out the sectarian conflict, the organisation itself sought to limit direct sectarian conflict in favour of attacks which would forward political aims. This is perhaps best illustrated in the preferred targeting of the British army, as symbols of the political occupation and caretakers of imperialism, rather than off-duty attacks on local members of the security forces that fuelled sectarian tensions.⁸⁵ These goals were interwoven with a religious/political/ethnic identity, which cannot be separated into its component parts. In short, paramilitaries involved in the Troubles were motivated by religion. Yet not "Religion" as understood through the teachings of the church and matters of spiritual beliefs, your own versus those of the "other" with whom you are in conflict, but "religion" as a communal mobilising factor which had been politicised and used to ethnically differentiate the two warring communities.⁸⁶

Conclusion

Throughout this piece the argument has been made that religion played a role in motivating these groups, not as a spiritual exercise but as an element of a tripartite identity of religion, politics and ethnicity. By examining aspects such as territory sacralisation, martyrdom and ethnic mobilisation it is evident that this multi-part identity was vital to the conflict and those involved in it. This argument is not intended to disagree with thinkers such as Bourke; rather it is intended to present the claim that it is not one of these three aspects (religion, ethnicity, or politics), but a combination of the three that is important in understanding the conflict.

The arguments presented here show the impact that religion, particularly in its use as an ethnic label, can have on the actions of non-state organisations, whether they be pro- or anti-state groups. This paper also highlights the importance of understanding that religion can very often be too narrowly defined in academia and conflict studies. This can lead to misinterpretations of conflict situations. Additionally it shows that even when religion is understood as a broader ethnic issue it can be combined with other political aspects of daily life that can lead to conflict. Simply put, it is wrong to suggest that religion is ever the only source of tension in a conflict, regardless of whether it is in a Western democracy or within the current conflicts in the Middle Eastern. The role of religion should also never be underestimated when it becomes intertwined with ethno-political factors. The Troubles were religious while at the same time being ethno-political. Dealing with a single element of this combination leads to a

Notes

¹ Due to space limitations and my focus on paramilitaries, this paper will not include a detailed discussion of the British Army. Although the British Army was a major player and understanding its role is important to understanding some aspects of the Troubles, this topic will not be discussed here.

² Jonathan Fox, "The Religious Wave: Religion and Domestic Conflict from 1960 to 2009," *Civil Wars* 14, no. 2 (2012): 141-158, 142-3.

³ Alexander De Juan, "The Role of Intra-Religious Conflicts in Intrastate Wars," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 4 (2014): 762-780, 766.

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CAUSAL MECHANISMS AND PROCESS PATTERNS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THINKING WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE BOX

Jörg Friedrichs

Abstract: This article makes the case for process patterns as an alternative to causal mechanisms. Causal mechanisms are explanatory tools to unpack the “black boxes” separating the input and output of models. Unlike causal mechanisms, process patterns do not require such a black box. They refer to recurrent sequences of interaction observed across any number of empirical domains. Scholars can apply them across disciplines when similar processes occur in different domains. The article provides examples from International Relations where scholars have sometimes studied process patterns in all but name.

It is widely accepted in International Relations (IR) circles that there are two types of inference: descriptive and causal. Descriptive inference detects general tendencies within an empirical domain, whereas causal inference explains such tendencies. On the condescending note that descriptive inference is the best that can be obtained in inchoate fields of knowledge, King, Keohane, and Verba see causal inference as the ultimate aim of any self-respecting scientist.¹

From a pragmatic point of view, this pejorative understanding of descriptive inference as the poor sibling of causal inference is unfortunate. Just as a good map may enable a commander to win a military campaign, and just like descriptive statistics is more meaningful to human intuition than inferential statistics, sound descriptive inference is a useful pathfinder through the complexities of the social world.²

Besides, descriptive inference has a practical advantage: it is relatively easy to check it against evidence. This is so because descriptive

inference always and by definition refers to observable entities. Causal inference is rather different: it often refers to unobservable entities, for example when it relies on logical deductions or the detection of regular associations (or constant conjunctions) of independent and dependent variables. In such cases, the scholar infers causality without any direct observation of how it operates.

Fortunately, causal inference can be more empirical and descriptive. It is descriptive when we trace causal connections from the empirical record. For example, we observe that Event A is followed by a sequence of events that trigger Event B, thus causing it. This is an exercise in descriptive inference because the operation refers to observable phenomena. At the same time, it is also an exercise in causal inference because we are explaining something. The upshot is that descriptive versus causal inference is a false dichotomy.

Positivists know this in their bones, and their response is refreshingly pragmatic. In addition to relying on conjunctions of independent and dependent variables to formulate causal claims, they rely on causal mechanisms to infer causality descriptively. The most typical procedure is to first identify a regularity and formulate it in terms of variables, and then to test it for causality by checking if there are specific linkages, or sequences of linkages, connecting independent and dependent variables.³ These connectors, called causal mechanisms, inject a descriptive and thus empirical element into causal inference.⁴

Positivists are not alone in pursuing this strategy. Scientific realists have taken similar views on causal or “generative” mechanisms as the descriptive bedrock of causal inference.⁵ In its most typical form, the strategy is to first formulate a causal hypothesis and then test it empirically by identifying the mechanism(s) connecting the input and output factors of the model.⁶ This means, as it were, that the researcher must first establish a regularity, with causation relegated to a “black box.” She then makes that box translucent so that the causal mechanisms become visible (Figure 1).

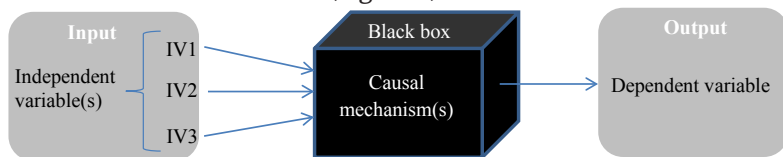


Figure 1: The positivist notion of causal mechanisms

The procedure has merits in some cases, but it is too narrow in many others. With due respect for mechanistic thinking within the box, it is sometimes more promising to infer causality by thinking without the box. As this article shows, we may systematically study

recurring processes by means of causal-descriptive inference even in the absence of a black box. At its core, the strategy is to observe causal processes via the comparative analysis of cases across any number of empirical domains. To differentiate this approach from the black-box notion of causal mechanisms, let us call it process patterns.

We may define causal mechanisms as recurrent sequences of interaction generating a specific outcome, given specified initial conditions. They feature prominently as a methodological tool in many disciplines, including general and comparative social and political science.⁷ International Relations (IR) scholars in particular have offered methodological contributions⁸ and concrete applications.⁹

My main contention is that process patterns, or recurrent sequences of interaction observed across any number of domains, are an interesting methodological alternative that opens promising avenues. Insofar as similar processes occur in different social domains, scholars can profitably engage in transdisciplinary research and collaboration to examine process patterns.

The first section introduces causal pathways as a wider category within which both causal mechanisms and other forms of recurrent sequences of interaction, such as process patterns, have their place. In the second section, I present the conventional specification of causal pathways as causal mechanisms. In the third section, I introduce process patterns as a methodological alternative to causal mechanisms. In the fourth and final section, I discuss specific examples related to IR to show how the proposed methodology works in practice.

Causal Pathways: The Overarching Category

There is a problem with the common practice of taking causal mechanisms to encompass any recurrent sequence of interaction: it amounts to conceptual stretching. Conceptual stretching occurs when a category is unable to cover all that people subsume under it. When that happens, the remedy is to climb Sartori's ladder of generality and introduce an overarching category that is sufficiently broad and open to subsume everything intended.¹⁰ In this vein, let me propose causal pathways as an overarching category to causal mechanisms and process patterns alongside other usages (Figure 2).

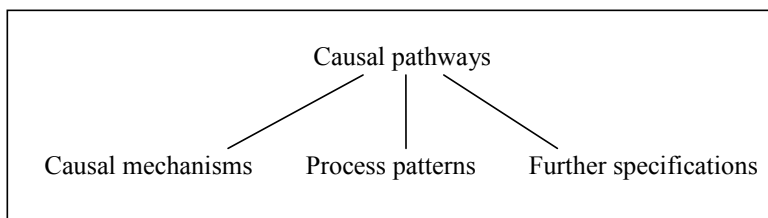


Figure 2: Causal Pathways

Let me first demonstrate that conceptual stretching is indeed occurring. In the conventional view, a causal mechanism is “the pathway or process by which an effect is produced.” This definition hails from a review article by Gerring, entitled “The mechanistic worldview: thinking inside the box.”¹¹ The purpose of Gerring’s definition is to represent the smallest common denominator. Gerring derived it from an impressive array of methodological contributions, from which he distilled nine different meanings of “mechanism,” which he boiled further down into his minimal definition.

The problem is that Gerring’s minimal definition is not broad enough to cover the gamut of legitimate research practices that sail under the flag of causal mechanisms. This becomes apparent when we take Mahoney’s glossary of 24 definitions.¹² Some of the definitions listed in Mahoney’s glossary fall under Gerring’s minimal definition, but others do not.

An example of the first group is the definition of a mechanism as “the process by which one variable influences the other, in other words, how it is that X produces Y.”¹³ Another example is their definition as “analytical constructs that provide hypothetical links between observable events.”¹⁴ Unlike these two, other definitions are incompatible with Gerring’s minimal definition. For example, Elster defines mechanisms as “frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences.”¹⁵ It is impossible to subsume this definition under Gerring’s minimal definition because, where Gerring talks about a specific effect, Elster talks about indeterminate consequences.

The result is stunted perception. According to Gerring, causal mechanisms “are not at variance with traditional practices in the social sciences and thus hardly qualify as a distinct approach to causal assessment.”¹⁶ Based on his positivist understanding of mechanisms as “thinking inside the box,” Gerring cannot find any “sharp point of contrast between ‘mechanismic’ and ‘covariational’ social science.”¹⁷

Since the term “causal mechanisms” is too narrow as a common

denominator, let me suggest the umbrella term of “causal pathways,” or recurrent sequences of interaction that a researcher may invoke in the descriptive inference of causal explanations. This broad umbrella term remains open to diverse specifications, as exemplified by the contrast between causal mechanisms (thinking within the box) and process patterns (thinking without the box).

Causal Mechanisms: Thinking Within the Box

Causal mechanisms are recurrent sequences of interaction generating a specific outcome, given specified initial conditions. In his 1989 book, Elster saw them as the “nuts and bolts,” or “cogs and wheels” of social science, connecting observable inputs with observable outputs in what would otherwise be the erratic black boxes of empirical generalisation.¹⁸

The fundamental idea behind this so-called I-M-O, or Input-Mechanism-Output model¹⁹ is that one should not prematurely assume causality when specified initial conditions (inputs, e.g. independent variables) are empirically associated with specified outcomes (outputs, e.g. dependent variables). One should assume causality only when a causal mechanism can be shown to intervene in what would otherwise be the black box separating a model’s inputs from its outputs.

The model works for both the hypothetic-deductive model of theory testing and the variable-oriented model of statistical inference. In the former, mechanisms link inputs and outputs by demonstrable causal accounts and thus establish causality for covering laws.²⁰ In the latter, they similarly connect the independent and dependent variables of statistical models.²¹ Like positivists of different stripes and colours, scientific realists are also interested in causal mechanisms as the descriptive bedrock of causal inference.²²

Thus understood, causal mechanisms are an indispensable supplement to conventional modes of empirical generalisation. The point is that, after identifying a covering law or a co-variation between variables, one must open the black box in order to see if input and output are actually connected in a causal way. Without an identifiable mechanism, covering laws and statistical correlations are likely to be spurious and cannot be taken as causal.

Discovering correlations between assumed causes and effects is not good enough. Explaining means showing how a cause leads to an effect. Democracies do not seem to fight each other. But saying that democratic domestic structures explain peace among democracies is unsatisfactory. It needs to be shown, for example, how parliaments and civil society groups

scrutinise executives and thereby reduce the likelihood of war. Saying that smoking kills is a superficial statement. To explain why many smokers die prematurely, the effects of nicotine on lungs and other body parts need to be revealed.²³

Searching for causal mechanisms means to check if there are linkages connecting the input and output of a given model and thus to evaluate causality empirically. From this perspective, causal reconstruction starts with an empirical generalisation about a specific population or sample of cases, and subsequently identifies the mechanism(s) that deterministically or probabilistically produce the outcome.²⁴ Scholars following this template are not entitled to make causal statements unless and until they find appropriate mechanisms operating within their black boxes.²⁵

To do this kind of analysis involves a series of analytical steps. First, you need a population or sample composed of equivalent entities (democracies; tobacco smokers). Next, you need to derive a tentative empirical generalisation (democracies don't fight; smokers get cancer). This may take the form of a covering law, correlation, probabilistic statement, or combination of necessary and sufficient causation.²⁶ Finally, you open the black box to see if there is a causal mechanism linking input and output, independent and dependent variables, stochastic events, or conditions and outcome. Process tracing is the method of choice for searching such linkages.²⁷

There is nothing wrong with this. On the contrary, it is a valuable antidote against the spurious attribution of causality. However, it is not particularly friendly to transdisciplinary research and collaboration. It always presupposes an empirical generalisation (e.g. democratic peace) over a specified domain of entities (e.g. states). Since the domain is likely to rest squarely within an established discipline (e.g. IR) or sub-discipline, cross-fertilisation among areas of research that are substantively remote from each other is unlikely.

Process Patterns: Thinking Without the Box

Let us revert to the overarching category of causal pathways as recurrent sequences of interaction. As I will show, causal pathways need not be mechanistic, nor do they have to unpack black boxes. Instead, it is possible to think entirely without the box—what I call process patterns, or *recurrent sequences of interaction observed across any number of domains*.

To clarify, consider two sets of examples:

1. What do the following situations have in common: a panic in a theatre; a bank run; and the famous race to the bottom after the world economic crisis of 1929?
2. Again, what do the following situations have in common: mobbing an ambitious colleague; bullying a nerd; and a smear campaign against an incorruptible politician?

As the examples indicate, we are capable of noticing patterned regularities across wildly different domains. We do not need an empirical generalisation over a specified domain before we can open, as it were, the black box and identify a mechanism to confirm that causality is at work. Instead, we can altogether suspend thinking in terms of black boxes and take process patterns as the heuristic starting point of our analysis.

This entails a methodological shift from population-based to pattern-based case selection; and from variable-driven to process-driven research.²⁸ We do not need to first draw a sample from a given population such as “nation-states” or “democracies,” then stipulate a domain-specific empirical generalisation such as “democratic peace,” and finally test it for causal mechanisms. Instead, we can think of all process patterns of a particular type as constituting a universe of cases to be examined through a systematic and rigorous procedure of comparative analysis. This turns the usual procedure on its head.

In population-based case selection and variable-driven research, the researcher starts with a population of ontological givens, draws a sample, derives empirical generalisations, and finally seeks to identify causal mechanisms. In pattern-based case selection and process-driven research, the researcher starts with an ontologically thinner categorisation, namely an observed process pattern that constitutes a universe of potential cases across any number of domains. Sampling then follows pragmatic criteria, with the cases selected revealing as much interesting variation as possible. The objective is to arrive at a precise and fully explicit articulation of the observed regularity.

Harking back to the first example above (bank runs etc.), let us take the process pattern whereby self-regarding behaviour is collectively self-defeating in that its private pursuit reinforces the propensity of others to engage in the same kind of self-regarding behaviour, thus leading to the worst possible outcome for everybody (akin to a prisoner’s dilemma). It is easy to see that, apart from the process pattern they share in common, the universe of cases based on this

pattern is not composed of ontologically homogenous entities. You would never put theatre panics, bank runs, and the world economic crisis of 1929 into the same basket unless you had a prior understanding of the process pattern at work in all of these cases. Yet, once you have identified the process and constituted a pattern-based case universe, you can sample from it and set in motion a systematic procedure of comparative research.

You are then able to ask interesting research questions. What do all manifestations of the process pattern have in common, what are the specificities of particular sub-sets, and what are the idiosyncrasies of individual cases? For instance, what are the commonalities and differences between theatre panics and bank runs? What role do context, actor constellations, and trigger events play?²⁹ To what extent can institutions like fire exits and financial reinsurance transform the dynamics of theatre panics and bank runs? Are there any discontinuities or path dependencies? What determines when a discontinuity kicks in, and whether the pattern goes down one path rather than another? How does all of this affect the outcome? For example, why are some theatre panics and bank runs more devastating than others?

At its core, the analysis of process patterns is an exercise in descriptive inference. Descriptive inference, including the analysis of recurrent patterns of interaction, is valuable in and of itself as it increases our ability to understand and contextualise social phenomena. When a social process falls under a process pattern, this puts our mind at rest and thus may serve as an explanation in a broader sense than is conventionally associated with causal inference.

Indeed, process patterns can be of many different kinds. Sometimes they can be developed through classical categorisation.³⁰ Sometimes it is better to formulate them in ideal-typical terms.³¹ Sometimes they are mechanical, and sometimes they require “understanding” the internal viewpoint of the participants.³² Sometimes they constitute explanations providing an answer to a “how possible” question.³³ At other times, they will follow other explanatory protocols. In short, process patterns are causal in a broad, catholic sense that encompasses not only efficient causes but also many other forms of explanation: empathetic, constitutive, and so on.³⁴

Insofar as process patterns are about causality in motion, it is possible to repackage them as causal mechanisms whenever they follow specific trigger events, occur in specific contexts, and lead to specific outcomes. Thus, it is possible to move seamlessly from one form of causal inference to the other. It is important to note, however, that process patterns are more than a mere prelude to the study of causal mechanisms. The more interesting and productive part of a research

cycle will often happen at the stage of exploring process patterns. Moreover, process patterns may just as well be a prelude to other pursuits such as discourse analysis and ethnographic fieldwork.

A research strategy that studies process patterns comparatively in different settings is well suited to support transdisciplinary research. It enables the researcher to detect regularities across divergent realms and thus to generate knowledge that can “travel.”³⁵ How far a specific process pattern can and should travel will depend on empirical and substantive considerations. At least in part, however, it is also up to evaluative choices of the researcher to decide at what level(s) of abstraction a process pattern is most useful. A process pattern formulated in a more abstract way will travel further than one specified in more specific terms. Depending on how far a process pattern is required to travel, the researcher will formulate and reformulate its definition and thus the criteria for inclusion in the universe of possible cases.

Examples From Research Practice

In methodology, causal pathways are often reduced to causal mechanisms. In practice, however, there have been many interesting contributions falling under the rubric of process patterns for all but name. As the following examples suggest, the study of process patterns is indeed a rewarding task.

To begin with, game theorists have been studying process patterns for a long time. Take for example the emergence of “tit for tat” behaviour as a recurrent phenomenon in situations of iterated prisoner’s dilemmas. Axelrod mentions phenomena as divergent as stickleback fish and divorcing women as cases where one can observe the emergence of “tit for tat.”³⁶ Although he does not use the term “process pattern,” Axelrod is talking about a processual pattern with an extraordinary ability to travel across the most divergent areas of the social world, from the animal kingdom to IR.³⁷

Likewise, complex systems theory and agent-based modelling examine recurrent features of social life such as adaptive behaviour and cybernetic feedback.³⁸ From the vantage point of complex system theory, the social world is of mindboggling complexity but there are emergent structures, or islands of order, even in the most chaotic systems. Agent-based modelling provides a useful tool to get a handle on the emergence of order in such situations.³⁹ From the viewpoint of complex systems theory and agent-based modelling, the best way for the researcher to proceed is arguably to take process patterns as starting points and explore as much as possible around them.

Another hotbed of pattern-based research, in the tradition of Robert Merton's middle-range theories, is the academic movement of analytical sociology.⁴⁰ To cite only the most classical example, self-fulfilling and self-negating prophecies are observed over any number of social domains,⁴¹ and their relevance for IR has been demonstrated.⁴²

Denial is an interesting case in point. Having presented a comprehensive treatment of denial elsewhere, I can be brief here.⁴³ Denial is the habit of treating a real problem as if it were a non-issue. A real problem is one that makes us suffer regardless of whether or not we acknowledge it.

Thus understood, denial is a ubiquitous social and psychological phenomenon. Any kind of problem, from personal trauma to planetary challenges such as climate change, can be an object of denial. Denial occurs at the individual level, e.g. when a cancer patient disavows her terminal illness. It also occurs in social constellations, from the denial of marital infidelity to the denial of race discrimination. Some cases of denial are deeply political, for example when a nation state such as Turkey denies genocide. A particularly worrisome manifestation happens at the global level, where humankind is in denial of the fact that infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible. This includes widespread denial of climate change and resource depletion.⁴⁴

As the examples suggest, and as is typical for process patterns, denial occurs across different social domains and levels of analysis. Although, or precisely because, denial can occur in multiple spheres of experience, it is amenable to systematic empirical scrutiny when understood as a process pattern. What is more, denial comes in different varieties depending on the problem at stake. A problem may be tractable or intractable, and it may be permanent or escalating. Without trying to be exhaustive, let us consider two such varieties to reveal the heuristic fruitfulness of the process-pattern perspective.

The most straightforward case of denial is the disavowal of a permanent and intractable problem. In such cases, folk wisdom has it that "[i]f we can do something to solve the problem, we will perhaps do it. If there is nothing we can do, we should try to forget the problem." The reason is that, while denial does not solve the problem itself, it reduces the discomfort of admitting it.

An example from IR is the way post-war Japan has handled the international stigma from the atrocities committed during the Asia-Pacific War. With due care, this can be compared to the disavowal of permanent problems in other domains, for example the way the Nixon Administration initially handled the Watergate Affair, or the way liberal white Australia has ignored until recently the suffering inflicted on Aboriginal Australians. In all of these cases, denial may

be morally objectionable but it is easy to see how the deniers half-consciously or (more likely) unconsciously serve their perceived self-interest by denying a reputational problem that they understand as intractable.

A more pathological case is the denial of a problem that escalates yet, up to a certain point, would be tractable if appropriate action were taken. For example, during the years leading up to the 2008 financial meltdown, national and international public servants ignored whistle-blowers criticising the lack of market regulation until it was too late. Or, to cite another example, until the Euro crisis of 2010/11 there was a regime of silence in public circles around the fairly obvious way Greece had concealed its lack of fiscal austerity.

The same pattern occurs at the domestic level, with some of Europe's ageing societies blissfully ignoring the unsustainability of their public pension system, with predictably devastating consequences. Another case in point is the way Hitler and his stalwarts, against all odds, refused to admit the deterioration of their military position. The denial of escalating yet tractable problems leads to tragedy because, with hindsight, it turns out that some action could and should have been taken at an earlier point in time.

Conclusion

While it is appropriate in many situations to rely on causal mechanisms as tools for thinking within the box, it is often more fruitful to study process patterns as devices for thinking without the box. As we have seen, this has important methodological implications. The passage from causal mechanisms to process patterns implies a shift from population-based to pattern-based case selection; and from variable-driven to process-driven research.

There are two main reasons why process patterns hold promise. First, they offer an opportunity for transdisciplinary research and collaboration. The world is punctuated by recurrent sequences of interaction, and process patterns can span any number of social domains. Because this is so, research investigating process patterns is likely to cross disciplinary boundaries.

Second, process patterns commit us to open-ended research. We are more likely to encounter surprises and genuinely learn something new if we map out recurrent social processes first; and only then ponder over which social domains they apply, and whether and to what extent we can or should repackaging them in terms of conventional causal models and frameworks.

Besides, they mitigate the "small n" problem. IR scholars can often

mobilise only a small number of cases that is insufficient for robust generalisation. For example, nuclear deterrence during the Cold War initially appeared unique and unprecedented. When scholars started to analyse it as a process pattern (mutual assured destruction, MAD), the strategic logic became apparent and it was possible to gain insights from analogues in other fields. ■

Notes

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⁵ Andrew Bennett, "The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 459-481.

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¹⁸ Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, 3.

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²⁵ Critics object that causal mechanisms are nothing more than a shorthand for temporal sequences of intervening variables. This is not convincing, as causal mechanisms are often non-linear: interaction effects, feedback loops, etc.

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⁴⁰ Michael Biggs, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, ed. Peter Hedström and Peter Bearman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 294-314; Pierre Demeulenaere, ed. *Analytical Sociology and Social Mechanisms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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⁴³ Jörg Friedrichs, "Useful Lies: The Twisted Rationality of Denial," *Philosophical Psychology* 27, no. 2 (2014): 212-234.

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THE COMMUNITARIANISM OF EXTREMITY: WALZER'S SUPREME EMERGENCY ARGUMENT REVISITED

Sean Fleming

Abstract: One of Michael Walzer's most controversial arguments in *Just and Unjust Wars* is that soldiers and political leaders can override the principle of noncombatant immunity—and even deliberately kill innocent people—if their political community faces an imminent and existential threat. He argues that the British terror bombing of German cities during WWII was a justified response to the threat of Nazism. This “supreme emergency” argument continues to be debated nearly four decades later, but it also continues to be misunderstood. The purpose of this article is to clarify the logic of Walzer's supreme emergency argument. I argue that, contrary to common interpretations, his argument is neither rights-based nor utilitarian. He allows the preservation of the political community to trump noncombatant immunity because he sees communal autonomy, not human life or the greatest good for the greatest number, as the supreme value. I show that criticisms of Walzer's argument are bound to miss the mark if they do not take his communitarian premise into account. Christopher Toner's “transmission argument,” which purports to show that the supreme emergency argument implies that individuals can justifiably kill innocent bystanders in order to save their own lives, has no force against Walzer. I conclude that supreme emergency poses a serious dilemma for Walzer, but an intractable dilemma for liberal individualists.

Introduction

“Can soldiers and statesmen override the rights of innocent people for the sake of their own political community?”¹ For example, would Israel be justified in indiscriminately bombing Mosul and Raqqa if the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria posed an imminent threat to its existence? The issue of whether state officials ought to disregard the principle of noncombatant immunity in cases of “supreme emergency” is one of the most contentious and protracted issues in all of just war theory.² The purpose of this article is to clarify the logic of Michael Walzer's classic argument for the supreme emergency exemption,

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which continues to be debated but also to be misunderstood. Despite Walzer's claim that the rights of communities "derive ultimately from the rights of individuals," and despite his own description of his position as "the utilitarianism of extremity," his supreme emergency argument is neither rights-based nor utilitarian.³ He allows the preservation of the community to trump noncombatant immunity because he sees communal autonomy as the supreme value.

The article has four sections. The first section describes the tension between just ends and just means, which reaches a breaking point in cases of supreme emergency. The second section examines the logic of Walzer's supreme emergency argument and shows that it depends on a communitarian premise. The third section defends this interpretation of Walzer's argument against common rights-based and utilitarian interpretations. Finally, the fourth section evaluates a recent criticism of the supreme emergency argument—that it implies that individuals can justifiably kill innocent bystanders to preserve their own lives. Walzer's argument easily evades this criticism, but it illustrates an important point: that it is necessary to recognise the communitarian premise of his argument in order to effectively criticise it.

I. The Tension between Just Ends and Just Means

Walzer divides just war theory into two principles. Whereas the *jus ad bellum* specifies the just ends of war, the *jus in bello* specifies the just means of waging war. Although just ends and just means are logically independent, there is a deep tension between them, and they become irreconcilable in cases of supreme emergency.

The *jus ad bellum* determines when it is justified to wage war. Walzer's initial answer is that war is justified only for collective self-defence,⁴ but he provides three exceptions to this rule in his subsequent discussion of intervention: secession, counter-intervention, and humanitarian intervention. Military intervention in another state is justified in order to aid a secessionist movement that represents an existing political community; to oppose a prior intervention by an alien power; or to prevent a government from destroying the political community that it purports to represent.⁵ Walzer argues that both the rule of non-intervention and its exceptions are instances of a more general principle: "always act so as to recognize and uphold communal autonomy."⁶ Self-determination, not non-intervention as such, is the central principle of the *jus ad bellum*.

The *jus in bello* consists of two sets of rules: (1) rules that specify

when and how people can be killed and (2) rules that specify who can be targeted. Walzer deems the first set of rules to be less important. He argues that “the morality of war would not be radically transformed were they to be abolished altogether” and that the content of these rules is culturally and historically relative.⁷ For example, chemical weapons are prohibited now, but certain chemical weapons might someday be considered more humane than physical weapons. Permissible weapons and tactics vary according to time, place, and the state of technology. The second set of rules is more fundamental and universal: noncombatants, or people who do not participate in violence, are immune from attack. They can be killed as a side-effect of an attack on a military target, but they cannot be targeted.⁸ The central principle of the *jus in bello* is thus that “rights to life are forfeit only when particular men and women are actually engaged in war-making.”⁹ This principle has exceptions, however, and supreme emergency is the most important one.

Walzer argues that the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* are logically independent: whether a war is fought for a just end and whether it is fought by just means are separate questions. A state that targets civilians in a war of self-defence fights a just war unjustly, and a state that respects noncombatant immunity and tactical rules in a war of aggression fights an unjust war justly. Although just ends and just means are logically independent, they are practically inextricable. There is, as Walzer says, a “tension between winning and fighting well.”¹⁰ A state that fights justly against an unscrupulous enemy is at a disadvantage. Fighting justly may decrease the chances of winning a just war. Walzer is acutely aware of the tension between just ends and just means, and he uneasily concludes that the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* are incoherent.¹¹

Graham Parsons shows that the tension between the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* results from the fact that they rest on incompatible foundations.¹² While the *jus ad bellum* follows from the right of communal autonomy, the *jus in bello* follows from the individual right to life. The problem is that it is not always possible to “act so as to recognize and uphold communal autonomy” while also abiding by the rule that “rights to life are forfeit only when particular men and women are actually engaged in war-making.”¹³ As Walzer recognises, “the collective defence of rights renders them individually problematic.”¹⁴ Some of the most difficult problems in just war theory, including supreme emergency, arise from this underlying tension between communal autonomy and individual rights.

The *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* become irreconcilable in cases of supreme emergency, when states must choose between fighting justly despite the unthinkable consequences and fighting unjustly to prevent the unthinkable. Until this point, Walzer treats the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* as coequal. However, he gives priority to the *jus ad bellum* in the exceptional case, and it is here that his communitarianism shines through.

In order to constitute a supreme emergency, a danger must be both imminent and severe.¹⁵ First, the danger must be about to happen. It cannot be distant in time or merely possible. Second, “the danger must be of an unusual and horrifying kind.”¹⁶ The risk of losing a war is not sufficient; the consequences of losing must be extreme. Supreme emergency occurs “only when we are face-to-face not merely with defeat but with a defeat likely to bring disaster to a political community,” and only after all just means have been exhausted.¹⁷

The threat of Nazi victory during the first part of WWII is Walzer’s archetype and his only example of a true supreme emergency.¹⁸ He argues that the British terror bombing of German cities was an excusable violation of noncombatant immunity—at least at certain points in the early 1940s, when it appeared that Germany was going to win. Quoting Churchill, Walzer emphasises that a German victory “would be fatal, not only to ourselves, but to the independent life of every small country in Europe.”¹⁹ What was at stake was not only territory, pride, or swift victory; it was the survival of political communities. He contrasts the British terror bombing with the bombing of Hiroshima, in which the American decision to use a nuclear weapon was based on considerations of expediency coupled with the desire for unconditional surrender.²⁰ Walzer’s point is that supreme emergency applies only in the face of an imminent threat to communal survival; it does not apply “when what is at stake is only the speed or scope of victory.”²¹

Walzer asks whether “soldiers and statesmen [can] override the rights of innocent people for the sake of their own political community,” and he answers with a troubled but unambiguous ‘yes’. There are three reasons to interpret his supreme emergency argument as communitarian. First, given that the *jus ad bellum* is based on the right of communal autonomy and that the *jus in bello* is based on individual rights, the fact that Walzer allows the former to trump the latter when the two become incompatible suggests that he sees communal autonomy as supreme. Giving priority to one principle over the other

implies giving priority to the right that underlies it. If defence of the community takes priority over noncombatant immunity, then communal autonomy must take priority over the individual right to life.

Second, Walzer is one of the most famous proponents of communitarianism in modern political theory. Just six years after he published *Just and Unjust Wars*, Walzer published *Spheres of Justice*, which is one of the classic works of communitarian thought.²² It would be quite odd if his just war theory were entirely unrelated to his other work from the same period.

Third, and more directly, Walzer's justification for the supreme emergency exemption is explicitly communitarian. He argues that it is legitimate for soldiers and political leaders to violate the rights of innocent people to preserve their community because "the survival and freedom of political communities—whose members share a way of life, developed by their ancestors, to be passed on to their children—are the highest values of international society."²³ In his later essay, "Emergency Ethics," he makes this point as clear as possible: "Supreme emergency is a communitarian doctrine."²⁴ He appeals to "the value of the community," and he argues that it is excusable to override noncombatant immunity only when the "ongoingness" of a community is stake—not just particular lives, but a way of life.²⁵ Walzer allows the *jus ad bellum* to trump the *jus in bello* in cases of supreme emergency because he gives priority to communal autonomy over individual rights.

III. The Communitarianism of Extremity

One might object that this communitarian interpretation of Walzer's supreme emergency argument puts too much weight on his later work and on certain passages from *Just and Unjust Wars*. Walzer wrote "Emergency Ethics" more than a decade after the book was published, so it is possible that his justification for supreme emergency changed over time.²⁶ He even acknowledges that his ideas have evolved since he wrote the book: "I have changed my mind or shifted the emphasis of my arguments about a few things."²⁷ Further, Walzer often refers to rights and utility in *Just and Unjust Wars*, which has led many readers to interpret his supreme emergency argument as rights-based or utilitarian. I argue that there are compelling reasons to interpret his supreme emergency argument as communitarian even if we read *Just and Unjust Wars* in isolation.

First, one might follow Joseph Boyle and "take seriously Walzer's claim in his preface that his deepest ethical commitment is to human

rights, with considerations of utility in a subordinate position.”²⁸ If we extrapolate from this interpretation of Walzer’s thought, it may be necessary to override noncombatant immunity for the sake of the political community because the political community is necessary to protect rights. The political community is not an end in itself, as the communitarian interpretation suggests, but only a means to protect the rights of individuals. It must be defended at the expense of non-combatant immunity not because it is intrinsically valuable, but because there is no one to protect rights in its absence. Somewhat differently, Stephen Coleman interprets supreme emergency as a tradeoff of rights: “The essential claim of the supreme emergency argument is really that one is justified in engaging in widespread violations of the rights of some people in order to prevent widespread violations of the rights of others.”²⁹ According to this reading, Walzer’s supreme emergency argument allows political leaders to prioritise the rights of their constituents, to whom they have specific duties, over the rights of others, to whom they have only general duties.

Walzer gives plenty of credence to rights-based interpretations. He begins *Just and Unjust Wars* with an appeal to human rights as the basis for just war theory, and he later argues that “[i]ndividual rights (to life and liberty) underlie the most important judgments that we make about war.”³⁰ Although he often refers to the rights of states and political communities, he seems to relegate these collective rights to a subordinate role when he says that “states exist to defend the rights of their members” and that the rights of political communities “derive ultimately from the rights of individuals.”³¹ On the face of it, the rights of individuals are supreme.

However, there are good reasons not to take Walzer’s rights talk as absolute. His appeals to human rights often have qualifiers attached. For example, in the preface, he appeals to “the rights of individual *and associated* men and women,” and he describes “life and liberty as *something like* absolute values.”³² The most important qualifier is that when the survival of the political community is at stake, political leaders “must opt for collective survival and override those rights that have suddenly loomed as obstacles to survival.”³³ Although individual rights “are still standing at the very moment they are overridden,” they cease to be action-guiding: “the only restraints upon military action are usefulness and proportionality.”³⁴ Walzer conceives of supreme emergency as a domain in which rights are suspended, not as one in which they are traded off.

One might instead take Walzer’s talk of usefulness and propor-

tionality as an endorsement of utilitarianism. He describes supreme emergency as “the utilitarianism of extremity,” and he uses the word frequently. He argues that, in the face of an imminent catastrophe, “the restraint on the utilitarian calculation must be lifted” and that “political leaders can hardly help but choose the utilitarian side of the dilemma.”³⁵ Alex Bellamy, taking Walzer at his word here, argues that he “flirts with realism and succumbs to utilitarianism.”³⁶ On this reading, violating noncombatant immunity is justified in order to prevent a much greater number of casualties.

It is plausible to take Walzer at his word, but, as with his rights talk, there are good reasons not to. When he says “utilitarianism,” he does not mean “the greatest good for the greatest number.” This is clear from the following passage, in which he considers the utilitarian justification for supreme emergency and then decisively rules it out:

Perhaps it is only a matter of arithmetic: individuals cannot kill other individuals to save themselves, but to save a nation we can violate the rights of a determinate but smaller number of people. But then large nations and small ones would have different entitlements in such cases, and I doubt very much that that is true.³⁷

Walzer’s justification for violating noncombatant immunity in cases of supreme emergency is not that it is necessary to save lives, but that it is necessary to save a political community. Suppose, for example, that India were about to invade Bhutan and massacre its citizens. For a communitarian such as Walzer, it would be justified for Bhutan to annihilate Mumbai (with a nuclear weapon, for instance) if this would prevent the massacre—even if the net loss of life were much greater. For a utilitarian, killing over 18 million people to save about 750,000 would clearly be unjustifiable. When he calls supreme emergency “the utilitarianism of extremity,” what he really means is “the communitarianism of extremity”—not the greatest good for the greatest number, but the survival of the political community at all costs.

Parsons has recently proposed a third plausible interpretation of Walzer’s supreme emergency argument.³⁸ He argues that communal autonomy and individual rights really are coequal values for Walzer and that cases of supreme emergency are best understood as intractable moral dilemmas:

At one and the same time, the survival and freedom of political communities are the highest values of international society *and* the survival and freedom of individuals are our deepest moral commitments. When we face a conflict between these values, as we do in supreme emergencies, there is no unequivocally right way to act.³⁹

Although supreme emergency is indeed a moral dilemma for Walzer, he comes down decisively on the side of the community. There is an unequivocally right way to act, and that is to “opt for collective survival and override those rights that have suddenly loomed as obstacles to survival.”⁴⁰ Supreme emergency is a case of “dirty hands”: killing innocent people is always immoral, but it is excusable and even obligatory when the survival of the political community is at stake. The exceptional case shows that, for Walzer, communal autonomy is a higher value than individual rights.

IV. Criticisms: The Importance of the Communitarian Premise

According to Christopher Toner’s “transmission argument,” we cannot consistently grant the supreme emergency exemption to state officials without also granting it to private individuals.⁴¹ If state officials can justifiably kill innocent people in order to preserve their community, then individuals must be able to justifiably kill innocent people in order to preserve their lives. Although this is a powerful objection to some versions of the supreme emergency argument, Walzer’s argument evades it entirely, and this illustrates the importance of his communitarian premise.

Toner takes aim at “consent theorists such as Walzer and Rawls.”⁴² He argues that if rulers derive their authority from the consent of the governed, then state officials have the authority to kill innocent people in supreme emergencies only if citizens have granted them the authority to do so. Citizens cannot grant authority that they do not possess, so the supreme emergency argument assumes that citizens have the authority to kill innocent people to preserve their lives—a conclusion that Walzer wishes to rule out.⁴³ If Britain had the authority to kill innocent Germans in order to repel the Nazis, then each individual Briton must have had the authority to kill innocent bystanders in order to repel a murderer. Toner argues that individuals do not have the authority to intentionally kill innocent people, so neither do state officials:

1. Rulers or statesmen have the authority to initiate the intentional killing of innocents only if the people have transmitted it to them

[A-->B]

2. If the people transmitted it, then they possessed it (you cannot transmit what you do not have)

[B-->C]

3. The people never possess the authority to initiate the intentional killing of innocents
[¬C]
4. Therefore the rulers have no authority to initiate the intentional killing of innocents
[thus ¬B; thus ¬A].

Toner purports to refute the supreme emergency argument using three premises that Walzer and Rawls accept. The argument is logically sound, so, “[t]o avoid the conclusion, Rawls and Walzer must reject at least one of the premises.” It seems that the only ways to salvage the supreme emergency argument are (1) to deny that the authority of rulers depends on the consent of the governed, (2) to take the absurd position that people can transmit authority that they do not possess, or (3) to accept that individuals have the authority to kill innocent people to preserve their lives.

None of these options would be acceptable to Walzer, and he maintains a position that, from Toner’s view, appears contradictory: “A moral person will accept risk, will even accept death, rather than kill the innocent. But the moral president or prime minister or military commander will not accept the risk or fact of communal death.”⁴⁴ He seems to be aware of some version of the transmission argument, and he pre-emptively responds to it. He accepts the first two premises—that people “can’t pass on rights they don’t possess, hence their political leaders can do no more on their behalf than they might do themselves.”⁴⁵ His answer is to modify the first premise such that “people” refers to a political community rather than to a set of individuals: “It isn’t only individuals who are represented [by state officials], but also the collective entity.”⁴⁶ State officials act on the authority of the political community, not only on the authority of its individual members, and state officials can therefore perform actions that private individuals have no authority to perform. The authority to violate noncombatant immunity during a supreme emergency resides only in the political community as a whole, which explains why private individuals cannot kill innocent people when their lives are threatened. Walzer’s communitarian premise allows him to consistently argue for the supreme emergency exemption while maintaining that individuals have no analogous right to kill innocent people in order to preserve their own lives.

Toner’s mistake is to read Walzer as a “consent theorist” and to lump him in with Rawls. However, Toner does mention that a communitarian argument offers “a final exit strategy.”⁴⁷ He recognises that if

the right to kill noncombatants for the purpose of self-preservation attaches to the whole community rather than to individuals, then the supreme emergency argument is consistent with the denial of its interpersonal analogue. He fails to recognise that this communitarian version of the supreme emergency argument is exactly the argument that Walzer makes. Toner's objection would only have force against a contractarian version of the argument in which the communal right to invoke supreme emergency is derived from the individual right to self-defence.

It is not obvious whether Rawls' version of the supreme emergency argument falls prey to the transmission argument.⁴⁸ Rawls seems to be an easier target than Walzer, since he is a contractarian liberal rather than a communitarian. Following Walzer, he argues that the terror bombing of German cities in WWII was justified because "Nazism portended incalculable moral and political evil for civilized life everywhere." Such threats to civilised life "justify invoking the supreme emergency exemption, on behalf not only of constitutional democracy, but of all well-ordered societies." For Rawls, it is not existential threats to particular political communities that justify invoking the supreme emergency exemption, but existential threats to all decent and just societies.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, he wrote only a few pages about supreme emergency, so he leaves many questions unanswered. It is not clear who or what ultimately possesses the right to invoke supreme emergency—individuals, political communities, or, as he suggests, the whole society of decent peoples. Toner's transmission argument has force against Rawls only if the communal right to invoke supreme emergency is derived from the individual right to self-defence.

The most direct way to criticise the communitarian form of the supreme emergency argument is to deny that the political community has such an exalted status. As Walzer himself recognises, "[t]he strongest argument against supreme emergency is that it makes a fetish of the political community."⁵⁰ Political communities are only one kind of human association among many, and, as Coady argues, they are not necessarily the most important kind: "Why not allow that the [supreme emergency] exemption can apply to huge corporations, the existence of which is central to the lives and livelihoods of so many?"⁵¹ Some economic associations are as important to human life and well-being as political associations, so it is not self-evident that political communities ought to have special privileges. Walzer would retort that the political community, to a much greater extent than a corporation, "is a source of our identity and self-understanding."⁵²

Political communities have special prerogatives because we depend on them for our identities as well as our lives.

A much more serious objection is that Walzer's supreme emergency argument justifies terrorism. As Coady argues, many rebel groups and terrorist organisations represent political communities, so they should be entitled to invoke the supreme emergency exemption for the same reason that states are: "Palestinian resistance groups, for example, can mount a strong case that they face a hostile power bent upon subordination and dispossession to a degree that threatens not only their lives but their way of life."⁵³ These groups could claim that suicide bombings and indiscriminate rocket attacks are the only available means to defend the Palestinian political community from the existential threat of an expansionist Israeli state. Walzer admits that the supreme emergency argument might justify terrorism, but "only if the oppression to which the terrorists claimed to be responding was genocidal in character."⁵⁴ His response is that "this kind of threat has not been present in any of the recent cases of terrorist activity." The most that he can do to mitigate the force of the criticism is to deny that modern-day terrorism passes the threshold for supreme emergency. Coady's objection is powerful because he uses Walzer's communitarian premise against him.

There are dozens of objections to Walzer's supreme emergency argument, and there is no space to review them all here. My point is that objections that fail to take his communitarian premise into account, such as Toner's transmission argument, are bound to miss the mark. By contrast, Coady's objections are formidable because he attacks Walzer's communitarianism at the root.

Conclusion

Almost all of the time, in almost all circumstances, Walzer is both a communitarian and a rights theorist. He tempers the defence of communal autonomy with strict adherence to individual rights. However, he recognises the tension between individual rights and communal autonomy, and he wrestles with it for as long as he can. He succumbs to the communitarian side only when cases of supreme emergency force him to choose between noncombatant immunity and the preservation of the political community. The exceptional case shows that he ultimately gives priority to communal autonomy over individual rights.

Despite that Walzer uses the language of both rights and utility, his argument for supreme emergency is neither rights-based nor util-

itarian. First, although he maintains that rights can never be nullified or eliminated, he argues that they must be “overridden” in cases of supreme emergency. Second, although his argument is consequentialist, it is not utilitarian. An action counts as “useful” in a supreme emergency if it helps to ensure the survival of the political community, not if it promotes the greatest good for the greatest number. Walzer would therefore allow a small community to invoke the supreme emergency exemption against a larger one even if this resulted in a greater net loss of life. Supreme emergency marks a domain in which individual rights and considerations of the overall good are suspended; the only action-guiding principle is “preserve the political community at all costs.”

Supreme emergency presents a serious dilemma for Walzer but an intractable dilemma for liberal individualists. What should we do if our political community faces an imminent and existential threat? If we reject Walzer’s claim that communal autonomy represents the highest value, then we cannot appeal to collective rights to justify overriding individual rights. We seem to be left with two unthinkable options. The first is to bite Toner’s bullet and allow that individuals can justifiably kill innocent people in order to preserve their own lives. If individuals have a Hobbesian right to do whatever is necessary for their own survival, then they can transfer this right to state officials, who can then exercise it on their behalf in cases of supreme emergency. This option opens the door to the morality of self-interest and raises troubling questions: how many innocent people can a person justifiably kill in order to save his or her own life? Once we accept that self-preservation trumps others’ rights to life, there does not seem to be any way to set a limit. The second option, which Toner embraces, is to maintain that neither individuals nor communities can justifiably kill innocent people under any circumstances. Although he admits that this may mean accepting “our deaths and the destruction of our culture and morality,” he argues that “there are things so bad that it is better to die than to do them.”⁵⁵ Liberal individualists face a stark choice in cases of supreme emergency: either live with the morality of self-interest or die as good liberals. ■

Notes

* I thank Antonio Franceschet and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

¹ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 254.

² Recent contributions to the supreme emergency debate include Stephen Coleman, "Even Dirtier Hands in War: Considering Walzer's Supreme Emergency Argument," in *Conscience, Leadership and the Problem of 'Dirty Hands,'* ed. Matthew Beard and Sandra Lynch (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2015), 61–73; Michael Neu, "The Supreme Emergency of War: A Critique of Walzer," *Journal of International Political Theory* 10, no. 1 (2013): 3–19; Anne Schwenkenbecher, *Terrorism: A Philosophical Enquiry* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2012), Chapter 5; and C. A. J. Coady, *Morality and Political Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapter 14.

³ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 53 and 231.

⁴ *Ibid* 62

⁵ *Ibid* 91–106

⁶ *Ibid*, 90.

⁷ *Ibid*, 42

⁸ *Ibid*, 152–55.

⁹ *Ibid*, 219.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 21, 226.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 325–26.

¹² Graham Parsons, "The Incoherence of Walzer's Just War Theory," *Social Theory and Practice* 38, no. 2 (2012): 663–88. Jeff McMahon goes further, arguing that the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are not logically independent in the first place. See McMahon, "Morality, Law and the Relation between *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello*," *Proceedings of the American Society of International Law* (2006): 46–48.

¹³ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 90, 219

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 136.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 252.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 253.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 254–55, 268.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 255–62. Walzer assumes that the terror bombing of German cities helped to stave off Nazi victory, but, as a reviewer pointed out, many historians of the Second World War deny this. See, for example, Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

¹⁹ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 254.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 263–68.

²¹ *Ibid*, 268.

²² Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

²³ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 254.

²⁴ Michael Walzer, "Emergency Ethics," in *Arguing About War*, ed. Michael Walzer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 45. This essay is a print version of Walzer's Joseph A. Reich, Sr. Distinguished Lecture on War, Morality, and the Military Profession, which he delivered at the United States Air Force Academy on November 21, 1988.

²⁵ Walzer, "Emergency Ethics," 42–43.

²⁶ I owe this point to an anonymous reviewer.

²⁷ Walzer, "Introduction," in *Arguing About War*, ed. Michael Walzer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 33–50, 44.

²⁸ Joseph Boyle, "Just and Unjust Wars: Casuistry and the Boundaries of the Mor-

al World," *Ethics & International Affairs* 11 no. 1 (1997): 83–98, 95.

²⁹ Coleman, "Even Dirtier Hands in War," 66.

³⁰ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, xxiii–xxiv, 54.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 136, 53.

³² *Ibid.*, xxiv, emphasis added.

³³ *Ibid.*, 326. See also "Emergency Ethics," 44.

³⁴ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 231.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 228, 336.

³⁶ Alex J. Bellamy, "Supreme Emergencies and the Protection of Non-Combatants in War," *International Affairs* 80, no. 5 (2004): 829–50, 830.

³⁷ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 254.

³⁸ Parsons, "The Incoherence of Walzer's Just War Theory," 682–85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 684–85.

⁴⁰ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 326.

⁴¹ Christopher Toner, "Just War and the Supreme Emergency Exemption," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 221 (2005): 545–61.

⁴² Toner, "Just War," 548.

⁴³ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 254.

⁴⁴ Walzer, "Emergency Ethics," 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Toner, "Just War," 556–57.

⁴⁸ John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 98–99.

⁴⁹ See Peri Roberts, "The Supreme Emergency Exemption: Rawls and the Use of Force," *European Journal of Political Theory* 11, no. 2 (2011): 155–71.

⁵⁰ Walzer, "Emergency Ethics," 49.

⁵¹ C. A. J. Coady, "Terrorism, Morality, and Supreme Emergency," *Ethics* 114, no. 4 (2004): 772–89, 787.

⁵² Walzer, "Emergency Ethics," 49.

⁵³ Coady, "Terrorism, Morality, and Supreme Emergency," 783.

⁵⁴ Michael Walzer, "Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses," in *Arguing About War*, ed. Michael Walzer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 51–66, 54.

⁵⁵ Toner, "Just War," 561.

THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE: TOWARDS A MORE COHERENT EU FOREIGN POLICY?

Maria Gianniou and Ioannis Galariotis

Abstract: From the inception of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to the new institutional reforms brought about by the Lisbon Treaty in the European Union (EU)'s external relations realm, the EU has constantly tried to improve its institutional structure in order to enhance its international role. Undeniably, the Lisbon Treaty and its series of institutional reforms can be deemed as a major step to improve the consistency and effective engagement of the Union's external action. However, this engagement often brings in the foreground issues of member states' heterogeneity and EU (in-) cohesion that are extremely relevant to our understanding of the EU's role in the international system. The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) comprises a significant evolution and, perhaps, the most innovative institutional development fashioned by the Lisbon Treaty. Not only does the European Union now have an independent actor to deal with all issues relating to its external relations: the EEAS synthesis, with personnel coming from the Commission, the Council Secretariat plus diplomats from the 28 EU member-states, also constitutes a unique body to manage all supranational and inter-governmental aspects of EU foreign policy under the same roof. Hence—almost six years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the EEAS genesis—the scope of this paper is threefold: a) to explain the nature, scope and structure of this new institutional actor in the EU's foreign policy system, b) to shed light on its position vis-à-vis all major players of the EU foreign policy system including the European Council, the Commission and the European Parliament (EP), and c) to postulate a preliminary assessment of its function from 2010 onwards. Our analysis is based on official EU documentation, secondary literature and twenty-one semi-structured interviews with officials in Brussels from October 2014 to February 2016.

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The European Union (EU) has always aimed to increase its international presence and speak with a “single voice” in world affairs.¹ One could argue that many positive steps have been noted in the last decades towards this dedicated goal since the Union has made a notable ascent as an international actor, evolving from a comparatively marginal actor to a widely recognised foreign policy power in its own right. To do so, the EU has adopted a multilateral approach to international interactions, aspiring to it both as an institutional form and a policy principle.² This approach is exemplified in the emphasis given to the role of international organisations and, more specifically, its interactions with the United Nations (UN) and other institutionalised fora that operate under its auspices.³

From the inception of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to the new institutional reforms brought about by the Lisbon Treaty in the EU’s external relations realm, the EU has constantly tried to improve its institutional structure in order to enhance its international role. Undeniably, the Lisbon Treaty and its series of institutional reforms can be deemed as a major step to improve the consistency and effective engagement of the Union’s external action. However, this engagement often brings to the forefront issues of member state heterogeneity and EU (in-)cohesion that are extremely relevant to our understanding of the EU’s role in the international system.

The newly born European External Action Service (EEAS) raised the expectations of a faithfully independent and more coherent EU foreign policy. Due to the fact that the EEAS has functioned since around 2011, there has not been exhaustive academic literature on the subject. Nevertheless, in-depth analyses so far have focused on the reasons behind its creation,⁴ on its degree of independence and autonomy vis-à-vis EU member states and EU institutions,⁵ on agenda-setting,⁶ on its limitations and possibilities,⁷ on international law implications,⁸ on the possibility of the EEAS to be an antidote to EU incoherence,⁹ on the rise of a new EU model of diplomacy¹⁰, and on its interaction with national diplomacies.¹¹ Hence—almost six years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the EEAS genesis—the scope of this paper is threefold: a) to explain the nature, scope and structure of this new institutional actor in the EU’s foreign policy system, b) to shed light on its position vis-à-vis all major players of the EU foreign policy system including the European Council, the

Commission and the European Parliament (EP), and c) to postulate a preliminary assessment of its function from 2010 onwards.

In the next section, we discuss and elaborate on the post-Lisbon institutional arrangements that led to the genesis of the EEAS. Following that, we analyse whether or not the EEAS is an autonomous body in the broader EU foreign policy system, and examine its relations with the European Council, the Commission and the EP. In our final section, we assess to what extent the EEAS has strengthened the coherence of the EU foreign policy almost six years after its inception. The concluding section summarises our findings and proposes further research tasks.

The Lisbon Treaty and the Birth of the EEAS

The Lisbon Treaty introduced significant institutional changes regarding the EU foreign policy machinery with the aim to “bring increased consistency to [the EU’s] external action.”¹² As such, Article 13(1) of the Lisbon Treaty requires the EU to guarantee the “consistency, effectiveness and continuity of its policies and actions” in an effort to deepen synergies between the multiple EU foreign policy actors and to avoid confrontation that could inevitably harm the EU’s effectiveness in the global stage.¹³ Effectiveness and coherence have been long-lasting goals of EU foreign policy, while incoherence is considered anathema to Europe’s projection in world affairs.¹⁴

The new institutional reforms created by the Lisbon Treaty comprise the double-hatted High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) and Vice-President of the Commission, a newly created European External Action Service (EEAS), and the permanent President of the European Council. The creation of these posts focused exclusively on the enhancement of Union’s external face in its international interactions. It is characteristic that Catherine Ashton, the first HR being elected for this post, after her appointment, called for “more unity amongst EU member states to bring our combined political weight to bear” and to “develop more integrated strategies, so that we are more effective on the ground.”¹⁵ The HR is, thus, entrusted to “ensure the consistency of the Union’s external action”¹⁶ and, in doing so, she/he “shall be assisted by a European External Action Service (EEAS).”¹⁷

The establishment of the EEAS comprises a significant evolution and, perhaps, the most innovative institutional development fashioned by the Lisbon Treaty. It is not only that the Union now has an independent actor to deal with all issues relating to its external

relations, but the EEAS synthesis, with personnel coming from the Commission, the Council Secretariat plus diplomats from the 28 EU member states, constitutes a unique body to manage all supranational and inter-governmental aspects of EU foreign policy under the same roof.¹⁸

The main task of the EEAS was to support the HR to reach her mandate, including “chairing the EU’s Foreign Affairs Council, the conduct of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the coordination of the European Commission’s responsibilities in the field of external relations.”¹⁹ What is surprising though, is that the Lisbon Treaty did not provide any detailed instructions on how the service would be created and what its scope and mandate should be. This intentional lack was primarily due to frictions between the EU and its member states on how the Union’s foreign policy structure should evolve in the future, proving, once more, the prevailing nature of intergovernmentalism when it comes to issues that affect directly member states’ national interests.²⁰ Negotiations regarding the set-up of the EEAS proved to be an “institutional act of balance,” affirming that the enhancement of intergovernmentalism, rather than the pursuit of coherence, was the involved actors’ main preoccupation.²¹ The service was created by the Council’s decision of 26 July 2010 concerning the establishment of the organisation and its functioning, which, as Furness argues, “left key details regarding interaction between the member states, the various Commission Directorate Generals (DGs), the European Parliament (EP) and the EEAS to be resolved through learning by doing process.”²²

EEAS: An Autonomous Body in the EU’s Foreign Policy Decision-Making System?

At first glance, what is striking about the EEAS’ nature is the lack of a predetermined legal status and the prevailing ambiguity regarding its position vis-à-vis the EU’s institutional framework. For this reason, the service is not an EU institution as defined in Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty. The EEAS was established under secondary law and cannot be considered as an institution proper, but is characterised as a “functionally autonomous body,”²³ with a specific *sui generis* character placing it in-between the Council and the Commission. In fact, this outcome is largely due to disagreements between the EU’s member states who wanted to assure the intergovernmental character of EU foreign policy and the Commission and the EP who pushed forward a more communautarised option for the EEAS.²⁴

During the debates surrounding the service's creation some opted for a maximalist point of view regarding responsibilities of the EEAS (all-inclusive), while others for a more minimalist approach.²⁵ The ambiguity surrounding its nature has led many EEAS officials to characterise it as being "chameleonic," at times functioning as a Commission DG and at times as the Council's General Secretariat.²⁶ At the same time, by its nature, the EEAS does not have the legal authority to support the decisions it makes while it does not have the final role regarding major decisions on EU foreign policy matters in general, which impedes it in actually fully implementing its mandate to assist the HR/VP in guaranteeing consistency and coherence in EU external action.²⁷ Indeed, it has very limited competence as far as it concerns decision-making and *locus standi*.²⁸ These limitations, coupled with the fact that its functioning depends on the agenda-setting and decision-making of the member states, heavily affect its independence—even though it enjoys some degree of autonomy thanks to its own administrative budget.

The EEAS' unclear nature represents, undoubtedly, one of its wavering elements. Meanwhile, a complex set of tasks, including offering assistance and support to the Commission's President and the member states' diplomatic services, is coupled with numerous cooperative duties with the totality of the EU's foreign policy actors, raising not only the question of reciprocal information-sharing, but also the extent to which day-to-day work is effective.²⁹ Article 2 of the EEAS Council decision vaguely defines, under the title "tasks," the EEAS' mandate, which is only depicted in relation to other foreign policy actors (HR/VP, Commission, Council, European Council).³⁰ The lack of further clarification regarding the service's mandate leads to uncertainty considering its tasks and what the service actually does. Up until now, the EEAS tends to focus more on classic foreign policy issues leaving the external dimension of internal EU policy lagging behind.³¹ This, in turn, raises the question of a possible mandate expansion, which would entail a transfer of all thematic policies having an external dimension to the EEAS, a scenario that would certainly displease the Commission.³²

Another major issue concerns the EEAS structure. Both members of the Council and the Commission consider that there are unnecessary duplicating layers of management, which add to the general structural confusion. Indeed, as Burke notes, one of its main weaknesses pertains to its blurry chain of command, which often blocks decision-making.³³ In addition, working methods within the service, including common training, need to be further elaborated in order to

ensure an *esprit de corps*.³⁴ This will follow from the socialisation effect that will be assured by bringing together different working cultures and organisational ethos in a professional environment where divergent working mindsets meet.³⁵

The work conducted by the HR/VP constitutes another vague point. According to Article 18 of the Lisbon Treaty, the HR has three main responsibilities: to conduct CFSP and CDSP, to preside over the Foreign Affairs Council, and to act as Vice-President of the Commission. Although high-ranking EEAS members consider this triple function to be a success,³⁶ it has proved to be rather difficult in practice. The major point of concern would be the impossibility to live up to, *inter alia*, all three responsibilities. This, in turn, raises the issue of deputisation to the HR/VP.³⁷

Vanhoonacker and Pomorska address the question of agenda-setting in EU foreign policy in the post-Lisbon institutional structure and attempt to understand the extent to which the HR/VP, within the EEAS framework, has the capacity of initiating foreign policy.³⁸ In the same vein, the right to propose legislation does not necessarily translate into the ability to set the agenda.³⁹ Yet, the Lisbon treaty has given a substantial *marge de manoeuvre* at the HR/VP not only because she presides the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), but also because a) she is seconded by the EEAS and the EU's delegations, b) she chairs the CFSP working groups and the PSC, which gives her the possibility to put forward certain issues, and c) the crisis-like character of CFSP could be to her advantage as negotiations among member states could prove to be timely and unproductive. At the same time, it is important that a personality with background on foreign policy matters occupies the HR/VP post. Any lack of expertise could, to a certain extent, represent a substantial drawback.⁴⁰ For this reason, the HR/VP should be in constant cooperation with the Commission, the EP and the member states, avoiding frictions and power struggles. Arousing interest by linking agenda status items to international causes or "particular strengths of the EU as an external actor,"⁴¹ such as the Mediterranean area, could place the HR/VP in an advantaged position regarding agenda-setting in EU foreign policy. Moreover, to a certain extent, the HR/VP's capacity to set the agenda and to guarantee consistency and coherence in EU external action "will depend on how she is perceived within the Service."⁴²

Last but not least, the service's limited resources accentuate its weaknesses. For example, the EU Special Representatives (funds and personnel) do not operate under exclusive EEAS supervision, allowing the EU member states to exercise influence.⁴³ Meanwhile, the

heads of CSDP missions do not report via EU delegations but rather through military channels, affecting EU foreign policy coherence.⁴⁴ In parallel, large EU member states are reluctant to give up some privileges regarding both relations to other major international players and their position in international *fora* (i.e. Security Council).⁴⁵ And, even though, some steps have been made in order to enhance the EEAS and the HR/VP as the main managers of EU external action, preparation and implementation of the foreign policy agenda still remains largely within the hands of the member states.⁴⁶

Inter-institutional Relations: European Council, Commission, Parliament and EEAS

The complexity that characterises the relations between the diverse institutions in Brussels is always a matter of scholarly investigation. Still, it is not clear how the numerous EU institutional actors interact with each other and what their functional relations are.⁴⁷ The creation of an institutional actor, such as EEAS, reasonably made the whole EU foreign policy-making system even more complicated.⁴⁸

Focusing firstly on the relations between the EEAS and the European Council, we acknowledge that their relationship depicts the awkwardness that surrounds agenda-setting and foreign policy management. In the post-Lisbon era, three major innovations have been introduced regarding the European Council. First of all, it became a *de jure* EU institution, secondly the treaty established the post of the President of the European Council, and lastly the member states' foreign ministers no longer take part in the institution's proceedings. All changes have further enhanced the body's role in foreign policy matters, at times, at the expense of the foreign ministers.⁴⁹ But, neither the EEAS nor the HR/VP take part in the drafting of the European Council conclusions, which main foreign policy input is to propose the general guidelines of EU action in the external field.

Relations between the EEAS with the Commission are also ambiguous. The Commission's main concern was to maintain competences in external action it has accumulated over the years.⁵⁰ To this extent, the EEAS' initial intention to coordinate some of the major Commission portfolios dealing with external action was met with dismay. The opposition of the Commission, but also of the EP, concerned fears of re-intergovernmentalisation, politicisation and intervention in the already integrated areas of the EU's external action.⁵¹ Commission President Barroso managed, at that time, to keep

key policy areas under the Commission's control (trade, humanitarian affairs, enlargement, energy, climate action, fisheries), while the Commissioners for Development, Enlargement/Neighbourhood and Humanitarian affairs would work closely with the HR/VP. These developments certainly put in jeopardy EU aspirations on a coherent external action and clearly show that economics and politics are not brought together under a single diplomatic umbrella as Ashton had wished for. In fact, the Commission often ignores or undermines the EEAS. Yet a combined approach could only benefit the EU in many domains, such as trade or the promotion of EU interests in international organisations (i.e. UNGA).⁵²

Regarding aid, for instance, Burke argues that some EU officials claim that closely linking EEAS diplomats and Commission aid officials could politicise EU aid packages. Yet, one should take into account not only the need to monitor the distribution of aid "at all times,"⁵³ but also the need to adapt economic input to political realities. Moreover, development should be considered as a political objective of the EU and a coherence element⁵⁴ bringing under the same umbrella both the political and economic dimension of EU external policies.⁵⁵ Yet, Commission officials do not want EEAS *mainmise* regarding political implications of development programs for three major reasons: the Commission (a) considers that it has the capacity to manage and report on development programmes, (b) fears a possible politicization of aid away from poverty criteria, and (c) questions the EEAS' ability to generate policy insights.⁵⁶ In order to avoid the possibility of a securitisation of development aid and political allocation of funds to third countries, the Commission retained the management of the external cooperation programs while the EEAS is involved in the programming cycle of aid instruments. Concerns were also raised regarding humanitarian aid. Inter-institutional tensions focused on the necessary independence of aid from foreign policy objectives (supported by the EP and some member states). Even though tensions arose following the creation in the EEAS of the post of Managing Director for Crisis Response and Operational Coordination, which was conceived by Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) as interfering on its own area of competence, there seems to be an unofficial division of the workload with the EEAS taking the lead in political types of crisis and DG ECHO in humanitarian ones.⁵⁷

Since neither the Lisbon Treaty nor the 2010 Council decision offer a detailed description of the relations between the EEAS and the Commission, bilateral arrangements regarding external relations

issues had to be agreed between the two services at a later stage.⁵⁸ The framework for relations between the EEAS and the Commission took one year of negotiations and as Burke notes, up to now, they are based “more on collegial cooperation than executive authority,” leaving often the HR/VP with less powers than former Commissioners for external relations.⁵⁹ While setting out basic principles of cooperation, these working arrangements leave open questions regarding, *inter alia*, EU Delegations, visits and representation of the EU at the international scene. Without a doubt, they aim to establish close cooperation in the case of visits of EU officials and missions in third countries and international organisations. Yet, as Wessel and Van Vooren note, even though the EU delegations are given an “embassy-like role” preparing the ground for visits (which is rather positive), intra-EU information sharing is not always guaranteed, as EEAS officials are not bound to inform their counterparts in the Commission of visits by the HR/VP.⁶⁰

Working arrangements are also misleading regarding representation issues. When EU officials visit international organisations, it is not clear whether the Commission can ensure external representation alongside to or instead of the delegations, undermining the role of EU Delegations as “the voice” of the EU on the global stage.⁶¹ Competence sharing is the main controversy issue in Commission-EEAS bilateral relations. Suffice it to say that while the July 2010 Council decision states that the EEAS shall assist the HR, the Commission and the diplomatic services of the member states, the 2012 inter-institutional agreement states that the EEAS “shall refrain from taking any measures...on issues which fall within Commission competence.”⁶²

The EP concerns focus mainly on the service’s political accountability. The EP managed to obtain co-decision powers over the Council decision regarding the EEAS by threatening to block, under co-decision rules, the decision on the budget and staff of the service. A practice that granted the EP a certain degree of influence, but refused budget approval could prove to be a “nuclear option.”⁶³ In general, as Helwig notes, Member of the EP (MEPs) seem to be satisfied with the implementation and performance of the EEAS so far.⁶⁴ More specifically, the HR/VP debriefs the plenary six times a year. Yet, there is a growing need for further enhancement of EEAS-EP relations, particularly in the field of information-sharing. EP and EEAS staff stresses the importance of a permanent EEAS interlocutor with the EP’s AFET Committee. In this respect, the Secretary General of the EEAS would be the best choice, yet he is not politically

accountable as he is not mandated by the Council but nominated by the HR/VP.⁶⁵ In general, there has been a shift of EP attitudes towards the EEAS. In the beginning the EP feared that the creation of the new service could present a danger for the supranational areas of the EU's external policies. As such the EP suggested that the EEAS be tied to the Commission and be less independent. Yet, in time, a more pragmatic EP approach suggested a stronger service with EP oversight prerogatives. Consequently, there are day-to-day contacts and exchange of views with the heads of the EU delegations, while information sharing regarding CFSP documents functions on a "need-to-know" basis.⁶⁶

Has the EEAS Strengthened the Coherence of the EU Foreign Policy?

Despite the fact that the EEAS faces a number of challenges, some critics consider that it represents an opportunity for establishing a new foreign policy system merging existing foreign policy tools and putting an end to the dualism between CFSP matters and external relations falling under the Commission's exclusive competences.⁶⁷ In this respect, the EEAS could compensate the downsizing of national foreign affairs ministries, a consequence of the current financial crisis. At the same time, a central role could be attributed to EU delegations regarding information gathering, coordination of EU member states' embassies and communication with third parties. Some would argue that national reporting is still essential (diverging national interests) but "shared assessments of situations abroad is a precondition" for the development of a common foreign policy culture leading to a new model for global diplomacy.⁶⁸ Moreover, delegations could, in time, play a role regarding consular matters and emergency assistance. This development could confirm Haas' theory where political actors would rely more on a new centre (EU) that serves best their interests compared to the old ones (nation-states).⁶⁹

However, the creation of the EEAS was a direct consequence of the reluctance of member states to empower the Commission as their representative in international affairs, in order to maintain intergovernmental decision-making on CFSP matters. Some member states, especially the "big three" (France, UK, Germany) wanted to maintain their own international leverage while enhancing the EU's diplomatic role.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, all EU member states did not have the same view on what they wanted the EEAS to represent. Some member states, like the Czech Republic, are clearly reluctant towards an independent EU foreign service, which could interfere with

their national interests. For example, the UK voiced some concerns regarding the EU's post-Lisbon legal personality arguing that the EU can "no longer serve to represent areas covered both by the EU and member states competence."⁷¹ This led to the publication of a Council document, on October 2011, regarding arrangements for EU statements in international fora according to which, in each EU statement it must be written who is competent for which area, which gives the possibility to member states to reiterate an EU statement on behalf of the EU in order to enhance their international visibility. In fact, this arrangement clearly shows the fear of some member states of a possible expansion of EU competences in the sensitive area of foreign policy.

Seen through a neo-realist spectrum, the EEAS was created in order to counteract the waning power of the major EU member states while offering a voice of opportunity to other EU members.⁷² Given the emerging multipolarity, traditional major EU powers, such as the UK, France or Germany have been marginalised in the international arena. The creation of the EEAS could be seen as an attempt to counterbalance this loss of influence. First, for the UK and France, the EEAS represents an ideal framework for cutting back German aspirations for a more pronounced global role and for increasing their prestige and global political impact. Germany, on the other hand, accepts to join the common EU line because, in this way, it gains access to "influence great power policies."⁷³ Choosing to create a centralised service would be for the benefit of both France and the UK, as it would give them access to the EU's wide network of delegations. These are a few of the major reasons which led the "big three" to struggle for the most important posts within the service, an attempt which not only highly politicised the creation of the EEAS, but which created concerns of a *directoire* of the big EU member states to the detriment of the smaller ones.⁷⁴ It is true that some states might see the EEAS as a power multiplier and as a "secretariat for national foreign ministries," yet all EU member states seem to agree on the service's complementary character as a means to avoid duplication in the conduct of foreign relations.⁷⁵

Two years following its creation, the HR/VP had to present a detailed review of the service. The July 2013 review identifies three main strengths of the EEAS: (a) a wide coverage of both geographic and thematic issues supported by the EU's 139 delegations around the world; (b) the capacity to engage strongly in support of key policy priorities, with the aim to deliver change and to promote stability

and development in Europe's immediate neighborhood; and (c) close synergy with the national diplomatic services of the EU member states.⁷⁶ Yet, besides these rather vague stipulations, analyses tend to agree that the service did not achieve to live up to the high expectations it has set. This much anticipated review might offer a comprehensive overview of the EEAS capabilities, shortcomings and possibilities to evolve, but it fails to propose a strategic dimension and to identify a clear-cut role and idea of the EEAS. As Duke notes, it is cautious in its proposals and recommendations, while ambiguous as to the means to reach the desired goals.⁷⁷

However, post-Lisbon institutional innovations and the EEAS record so far do not lead to the conclusion that the EU's foreign policy has been strengthened.⁷⁸ This is not only due to the financial crisis, but also to a lack of agenda-setting impetus by the HR/VP and a reluctance of EU member states to use Lisbon provisions for military crisis management.⁷⁹ Although limited elements towards supranationalism exist (e.g. the permanent chair for the FAC), the EU's foreign policy remains largely intergovernmental. The position that the EEAS independent decision-making is an indicator of the EU member states' commitment to more supranationalism⁸⁰ is irrelevant as it does not take into account external factors arguing that even a coherent approach does not necessarily mean an effective approach.⁸¹ Last but not least, the overall lack of strategic objectives leads to the conclusion that the EEAS will be given limited autonomy to represent member states in the world stage.⁸²

Conclusion

The EEAS has seemingly added further confusion to the already existing EU foreign policy system, and instead of improving its effectiveness one could argue that it actually constitutes a step backwards.⁸³ The new provisions seem to have created more perplexity than before with the HR/VP having to compete with the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission and the rotating Presidency leaving the issue of "who speaks for Europe" still pending.⁸⁴ This uncertainty is coupled with concerns over a possible re-nationalisation and de-communautarisation of EU foreign policy, as the EP expressed fears of potential dominance of the EEAS by member states. Balfour and Raik note that shifts in the global balance of power have created an opportunity for Europe to unite and push forward its foreign policy machinery.⁸⁵ Yet, it has also provoked division lines within Europe, with the current financial crisis pushing member states to

“play it alone” especially regarding the upgrade of their commercial and economic relations with emerging powers, such as China.

Despite the above-mentioned negative comments the EEAS has received for its functional and/or existential weaknesses being present from the first day of its realisation, there is a widespread positive expectation that the new foreign policy actor will fulfil its goal to bring closer the supranational and inter-governmental elements of EU foreign policy and enhance the Union’s coherence in its external relations. To what extent this will become a reachable goal depends on the willingness of the member states to delegate more external relations powers to the supranational level. The convergence of national preferences and interests in the foreign policy agenda is a constitutive part towards this dedicated aim. New challenges, including immigration and the outburst of severe conflicts near the EU borders (such as the Syrian civil war and the Ukraine crisis) will test, in the years to come, the ability of the EU foreign policy to confront these issues effectively and coherently through its supranational powers. The role and involvement of the EEAS in these evolutions remains to be seen, both as a future research goal and a political reality. ■

Notes

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- ⁴⁹ Helwig et al. *The New EU Foreign Policy Architecture*, 19.
- ⁵⁰ Interview No.8, EU official, 11 November 2014, Brussels.
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- ⁵² Burke, "Europe's External Action Service", 4.
- ⁵³ Burke, "Europe's External Action Service", 4.
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- ⁵⁶ Burke, "Europe's External Action Service", 5.
- ⁵⁷ Helwig et al. *The New EU Foreign Policy Architecture*, 41.
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⁷⁰ Furness, “Who controls the European External Action Service?”, 110-1.

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BOOK REVIEWS

RON HASSNER. *RELIGION ON THE BATTLEFIELD*

Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-0-8014 510702. Hardcover: £17.27

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Hassner's *Religion on the Battlefield* offers a welcome contribution to the body of literature on religion and conflict. Much of the existing literature privileges religious ideas and identities as the motivating factors that lead to violence and, as such, primarily explores religion as a cause of conflict. Hassner, however, focuses on the *effects* of religion on conflict—that is, how the ideas of individuals manifest in their actions. More specifically, and based on his hypothesis that the role of religion does not end where conflict begins, he poses the research question: “How does religion shape the modern battlefield?” His analysis is underpinned by an interpretivist conceptualisation of religion that centers on practices related to the sacred—that is, religion as a lived system of symbols and practices. This approach is a departure from existing literature on religion and conflict, which typically references theological concepts as they are understood by religious actors themselves. In doing so, this literature tends to neglect the importance of religion's role during the course of conflict, as well as the importance of religious practices, symbols or social structures. These works rather focus on how the individual's religious experience strengthen their motivations to participate in, or initiate, warfare. In other words, what sets Hassner's work apart is that it is much less focused on why actors internalise religious ideas and identities, and more on what they actually do with these ideas.

Hassner explores the research question from the four different dimensions of time, space, leadership, and rituals. As such, he commendably moves beyond the *why* to the *when*, *where*, *who*, and *how*. It is according to these dimensions, too, that the book is structured and its argument unfolds. Following a captivating introduction, Chapter 2, titled “Sacred Time and War,” shows that religiously significant dates and periods can have important effects on warfare. For example, dur-

ing the Christmas Truce of 1914 combatants along the Western front ceased their battlefield activities following a plea from Pope Benedict XV. Chapter 3, "Sacred Space and War," explores the importance of sacred sites to warfare. In this chapter, Hassner broadly argues that sites of religious importance have the potential to determine combat targeting. This is reflected in the unlikely survival of many churches during World War II, which, though not completely immune from indiscriminate night-bombing, were intentionally protected by combatants, often at a military cost. In Chapter 4, entitled "Sacred Leaders and War," Hassner argues that religious leadership can have direct effects on the discipline and morale of military units. For example, he shows that chaplains, which he references extensively, play an important role in enhancing combat motivation amongst soldiers by providing them with counseling and fiery battlefield sermons, amongst other things. Chapter 5, "Sacred Rituals and War," raises questions instead of arguments about the importance of ritual in warfare and their ability to strengthen the religiosity of soldiers. As an example, he invokes the story about the Second World War American General, George Patton, who summoned his chaplain to write a prayer, later distributed to 250,000 soldiers, to stop the rain for favourable battle conditions. Hassner approaches the chapters primarily through qualitative analysis, though he includes occasional references to quantitative data, which supports his argument that religion influences warfare through time, space, leadership, and rituals.

Hassner's overarching argument in *Religion on the Battlefield* is that religion can shape war in a multitude of ways through its constant feature in the landscape of combatants. Based on the examples employed throughout the book's substantive chapters, Hassner argues further that religion can both enable and constrain military operations by assuming the role of what he terms "force-multiplying" and "force-dividing" forces (2-18). Which role religion assumes then depends on the environment in which it operates. In a constraining religious environment where religious practices limit the use of force by, for example, requiring combatants to fast or forego sleep for religious reasons, religion will serve as a "force-multiplier" if such constraints apply to the enemy's combatants, and as a "force-divider" if they apply to an army's own combatants and vice versa.

Religion on the Battlefield provides a conceptually and empirically rich account of how religion shapes warfare that is unique for its focus on the *effects* of religious practices on the battlefield. It is, moreover, an important piece of work due to the case studies that it invokes. Drawn, by and large, from interstate wars in the West during

the twenty-first century, these cases demonstrate that religion's role in warfare is relegated neither to irrational, non-state actors, nor to conflicts in which religious identities and ideas play dominant roles, as much of the existing literature implies. By extension, Hassner also shifts the attention away from Islam and violence, on which a disproportionate amount of the literature has focused. Perhaps because *Religion on the Battlefield* is a pioneering work in its own right, its contribution lies more in the descriptive insight that it yields in terms of how religious time, space, leadership, and rituals affect warfare; rather than a more specific indication of the conditions under which it does so. The latter would be an interesting angle for future research, whether by Hassner or others, to explore. Equally, it would be interesting to combine the analyses of how religion as a set of practices interact with religion as an idea. Hassner deliberately separates religious practices from ideas in order to differentiate himself from existing studies, but it is not clear whether it is in fact possible that the two would ever operate independently of each other. A study that explores both would be all the more analytically rigorous for it. These critiques do not take away from the significant contribution that *Religion on the Battlefield* offers and the long way that it goes in advancing the field of Religion and Conflict. For these reasons, which are only enhanced by Hassner's eloquent writing style, *Religion on the Battlefield* should be considered a must-read work. ■

LUKE M. HERRINGTON, ALASDAIR
MCKAY, AND JEFFREY HAYNES (EDS.).
*NATIONS UNDER GOD: THE GEOPOLITICS
OF FAITH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY*

E-International Relations, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1910814048. Paperback £19.99

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Religion and global politics are intimately interwoven, and indeed it can be argued that they are part of each other's very fabric. Yet, until recently, religion has played a negligible part as a factor to be considered in regard to foreign policy strategies in the vast majority of Western scholarship on global politics. Instead, the predominant and

widely accepted secularisation theory posited that, through modernisation and social change, religion would become increasingly and irrevocably sidelined as a factor influencing the public sphere. This truism has been dismantled. Indeed, the great variety of topics covered by *Nations Under God* drives home without a doubt that religion is a diverse and resilient force that needs to be reckoned with in the contemporary global politics theatre.

Nations Under God aims to contribute to the discussion on religion and global politics by offering an interdisciplinary perspective and by presenting a balanced, broad analysis where much of the existing literature has been limited by an exclusive attention to Islam and a narrow, ideological focus. Divided into four parts, this edited volume offers theoretical insights alongside empirical research concerning religion in its relationship with nations, society, peace and violence, transnational institutions, and human rights.

The first part of *Nations Under God* addresses theoretical questions of religion as a concept today. Stephen Dawson investigates the theoretical implications of the post-secular turn for the field of International Relations and argues that religion as a concept cannot simply be “added and stirred” (27) into existing theories. He also offers an excellent and accessible conceptualisation of the term “religion”. Other articles in this section touch on a variety of issues. For example, John A. Rees develops four dynamics between the religious and the secular to form a diagnostic tool for policy makers. Further, Gertjan Dijkink offers a good explanation of the rise of Christianity and Islam as well as the Reformation in early modern Europe in the context of contemporary territorial events, and argues that globalisation, as a key shift in today’s territorial order, may hold a similar potential for religious revival.

The subsequent part of the book includes equally engaging contributions, which are chiefly concerned with religion’s relationship with nation and society. Brendan Sweetman suggests an inability of the state to be neutral between worldviews due to the embodiment of moral values in its laws, and points towards the difficulties of pluralist democratic society. Another noteworthy article in this section is Scott W. Hibbard’s “Religious Politics and the Rise of Illiberal Religion,” in which he argues that certain features of exclusive interpretations of religion are more easily aligned with ideological structures of the modern state than liberal religious traditions, but notes that religion has been used for both good and ill by political actors.

Religion in the contexts of violence and peace takes center stage in the next section of *Nations Under God*. Shireen T. Hunter maps the

recent history of increasing sectarian tensions in the Middle East and convincingly argues that “politics and quests for security and influence” (157) rather than religion as such are at the heart of these developments. Instead, she suggests, religion is becoming more prominent as an instrument of policy and makes for fertile ground for such struggles. Connecting religious liberty with political stability, Nilay Saiya proposes that religious liberty ought to be viewed as a security issue, as its denial may result in resentment and radicalisation. In a similar vein, Dan G. Cox reports findings suggesting a higher level of stability, as well as less terror acts in states with a diverse ethnic and religious makeup.

In the final part of the book, the contributors discuss religion *vis-à-vis* transnational institutions and human rights. The articles in this section range from Jeffrey Haynes’ assessment of faith-based organisations in the UN to accounts focused on human rights in connection with Islam in the case of Pakistan. Additionally, Paul S. Rowe’s article offers an impassioned argument for the quiet good that religion can do and that seldom makes the headlines. He posits that religion as a force transcending national boundaries is well-positioned to advance cultural as well as social change and exchange.

As these examples suggest, the contributions in this book are as intriguing as they are diverse. Unfortunately, this also reflects a crucial point where the book misses one of its targets. The editors underline that their primary target audience are students and academics, but that they also hope to reach a wider public. However, *Nations Under God* appears too complex in language and too specific in its diverse topics to appeal to this desired larger audience.

Otherwise, *Nations Under God* not only succeeds in fulfilling the aims set by its editors in its introduction—it surpasses them. The broad, interdisciplinary backgrounds of over thirty contributing researchers—offering perspectives from international relations and geography to theology and anthropology—are not only an asset. They are what succeeds in offering the reader a glimpse of the complexities and vastness of the relationship between religion and global politics. It includes cases from Angola, Algeria and Pakistan to Taiwan, from sectarian struggles between Sunnis and Shias in the Middle East to the influence of historical differences between Protestant and Catholic states on the European Union, and an article on Russian paganism. *Nations Under God* not only successfully argues but also in itself showcases how the connection between religion and global politics runs much deeper and encompasses much more than the terror-related discourses so prevalent within scholarship since 2001. The plethora of angles included in

this publication and the care taken to situate and contextualise the debate make it a very rewarding read for both scholars already familiar with the subject matter as well as students delving into it for the first time. ■

ELIZABETH SHAKMAN HURD. *BEYOND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: THE NEW GLOBAL POLITICS OF RELIGION*

Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-0691166094. Hardcover £22.95

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In Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's new book, *Beyond Religious Freedom*, international relations scholars are confronted with a sharply critical analysis of the role religion has assumed in their discipline ever since Samuel Huntington formulated the thesis of the "clash of civilisations" in 1993. Experts, policy makers, and activists, in turn, will find themselves chewing hard on the compelling evidence presented that their best intentions with regard to the defence of religious freedom in foreign countries can have unfavourable outcomes.

Hurd argues in Chapter 2 that IR scholars tend to follow an oversimplified "two faces framework" with regard to religion. They see religion as a force in society, which can have both pernicious and benign effects. The task of scholarship and policy ("expert" and "governed religion" in Hurd's terminology) is to foster the factors that make religion benign, and combat those that make it dangerous. For Hurd the two faces framework "enacts a discursive and political logic that produces its own object ('religion') and then assigns it causal powers and significance" (29). It therefore ignores both the complexities of "lived religion" (the third term used by Hurd to classify religion) as well as the reality of other forms of belonging or exclusion. The author substantiates this claim through a theory-driven analysis of a series of cases of state efforts to define and shape religion. Chapter 3 deconstructs state-sponsored international advocacy of religious freedom by organisations like the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom as a contingent power arrangement of the West. Chapter 4 analyses the reifying effects of civil (USAID) and military

(army chaplaincy) programmes geared at fostering “moderate religion” in Muslim countries. Chapter 5 assesses critically the politics of recognition of religious minorities in local contexts by external powers. Lastly, chapter 6 concludes that religion should be “dethroned as a stable interpretative and policy category” (114), that the two faces framework should be abandoned once and for all and that the study of religion should become piecemeal and contextual: “[O]ne can study the ways in which religion is delimited and deployed in specific legal, institutional, historical contexts, by whom, and for what purposes ... religion is too unstable a category to be treated otherwise” (121).

The core of Hurd’s argument about the problematic nature of the category of religion is her criticism of reification. The global politics of religious freedom claims solutions for three problems which, in Hurd’s view, defy any easy answer: the affiliation-problem (who is part of a group), the boundary-problem (how are groups distinguished from each other) and the definition-problem (what defines a group). Hurd argues that “religion” is not a valid solution for any of these problems (28-40). Hurd argues that groups singled out as worthy of protection of their religious freedom are reified through recognition. A new type of boundary is created around them. With it, obstacles to integration emerge which are even harder to overcome, because they are derived from a logic that lacks adequate context. She strengthens her claims by looking at real-world examples, like the Rohingya in Burma and the Alevi in Turkey. Even “a more encompassing, new and improved ‘international religious freedom 2.0,’” she poignantly writes, would only serve “to (re)enact a modified version of the same exclusionary logic” (63).

Both IR experts and experts on European governance of religion should use this argument as a cause for critical self-reflection. The global politics of religious freedom originated in the US. But other countries (Canada, the UK, the European Union) have also created official bodies for the promotion of international religious freedom. Inside the US, Hurd points out, many of the policies promoted under the label of “religious freedom” by the foreign department would be deemed unconstitutional under the First Amendment. In Europe, on the other hand, selective state-religion cooperation has a long tradition. The European practice of state-regulated religion and US religious freedom advocacy converge due to common concerns about religious extremism and Muslim immigrants. In this sense, Hurd’s fundamental critique of the effects of “making religion” from above applies equally to the selective cooperation models in place in many European countries. The “formalisation of identity in religious terms”

and “confessionalisation of social order” (104) is already apparent in discourses about immigrant integration in Europe today, prioritising religion over other crucial factors of inclusion and exclusion: employment, social welfare, education, mobility etc.

Hurd’s otherwise powerful argument carries the risk of becoming involuntarily affirmative of politics that antagonise international human rights as a Western invention. In Hurd’s presentation, “local actors” represent the reality of “lived religion” beyond the construction of “expert” or “governed religion”; but at the same time these “local actors” appear oddly deprived of independent agency and as the products of foreign rights intervention. This is problematic. As someone working on religion in Russia, I am well aware of the effects of international rights advocacy on local actors in an autocratic state. In Russia, people engaged in civil rights activities have seen themselves branded as “foreign agents” and have been accused of merely following foreign orders. This is a conclusion which Hurd should have rejected much more strongly than she does in her book. Local actors for the most case are not just blindly following the carrot of foreign rights advocacy, but are pragmatically using available means in an unequal struggle for civil rights in oppressive regimes. Critical theory, which presents itself as a tool of emancipation and pluralism, must be extra careful today not to provide a theoretical language for anti-Western autocratic politics.

Despite this reservation on practical grounds, I fully recommend *Beyond Religious Freedom*. It is a signpost book, and the directions it provides are more precise than merely “beyond.” It guides the reader through approaches to religion in IR theory, charts original maps of complex situations of inequality, and sets the landmark for critical analysis, which future debates in the field can effectively build on.■

IZA R. HUSSIN. *THE POLITICS OF ISLAMIC LAW: LOCAL ELITES COLONIAL AUTHORITY AND THE MAKING OF THE MUSLIM STATE*

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-0226323206. Paperback £26.50.

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In this magisterial work, Iza Hussin explores the political life of Islamic law in Egypt, Malaya and South Asia. From 1765 till 1948, the concept of shari'a was reduced from being a general societal discourse to "Islamic law," which was incorporated as the law of the state. Concurrent centralisation of the administration of Islamic law and marginalisation of Islamic law in state institutions led to its heightened prominence in political life—a paradoxical phenomenon which the book describes with ample empirical evidence. Landmark documents and events such as the Allahabad Treaty (1765), Queen Victoria's Proclamation (1858) and the Pangkor Treaty (1874) supposedly excepted matters relating to religion and custom from the authority of the British authorities, but more precisely led to "productive denial of colonial jurisdiction" (66).

The book is a refreshing departure from scholarly discourses that focus on binaries of Islamic authenticity and modernity, and works that lament the end of shari'a and the articulation of fiqh (jurisprudence). As a cross-regional comparison, the scope of the book is ambitious—based on painstaking original archival research conducted in Malay, Arabic, and English in state archives, libraries, universities, and museums in Britain, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States. Her sources include censuses, correspondence, formal legal codes, treaties, and travellers' accounts. She recognizes that Islamic law was a diverse phenomenon, simultaneously single and multiple. She highlights profound personal interactions that people had with Islamic law. For example, she recounted an instance in Malaysia a few years ago when a Muslim lady had told her "Islamic Law happened to me yesterday" (5). The state-sanctioned "Islamic law" that affected her life was opposed to the matrilineal practices of the "adat Minangkabau," and was increasingly becoming the sole purview of men (6).

Hussin begins her book by correcting flawed and inadequate con-

ceptions of Islam and Islamic law in existing scholarship. The most significant changes to Islamic law pertain to its application and administration and not its substantive rules. The only domain of Islamic law today in most countries is Personal Status Law (most of family law), but Hussin demonstrates how this is not Islamic law since it was infused with British law and values from the outset. Even more important is her criticism of the concept of legal pluralism as a heuristic device that hides the very transformations of law that were needed to construct legal pluralist regimes (27). Indeed, legal pluralism obscures what laws were given over to Personal Status law, and which were given up to the state, and what effect jurisdictional changes had on Islam. Chapter Six again takes up the conceptual issues in the study of Islamic law where Hussin pointedly argues that hybrid law was not simply a plural law. The layering of multiple systems of law constitutes the creation of an entirely new legal system, and not simply an aggregation of separate strands (225). While Egypt, Malaya, and India shared experiences of British colonialism to different degrees, Hussin refrains from generalizing their experiences by relying on archival sources to drive her narrative. Her evidence indicates that Islamic law was far from being an Arab export. To a large extent, it has been shaped by local political networks, and is ultimately a transnational product with no clear centre.

The author did not adhere to the two popular interpretations of the trajectory of Islamic law—violence or seizure of the state—or to its sustained but limited efflorescence in circumscribed cul-de-sacs, such as in religious schools. Even as legal institutions stabilized under colonial regimes, Islamic law remained robust and dynamic. Deprived of their larger domains, Muslim elites clung on desperately to “religion and custom,” which gained more importance in political life. Both colonial authorities and (new) Muslim elites alternately revelled in their newfound control, and continually agonized about the limits of their jurisdiction.

The final chapter focuses on Malaysia, the only state where ethnicity is legally tied to Islam. Although this policy dates from the colonial period when the Malay ruling elite guarded their purview of religious affairs jealously, colonial legacies cannot fully explain the contemporary state of politics in Malaysia. Her close examination of two high profile cases in 2001 and 2006 involving apostasy reveal that the majority of references to Islamic law in federal and state courts played performative rather than adjudicative functions. She convincingly demonstrates how the trials form a theatre for the performance of

both Islamic legitimacy and Malay supremacy that are equally integral to Malaysian politics, and not so much a barometer of religious tolerance within the law of the state.

Although Hussin's use of the theatre metaphor enhances her study overall, it sometimes undercuts her argument that words matter very much in all contexts. This view in fact allowed her to take Indian "treaty kings" seriously even after they signed off their sovereignty away to the East India Company in the late eighteenth century. She astutely observes that colonial rule was premised on investing rulers with new powers even as these powers were removed from other rulers. Yet at other times, she refers to certain laws and trials as "rehearsals" (37, 103, 114), which suggest tentativeness. All public articulations of law establish actual precedents for future actors to enact and re-enact. Therefore, this differentiation between law and the realm before law is overdrawn. This is, however, a minor flaw in what is a conceptually rigorous book.

Since Hussin regards the history of the politics of Islamic law as a tragedy with several arcs, she obviates the need for firm conclusions. Her book, which is chronological, implies that it is increasingly harder to change the status quo with new legislation because there are so many influential interests benefitting from existing law. However, she optimistically points out that authoritarianism of codification and reification can be countered by ongoing investments in intertextuality, facility in reading between the lines, and fluency in multiple languages of authority and authenticity (265). She provides an excellent blueprint for this arduous undertaking. ■

CHRISTIAN JOPPKE. *THE SECULAR STATE UNDER SIEGE: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA*

Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-0745665429. Paperback £17.99

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Christian Joppke's *The Secular State under Siege* provides a fascinating account of the challenges that both the Christian Right and Islam present to the secular state. In this rather short text, Joppke moves

his focus away from some of his previous work on the nation-state, immigration, and citizenship, to the challenges posed by religion to in secular Western liberal states. Although Joppke concludes, in contrast to the book's title, that this "siege" does not really exist, certain contingencies within the Christian Right and Islam have at times attempted to "batter" the wall thought to separate the nominally liberal and secular state and religion (171). Joppke is concerned with two overarching questions. The first asks to what extent religion can be included or excluded from the public sphere and, concomitantly, how much religion in law, politics, and the public sphere is too much. The second asks whether different religions, in this case Christianity and Islam, can be treated equally—despite their different origins and divergent development—in a Western secular state grounded on notions of "liberal neutrality and secularism" (4).

In order to address these questions, Joppke uses a "historical-institutional" approach to compare the unique relationship between politics and religion in the United States and Europe. Parsing carefully through the work of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, and the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, Joppke argues for a "substantive, Weberian understanding of religion" that focuses on the "cultural stuff" of religious activity (37-39). In other words, Joppke's methodological focus on how religion is different from other spheres of human activity, in contrast to a more functional understanding of religion that fails to distinguish between political and religious actors, allows Joppke to successfully compare religion to other cultural spheres of difference, such as the political sphere, which have increasingly been at the root of conflict in the West.

In the first part of his text, Joppke interrogates how religion has been interpreted in social and political theory and then proceeds to historically trace the separation of religion from the state in liberal democratic states in the *longue durée*, or what Joppke terms the "Long Christian Exit." He argues this process was key for the development of the liberal democratic state (42). Important to note here is that, in contrast to the tight entwinement of the political and the religious in Islam, the historical contingencies in Christianity's development allowed for a compartmentalisation of political authority and religion, which regulated the latter to the private sphere, where religion largely remains despite an apparent resurgence in the public sphere. This resurgence is attributed to the Christian Right and Islam in the US and Europe, respectively.

The latter half of Joppke's book investigates what the author believes is an exaggerated fear of a religious takeover of the "naked public sphere" in both the US and Europe (87). In the US, Joppke argues

that the Christian Right, an “Evangelical-Enlightenment religion-state regime,” has tried to push the US towards a “legal theocracy” with the help of conservative US Supreme Court judges who have shifted the Supreme Court to the political right. Despite the Christian Right’s success accessing state funding for specific religious institutions and public Christian symbols, Joppke contends that the wall of separation in the US has only been “battered”, not breached (110). On the other side of the Atlantic, Joppke notes that Islam provides its own unique challenge to Europe because “Islam grows out of a different civilizational context,” which causes particular problems for the integration of Islam within secular Europe. This applies in particular with respect to the rights of women and non-Muslims (219). Yet, Joppke admits that this civilisational narrative that often portrays Islam as an existential threat to the very “essence” of Europe is only present within elite Islamic discourse, propagated by such prominent figures such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Tariq Ramadan. Thus, the religious and cultural friction between Islam and Europe is much less pronounced at the level of “ordinary Muslims” (219). Subsequently, this focus on more elite Islamic discourse rather than examining the quotidian challenges that face Muslims in European countries, for instance in the often isolated districts such as Molenbeek where the terrorists who organised the attacks in Paris and Brussels originated from, ultimately weakens the author’s overall argument. Yet, in a surprising conclusion, and in contrast to the majority of mainstream discourse, Joppke contends that despite the problems of integrating Islam into Europe, Islam is less of a threat to the secular state due to its inability to radically challenge the liberal democratic institutions within Europe, compared to the Christian Right in the US.

Despite the threat posed by the Christian Right to liberal democratic institutions, Joppke ultimately argues that this assault on the separation of religion and state, led by former Justice Antonin Scalia and his fellow conservative judges on the Supreme Court, does not constitute a move toward a theocracy, but rather a move by the US towards the “modest establishments’ of Europe,” which he argues can be shaken by religious challenges but will ultimately remain secular. That said, there is a curious absence of any connection between the Christian Right and its fetishisation of the invisible hand and the neoliberal market highlighted by the work of political theorist William Connolly¹ This connection seems to play a distinct role in the current rise and popularity of the so-called Tea Party and other “anti-establishment” politicians who purposively inject religious discourse into their politics. On Islam in Europe, Joppke’s focus on a “clash of civilizations” seems to simplify the historical role of Islam, which was

both an apparent threat to, and simultaneously constitutive of what we now know as Europe. His binary opposition between “Christian” and “Islam” obscures the fact that the EU, as the latest iteration of “Europe,” excludes minorities and migrants of both Christian and Islamic faith. Their exclusion is more often based on their geopolitical point of origin and their ethnicity than their religious affiliation.²

In sum, *The State Under Siege* is an intriguing book that suggests the challenge of religion to the secular state is more exaggerated than real. In spite of the above critiques, *The Secular State under Siege* is a well-written and theoretically sophisticated work that should be widely read, especially in light of the recent resurgence of “public religion” in both the US and Europe. Indeed, the current state of electoral politics in the US as well as the increasing tension between Islam and Europe signal a continuing challenge of religion to the secular liberal state. Thus, in contrast to the mainstream narratives that would have us believe that religion has become a threat to the secular nation-state, Joppke’s work provides an important and valuable intervention. ■

Notes

¹ William Connolly, “Capitalism, Christianity, and America: Rethinking the Issues,” *Political Theology* 12, no 2. (2011): 226-236.

² Robbie McVeigh, “United in Whiteness? Irishness, Europeaness and the Emergence of A ‘White Europe’ Policy,” *European Studies* 28 (2010): 251-278.