

Edited by Patrick James

Religion, Identity,
and Global Governance

Ideas, Evidence, and Practice

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Looking Back, Looking Forward

This study began in chapter 1 with a series of questions about religion, identity, and global governance. It moved toward answers by focusing on ideas, evidence, and practice. Each of the questions from chapter 1 will be answered in a tentative and summary way. This includes references to a few other studies. The discussion that follows regarding each set of questions is based on insights derived from the intervening chapters. The chapter concludes with a few thoughts about the way forward.

Religious Identity

How is it established that religious identity is a relevant factor in explaining or understanding politics? How can it be known whether religion is 'real' versus a cover for some other factor such as ethnicity or group power?

These questions, in an overall sense, already are important ones in the study of religion and politics. The answers offered in this study parallel some of what is established now about the role of religion in politics and society. Religion very frequently plays a genuine role in politics. Witness what Appleby (2000) labels as 'militance.' Many instances of self-sacrifice in the name of religion are observed; attempts to label this behaviour as purely instrumental across the board are not convincing. Moreover, religion overlaps with significant transnational issues like fundamentalism, human rights, and political Islam (Fox and Sandler 2004). As for the related question about whether religion is just a front for something

else, other studies have challenged this way of thinking quite effectively in both theory and evidence (Appleby 2000; Fox and Sandler 2004). The tendency to pose the question so persistently, in fact, is a telltale sign of bias against religion as an established part of human life.

This volume offers a number of illustrations that establish the value of religious identity in understanding and explaining political processes. The chapters on evidence and practice are most helpful here. Consider analysis of the Iraqi civil war in chapter 8. The evolution of that conflict shows how religion is used by factions to interpret the world. Militias with a religious designation, such as the Mahdi Army under the radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, are formidable threats to peace and security. This chapter, in fact, shows that a security dilemma with a religious foundation is at work in sustaining civil strife in Iraq. Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship, which turned to Islam for legitimacy as it became increasingly threatened from within, clearly made religious identity more salient. After the regime's fall, that tactic produced unintended consequences. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia ensued once the U.S. invasion and occupation removed Saddam's iron grip on Iraq.

Very different in how it played out, but also convincing about the impact of religious identity, is the account in chapter 9 of the debate over sharia law in Canada's province of Ontario. It is interesting to note that the debate included citations of Islamic beliefs by both advocates and opponents of sharia as an alternative to the court system vis-à-vis family law. The arguments back and forth are grounded in different visions of society on the role of religion. The main points of division, at a basic level, concern religion as a private versus public part of identity and the degree to which some forms of the latter, most notably regarding Islam, are consistent with a free society.

Religious beliefs also affect substantive matters of negotiation as practised by NGOs. This is well-established by the account in chapter 11 of Christian mediation. For example, Christian mediators in general prefer the role of communicator over manipulator in attempting to move those in conflict closer to agreement. Stylistic nuances also are revealed and follow from doctrinal differences among Christian traditions. For example, the Reformed and Anabaptist traditions prefer elite and grassroots mediation levels, respectively.

Chapter 12 tells a convincing story about the political efficacy of religious NGOs. (Chapter 13, which focuses on Canadian foreign policy, reinforces this main point in a more specific context.) Put simply,

these NGOs indeed match well with self-interest. Chapter 12 shows how religious NGOs in the Western middle power world pursue goals that eschew power politics and pacific doctrines of the past. This is understood in the objectives pursued in chapter 14. Moreover, the common to all the world systems are distorted.

What comes out of religion generally is more the actions of NGOs in positive behaviour. Religion fits in substantially the problem, but also worldwide.

With regard to the identity, the answer is faith antedates the world for so long. As the of believers. Thus it goes beyond instruction 3 goes on to argue between what is reasonable to challenge the course, but sustained increasingly difficult observed. Examples acts of insurgency and trained adversaries show that religious is associated with its involvement based research would the evidence on the influencing at least

One example of jihad in India, which is restrained in their

these NGOs indeed are religious in that their priorities about policy match well with self-proclaimed belief systems. For example, chapter 12 shows how religious NGOs such as Project Ploughshares work with Western middle powers toward the goal of enhanced human security. This is understood in the sense of peace and social justice in tandem – goals that eschew power politics and can be traced to the altruistic and pacific doctrines of the Abrahamic religions. The same could be said of the objectives pursued successfully by the IGE, which are covered in chapter 14. Moreover, the altruistic and pacific doctrines espoused are common to all the world's major religions, in spite of how these belief systems are distorted in some instances to justify mayhem.

What comes out of this evidence, collectively speaking, is that religion generally is more important vis-à-vis understanding and explaining the actions of NGOs rather than states – at least when it comes to positive behaviour. In that sense, as the volume's title anticipates, religion fits in substantively with global governance. It clearly is part of the problem, but also part of the solution, in achieving human security worldwide.

With regard to the related question about the reality of religious identity, the answer begins with the observation in chapter 2 that faith antedates the international relations theories that have ignored it for so long. As the chapter points out, religion creates a community of believers. Thus the potential for mobilization is omnipresent and goes beyond instrumental rationality into *affective motivation*. As chapter 3 goes on to argue, such motivation inherently blurs the boundary between what is regarded as public versus private. It always is possible to challenge whether self-stated religious motivations are real, of course, but sustained, extreme actions in the name of religion make it increasingly difficult to imagine that religion is just a cover for what is observed. Examples include homicide bombing and implicitly suicidal acts of insurgency against more numerous, better-equipped, and highly trained adversaries. Chapter 5 uses cross-national, aggregate data to show that religious exclusivity on the part of a government is associated with its involvement in international crises. More in-depth, case-based research would be needed to establish a causal process there, but the evidence on the surface points in the direction of religious beliefs influencing at least some aspects of foreign policy.

One example of just that type of research appears in chapter 7. Muslims in India, while experiencing violence, are observed to be very restrained in their responses. The chapter traces this to the evolution

of Islamic theology in that part of the world to favour pacific relations with others, even in the face of violence.

Religious identity can be malleable. This comes out clearly in chapter 10 as a feature among even of those in positions of high leadership. The chapter's recounting of Catholic doctrine on just war shows how pontiffs evolved from pacifists into warriors and then back into a belief that violence should be used only in the most extreme circumstances. Chapter 14, which is autobiographical, tells the story of one person's evolution in religious identity. The author moves toward social consciousness as a result of reflection on his Christian beliefs and takes action through the Institute for Global Engagement, which promotes dialogue and religious freedom around the world.

Religious identity interacts, as chapter 6 points out, with other aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, class, and language. This chapter uses the example of the 'War on Terror' to show how religious identity can be shaped by historical context. Muslims in general and Islamic humanitarian organizations in particular are put on the defensive by the War on Terror's dichotomy of good versus bad in the context of their religion.

While the weight of evidence in this volume favours the position that religion is real rather than a cover for other motivations, it also is important to point out limitations. Happily, not all violent behaviour that superficially might be attributed to religion is in fact traced to differences over faith. The investigation in chapter 7 of the Sri Lankan conflict establishes that material differences between ethnic groups, not religious belief, explain the horrific violence between Tamils and Sinhalese. And sometimes good things happen – consistent with the best aspects of religious faith – but not because of religious adherence. An example of that is Canadian coordination with religious NGOs in pursuit of human security, as described by chapter 13. This is *not* faith-based diplomacy. Instead, the Canadian government sees religious NGOs as targets of opportunity to more effectively carry out its foreign policy goals.

Religion, in sum, is real. So are the effects of religious identity on politics.

Religion and Global Governance

When and how can religion be applied to advance positive, peace-oriented agendas? What is the balance between religion as a cause of

violence versus a positive world? In an overall sense, how do they relate to each other?

Religion indeed can be a force for good. Its capacity to be constructive as well as destructive is well known. To claim to act out of faith alone is to become apparent, the more one looks on the point of view, the more evident here is the established fact that religious groups find themselves in a world vis-à-vis religion (Sivan 2003). This is a world where religion is a

With regard to the world, the elements emerge as important in a minimal level of statehood.

Theology matters. In the end, the coercive and the persuasive of travellers is well known. In chapter 7 about Islam, the author shows how Islamic beliefs evolved over time, even to violent provocation. This occurs elsewhere in the world, against seeing religion as a source of difference. The evolving role of the religion in the Bible produced a new politics and even violence. The religion promotes peace and a new world.

Religious NGOs are a force for good. It is a more specific observation of an essential reality (Sivan 2000, 795). Consider the international context. The international context is such that success stories such as the end of the war demonstrate the power of religion. Peter also points out the importance of goals, especially given the negotiations forward. Those realities, they are provided in the

violence versus a possible source for achievement of a more peaceful world? In an overall sense, how do religion and global governance relate to each other?

Religion indeed can be applied in a positive way. It gives legitimacy to constructive as well as destructive acts committed by those who claim to act out of faith (Appleby 2000; Fox and Sandler 2004). As will become apparent, the glass is either half empty or half full, depending on the point of view, regarding the overall role played by religion. Relevant here is the established finding that a significant number of religious groups find secularization threatening (Almond, Appleby, and Sivan 2003). This is at the root of many problems encountered in the world vis-à-vis religion.

With regard to the context for a positive role for religion, three ingredients emerge as important in this volume: theology, NGOs, and a minimal level of state non-interference, if not support, for their actions.

Theology matters. While only alluded to at various points in this volume, the coercive and even violent message of Al Qaeda and its fellow travellers is well known. Less familiar is the important story told in chapter 7 about Islamic theology in South Asia. Among Indian Muslims, beliefs evolved in a manner that promoted peaceful responses even to violent provocations. (Only Kashmir is an exception.) Examples of this occur elsewhere, although, as chapter 3 points out, there is a bias against seeing religious pacifism as sincere. Consider also the importance of religious doctrine in the story told by chapter 10 about the evolving role of the pontiff in world politics. Changing interpretation of the Bible produced pacifism, subsequent direct involvement in power politics and even violence, and ultimately a sense of responsibility to promote peace and avert war in all but the most extreme circumstances.

Religious NGOs are important builders of a more peaceful world. This is a more specific observation that follows from the prescient designation of an essential role for NGOs per se in global governance (Murphy 2000, 795). Consider the account in chapter 11 of Christian mediation. The international community generally reacts well to such efforts. Success stories such as Sant' Egidio's role in quelling the Mozambique civil war demonstrate that religious intermediaries can succeed. The chapter also points out limits: NGOs can succeed when they set realistic goals, especially given their inherent inability to use coercion to move negotiations forward. When religious NGOs operate with awareness of those realities, they can achieve great success. Other positive examples are provided in chapter 12 vis-à-vis partnership with Good Samaritan

states to promote the UN's Millennium Development Goals, chapter 13 with respect to coordinated efforts with the government of Canada in delivering its message in favour of religious pluralism, and chapter 14 in regard to the activities of the IGE in Pakistan and elsewhere to achieve higher levels of dialogue and religious freedom.

While NGOs matter, states still hold the overwhelming amount of power in this world and need, at the very least, to get out of the way for NGOs to do their work. More than that would be desirable, but a permissive environment is essential for NGOs to effect change. Western middle powers are cited in chapter 12 as working in tandem with NGOs to remove the underlying causes of strife within and between states. An especially notable government action is Canada's establishment of a Global Centre for Pluralism. It might be added that NGOs in such collaboration may be able to address the 'moral insufficiency' of global governance as Murphy (2000, 791) described the situation a decade ago – a description that regrettably still seems on the mark today.

Chapter 4 shows interesting possibilities for states to behave in different ways within and beyond their borders with regard to religion. While supporting human rights at the UN, various Islamic states continued to oppress their own people. Ironically, as chapter 6 points out, Western states fiercely protect the rights of their citizens but do unintended harm with the discourse coming out of the War on Terror. This divisive language, which categorizes Muslims simplistically as good or bad, inhibits efforts by Islamic humanitarian organizations. It creates a climate of fear and may even produce the very reaction it is intending to head off – hostility to Western institutions and values.

What about the balance between positive and negative aspects of religion? The best answer to this question is perhaps one provided by chapter 14: religion has been and will always be a part of the problem, and a part of the solution. Chapters 2 and 3, however, provide ample warning that the world after 9/11 is likely to answer the question in a biased way that overlooks the positive side of the ledger. Bias is twofold: against religion in general and against Islam in particular. The chapters in Part Four of this volume already make it clear that the story of religion is not just one of fanaticism and violence. Religious NGOs obviously are making efforts, sometimes individually and others in alliance with governments, toward a better world.

Unfortunately, religious fanaticism – within Islam but also other religions – continues to wreak havoc around the globe. Iraq's civil war,

retold in chapter 8, is takes a cross-national religious exclusivity in stimulating conflict and legislation tend to be within a protracted importance of work or even eliminate the interstate strife.

One way to answer are developing rather than obviously optimistic about the term evolution of the of active peace-building. Christianity also can promoted by both states, with enough time for peace and social justice.

Overall, the jury is in. Governments work toward religious extremists control. Peace-oriented agencies, NGOs, and governments.

This discussion leads to global governance in chapter 1 that global is not just how governments. Instead, global governance relationships, and processes (Thakur 2006; Thakur arbitrary, a focus on the limit a relatively complex.

Consider institutional grant extraordinary makes them more powerful here, as elsewhere religious exclusivism conflict and even war. Massive institutions such as auspices of the UN. For

retold in chapter 8, is just the latest glaring example. Chapter 5, which takes a cross-national approach, reveals the importance of state religious exclusivity in not only creating resentment at home but also stimulating conflict abroad. States with an official religion or religious legislation tend to be more involved in international crises, especially within a protracted conflict. This generalization points toward the importance of working on behalf religious freedom in order to reduce or even eliminate the forces that can set in motion both domestic and interstate strife.

One way to answer the question is to focus instead on how things are developing rather than in an absolute sense. It is possible to be cautiously optimistic about religion at a global level. Consider the long-term evolution of the Catholic Church, noted above, in the direction of active peace-building. Examples of mediation efforts from within Christianity also can be cited. Moreover, religious pluralism is being promoted by both states and NGOs. Perhaps these efforts will crystallize, with enough time, into a clear trend toward religion as a force for peace and social justice.

Overall, the jury is still out on religion. NGOs and some governments work toward a better world, but other governments and religious extremists continue to engage in oppression and acts of violence. Peace-oriented agendas are moving forward to the extent that theology, NGOs, and governments come together in the right way.

This discussion leads naturally into the question of how religion and global governance relate to each other in a general way. Recall from chapter 1 that global governance is an encompassing concept. It is more than just how governments interact with their people or each other. Instead, global governance refers to institutions, mechanisms, relationships, and processes to manage interests, rights, and obligations (Thakur 2006; Thakur and Weiss forthcoming). While it might seem arbitrary, a focus on each of the first four concepts, in turn, should permit a relatively complete treatment of global governance.¹

Consider institutions. Religion is a double-edged sword here. It can grant extraordinary levels of legitimacy to institutions, which then makes them more powerful forces – for better or worse. The message here, as elsewhere in this volume, seems to favour pluralism. State religious exclusivism, taken to extremes, may encourage international conflict and even warlikeness. At the same time, consider highly inclusive institutions such as the Alliance of Civilizations, built under the auspices of the UN. Perhaps it could be said that, at this stage of human

history, most institutions with a religious character lean toward the exclusive end of the scale, but with some discernible movement in the other direction. An optimistic but not unrealistic reading of human history would suggest that learning on this subject, like others, is not only possible but probable.

Mechanisms of global governance with potentially positive effects come through clearly from this study. One example is mediation. Another to consider is dispute resolution based on religious principles, although the immediate instance from this volume met with mixed to negative reactions in what would seem like a hospitable setting. With greater knowledge of religion – or, to be candid, lower levels of ignorance among the public – a more accepting environment for governance incorporating religious principles might be expected to emerge in the increasingly multicultural and diverse societies that make up the world of today. This does *not* mean embracing theocracy – that would take us back to exclusivism – but instead a willingness to consider a wider range of value systems, some of which have origins in religion, for governance within and even beyond the level of the state.

Encouraging are stories told in this volume about relationships that involve religious entities. One example is the coordination of religious NGOs and middle powers to achieve more together than either could separately in meeting UN development goals. Since an obligation to assist those in need forms a part of all religions with significant numbers of adherents, this bodes well for global governance.

What about processes of global governance? A process leading to more responsiveness of governments to the vision of human rights held by their own citizens – not necessarily the ideas purveyed by the West – would be most welcome in the Islamic and especially Arab world. Islamists, it becomes interesting to note, are engaged with a discourse on human rights and may even find some common cause with their governments regarding self-determination – a key difference with Western states, highlighted during the colonial era, on what is meant by human rights in a more encompassing sense. Another process, perhaps weakly underway as a delayed reaction to 9/11, is a more accepting attitude toward religion among residents of technologically advanced states. Noted already in this volume are the tendencies in academe and the popular media to ignore or even ridicule religion. This will not help leaders engage the vast majority of the world's population, which is religious and unlikely to abandon such inclinations. More informed

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Religion and Leaders

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foreign policies, which take into account religious identity in shaping political allegiances, would improve global governance.

Religion and Leadership in Foreign Policy

How might governments in general, and especially the international system-leading United States, reconsider their foreign and domestic policies in light of religious resurgence around the world? In particular, what is the legacy of the Bush Doctrine and what should come next?

The first of these questions answers itself to some degree in that virtually everything underway now in the domain of policy should be reconsidered in light of a more realistic view of religion. A military confrontation writ large with religion is not the way forward and the monolithic portrayal of Islam, in particular, misses so much of the inherent ambivalence within the great religions (Appleby 2000). Appleby, to cite one example, emphasizes education among religious communities to stimulate their thinking about the more peaceful aspects of doctrine already in place. Education and the value of greater knowledge is a priority that comes back again, below, in an even more encompassing way.

One basic problem with existing foreign policy is clear after reading chapters 2 and 3 of this volume: lack of knowledge creates bias and hostility to religion among academics who advise national leaders, and decision-makers themselves. Consider the low levels of awareness about Islam in particular from the poll results reported in those chapters. In addition, chapter 4 describes a role for Islam in promotion of human rights that may well surprise many readers. Add the shocking effect of 9/11 to low levels of understanding and it is easy to end up with sub-optimal policies toward religion in world politics.

U.S. and other decision-makers, as urged by chapter 5, need to look at religion and religiously motivated actors on the world stage more objectively. Imputing irrationality and even evil intent to those with a religious agenda can only lead to policies that produce more disappointing results. Some general recommendations either appear in or are implied by respective chapters from this volume:²

- Be more sceptical about the assumption that religion is behind a given conflict and that it must play a negative role in politics (chapters 3, 4, 7).
- Coordinate with FBOs to achieve community enhancement at home and abroad (chapter 2).

- Move further away from the War on Terror discourse, as per initial steps of the Obama Administration, to avoid isolating and possibly radicalizing natural allies among Muslims and Islamic NGOs in development of civil society (chapter 6).
- Encourage interfaith organizations and religious pluralism (chapters 5, 6, 14).
- Encourage faith-based conflict management and mediation (chapters 10–11).
- Show greater willingness to work with NGOs, who may have complementary goals and appears less threatening in many settings (chapters 12–14).
- Make an effort to integrate Muslims into civil society (chapter 9).
- For the United States in particular, as related to Iraq, recognize that religious organizations can and must be part of any viable effort toward political stabilization (chapter 8).

This list leads into two more encompassing observations.

First, much can be done to improve the role of religion in the world and take advantage of what it can offer rather than simply assuming it out of existence or treating faith as an obstacle to human progress. It is time to move beyond secularization in theory and practice. This is not a call for any particular person or group to adopt religious beliefs. Instead, the message is to accept religion as a part of this world and address it constructively.

Second, this volume's ideas, evidence, and practice converge exceptionally well on a pragmatic and viable set of recommendations that follow from the first point above. Enhanced knowledge about religion, cooperation with NGOs, and interfaith dialogue would be a welcome change from what exists now. Lack of knowledge about religion accounts for many of the problems besetting the world today. The slow progress in Iraq is merely the most high-profile example of what can happen when religion is assumed to be epiphenomenal and destined for the trash bin of history.

This observation returns to a point of curiosity from the outset of the volume: what about the Bush Doctrine? While chapter 1 established it as something other than a religious statement, matters of faith come to the forefront in its assessment. The Bush Doctrine reflected a one-dimensional and highly militarized national security policy. This mindset did not start with Bush, but it did intensify after 9/11. Notable is the absence of a nuanced sense of what role religion in general and

Islam in particular. Bush created a dissonance between a sense of 'good' and 'evil' with the Islamic world. The religious factions and their sense of belief are not helpful in interacting with the best legacy of the world as it transpires, without the systems such as Islam in U.S. foreign policy.

Even John Paul II, a military force, realized the message here. Religion as the best needs to be achieved over decades to come into policy. Ironically, the door – in Canada – to multicultural realities of the world's great by-products of power.

Final Thoughts

This volume started with a question: what are the causes of war and conflict? The well-being in societies around the globe (the United States) need to be understood. How can that be achieved? Nations will continue to need global governance.

NOTES

1 It is understood

Islam in particular might play in policy implementation. President Bush created a discourse, summed up as the War on Terror, that created a sense of 'good' versus 'bad' Muslims and greatly distorted relations with the Islamic world and, most regrettably in the immediate term, religious factions in Iraq. Islam as well as Islamism are multifaceted in their sense of belonging, and a 'black-and-white' division is not helpful in interacting with the products of these belief systems. Perhaps the best legacy of the U.S. experience with the Bush Doctrine in action, if it transpires, would be a less monolithic sense of encompassing belief systems such as Islam. This could facilitate an improved performance in U.S. foreign policy across the board.

Even John Paul II, with all of his disposition against the use of military force, realized that in some instances it still could be justified. Thus the message here is *not* that any and all military actions are wrong, with religion as the basis for holding that belief. Instead, a greater balance needs to be achieved by the United States, the likely system leader for decades to come, between military and other implements of foreign policy. Ironically, some of the best ideas about 'how' might be right next door – in Canada, where debates about peaceful management of multicultural realities have been underway for decades. If the diversity of the world's great religions can be comprehended more fully, the worst by-products of policy made out of lack of knowledge may be averted.

Final Thoughts

This volume started out with three sets of questions. The answers provided in this chapter, of course, lead to new questions. If religion is real, what are the causal mechanisms that lead from faith to either cooperation or conflict? Given that religion can be used to promote peace and well-being in some contexts, how can those conditions be encouraged around the globe? Finally, if governments (most notably the United States) need to reorient their policies to take religion more seriously, how can that be encouraged to happen? These and many other questions will continue to preoccupy the study of religion, identity, and global governance for years to come.

NOTES

- 1 It is understood that the concepts overlap with each other in some ways,

so this path is followed to facilitate a summary rather than offer a rigorous scheme of organization.

- 2 It is quite possible that additional chapters imply a given recommendation on the list, but those noted are deemed sufficient to make the point.

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