

IS RELIGION INHERENTLY VIOLENT? RELIGION AS A THREAT AND PROMISE FOR THE GLOBAL SECURITY²

Abstract

The paper tackled the extremely hot relationship between religion and security and argued that religion is both a threat and a promise for global security. Methodologically, the paper falls within the area of conceptual analysis. By making use of both inductive and deductive reasoning, it tried to find answers to the following questions: Is religion inherently violent? and What are the prospects that religion might contribute rather to peace and stability than to conflict and destruction within the international system?

The paper comprised four sections. The first one outlined the background of the discussion, emphasizing that the world is facing a worldwide resurgence of religion, and tried to assess the meaning of the politicization of religion for the global security. The second section comprised a few reflections on the nexus between religion and violence, attempting to prove that no religion is inherently violent or inherently peaceful, as many would assume. The third part explored the positive nexus between religion and security and the last part comprised the conclusions and some recommendations meant to improve the ability of International Relations practitioners and policy-makers to make religion part of the solution to the global security dilemmas, instead of treating it exclusively as part of the problem.

Key words: global security, religion, peace, violence.

Setting the background

Despite the quasi-paradigmatic status of the secularization thesis³ and religion's 'exile' from social sciences during the last two centuries,⁴ on the basis of the assumption that modernity has made religion irrelevant in the public sphere and in the political life, relevant empirical research and data in the last decades reveal that instead

1 nataliavl@yahoо.com

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3 See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago:University of Chicago, 1994).

4 Fabio Petito & Pavlos Hatzopoulos, ed., *Religion in International Relations, The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

of declining and eventually disappearing, religion persists both in the individual conscience and in the public sphere, continuing to shape the political beliefs and practices of a great number of people and institutions throughout the world.⁵

Given that one of the main reasons for the anterior exclusion of religion from the public sphere since the Peace of Westphalia were linked with the idea of religion as a source of dogmatism, fanaticism, prejudice, ignorance, repression and persecution⁶ and that, as some observers note: 'at the turn of the new millennium, religious loyalties are at the root of many of the world's ongoing civil wars and political violence'⁷ religion '(re-) emerging as the single (?) most important political-ideological default mechanism in global conflict',⁸ the analysis of the nexus between religion and security becomes an extremely necessary and timely enterprise. After all, we are now in a war (against terror) that is 'simultaneously intranational, transnational and religious', which was described by some as a «civilization conflict» that both reflects and exacerbates security problems between the Abrahamic traditions.⁹

Although the tendency in political science literature is to approach the impact of religion upon security mainly in negative terms, I am going to approach this issue in a more nuanced manner, emphasizing both the positive and negative aspects of the nexus between religion and security. Methodologically, the paper falls within the area of conceptual analysis. By making use of both inductive and deductive reasoning, I will try to find answers to the following questions: Is religion inherently violent? and What are the prospects that religion might contribute rather to peace and stability than to conflict and destruction within the international system?

The paper is structured in four parts. The first one outlines the background of the discussion, emphasizing the fact that we are now facing a worldwide resurgence of religion, and tries to assess the meaning of the politicization of religion for the global security. The second section of the paper comprises a few reflections on the nexus between religion and violence, attempting to prove that no religion is inherently violent or inherently peaceful, as many seem to assume. The third part explores the positive nexus between religion and security and the last part comprises the conclusions and some recommendations meant to improve the ability of International Relations practitioners and policy-makers to make religion part of the solution to the global security dilemmas, instead of treating it exclusively as part of the problem.

5 Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relation, The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (California: University of California Press, 1994); John L. Esposito & Michael Watson, eds., *Religion and Global Order* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press).

6 See Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?*, p. 4; Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006).

7 Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, p. 163.

8 Pauletta Otis, 'Religion and War in the Twenty-first Century,' in Robert A. Seiple & Dennis R. Hoover, *Religion and Security. The New Nexus in International Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), p. 11.

9 Dennis R. Hoover, 'Introduction: Religion Gets Real,' in Robert A. Seiple & Dennis R. Hoover, *Religion and Security. The New Nexus in International Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), p. 3.

The global resurgence of religion. The politicization of religion

As the classic secularization thesis proved inadequate in the light of the religious developments during the last decades, other thesis trying to account for these developments emerged. One of the most influential is the one emphasizing that a global religious resurgence is currently taking place. This religious resurgence could be understood as 'the growing saliency and persuasiveness of religion, i.e. the increasing importance of religious beliefs, practices, and discourses in personal and public life, and the growing role of religious or religiously-related individuals, non-state groups, political parties, and communities, and organizations in domestic politics, and this is occurring in ways that have significant implications for international politics'.¹⁰ Among the most visible symptoms of this religious resurgence are the thriving of the fundamentalist movements, of the increasingly numerous Muslim diasporas in Europe and in the US, of some Jewish groups and of evangelical movements in the US and in Latin America, and also the emergence of some national-communal movements in South and South-East Asia, India and Sri Lanka, for example.¹¹ Other symptoms may include the rise of faith-based diplomacy, the World Faiths Dialogue, the increasingly significant role of the world's religious leaders at the UN and at the meetings of the World Economic Forum in Davos, and the growing role of religion as part of peacemaking and conflict resolution efforts throughout the world etc.¹²

This 'return of the sacred' often involves the politicization of religion. In the case of Islam, for instance, the 'revanche de Dieu' means primarily a revival of political Islam (Islamism) which takes the form of numerous transnational Islamists networks and movements that seek to establish a new neo-Islamist world order, that is to remake the world order according to Allah's rule (*Hakimiyyat Allah*).¹³ As John Kelsay remarks:

'Much of the contemporary return to Islam is driven by the perception of Muslims as a community... having a mission to fulfill [...]. In encounters between the West and Islam, the struggle is over who will provide the primary definition of world order. Will it be the West, with its notions of territorial boundaries, market economies, private religiosity, and the priority of individual rights? Or will it be Islam, with its emphasis on the universal mission of a trans-tribal community called to build a social order founded on the pure monotheism natural to humanity?'¹⁴

The same tendencies can be seen outside the world of Islam and the West too, where 'politicized religions of all kinds present their own concepts of order unaccept-

10 Thomas, 'Outwitting the Developed Countries?', p. 26.

11 Eisenstadt, 'The Resurgence of Religious Movements', p. 4.

12 Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*.

13 The concept of *Hakimiyyat Allah*/Allah's rule originates in the works of Qutb, who called the Muslims to wage the global jihad to establish a new world order based on an 'Islamic world peace' – that is to bring the entire world in the *dar al-Islam* (Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe. Democratic Peace and Euro/Islam versus Global Jihad* (Abington, New York: Routledge, 2008).

14 Apud. Tibi, *Political Islam*, pp. 30, 31.

able to others and thus contribute to 'a new Cold War'.¹⁵ Actually, the contemporary revival of religion in the non-western world is considered by some authors as a 'revolt against the West' and especially against the Westphalian order. Thus, not just the Political Islam's but Sikhism's narratives, for instance, also reject the subordination of the religious to the political and accordingly challenge the Westphalian international order.¹⁶

With the attacks of 11 September 2001, politicized religion has moved from the periphery to the centre of the international public arena. 9/11 was the event that brought religion to the surface of the International Relations discipline, by focusing attention on the conjunction of religion and violence and the political significance of this conjunction on a global level. The fact that the religious rhetoric and symbols are extensively employed by the warring parties throughout the world seem to give credit to the assumption that killing in the name of God has become the main driving force of many of the conflicts in the world¹⁷ and under these circumstances, the current resurgence of religion would be nothing more than the ignition spark of security's powder keg. Yet, is it really so? Is religion indeed the main threat for the global insecurity?

The next section of the paper is therefore dedicated to the analysis of the relationship between religion and violence, trying, on the one hand 'to disentangle problems instead of heaping everything at the door of religion'¹⁸ and to determine if religion (or at least some religions) is indeed inherently violent, as some authors argue.¹⁹

Reflections on the nexus between religion and violence

First, if we accept the idea that some religions are inherently violent,²⁰ while others are inherently peaceful, that would mean that there is something within them (i.e. sacred texts, rituals, dogmas or doctrines) that makes them more violent or more peaceful than others. Under these circumstances, we would expect some religions to be in a constant state of war, while others would be in a state of permanent peace. That is not the case, however. History shows that every religion was or still is involved in conflicts throughout the world - not only monotheistic religions, because of their belief in the

15 Tibi, *Political Islam*, p.23. This 'New Cold War' was also envisioned by Juergensmeyer (in his *The New Cold War*, 1993) in the 90s, when he observed that what appeared to be an anomaly when the Islamic revolution in Iran challenged the supremacy of Western culture and its secular politics in 1979 has become a major theme in international politics in the 1990s' and maintained that the conflicts in the post-Cold War international system would be driven by clashes between various communal identities based on race, ethnicity, nationality or religion rather than by ideologies.

16 Tibi, *Political Islam*, p.23. See also Giorgio Shani, 'A Revolt Against the Vest: Politicized Religion and the International Order – A Comparison of the Islamic Umma and the Sikh Qaum', *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies*, Vol. 1, 2002, pp. 15-31; Shani, *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

17 J.P. Larson, *Understanding Religious Violence: Thinking Outside the Box on Terrorism* (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004).

18 Motzkin & Fischer, (eds.), *Religion and Democracy in Contemporary Europe* (London: Alliance, 2008).

19 Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran*, (Harrisburg / London / New York: Trinity Press International, 2003); M. J. Akbar, *The Shade of Swords. Jihad and the Conflict Between Islam and Christianity* (London: Routledge Publishers, 2002); Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?'

20 See Akbar, *The Shade of Swords*; Nelson-Pallmeyer *Is Religion Killing Us?*; Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?'

existence of only one true God, as many people seem to believe, but polytheistic ones, too. Despite their belief in a multitude of gods, polytheistic religions do not seem to be more tolerant or peaceful. For instance, in Sri Lanka, Buddhists and Hindus fought each other for decades. In India, the Hindus and Sikhs also confront each other in violent episodes and Hindus and Muslims confront each other in India as well as in Pakistan. Religious based violence is encountered in every religion; none of them is more or less prone to violence than the others, none of them is inherently violent or inherently peaceful. Every religion presents some concepts, religious writings or principles that can be used in order to justify the appeal to violence. In Sri Lanka, for instance, although the conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamils is purely political,²¹ both the Hindu Tamil minority and the Sinhalese Buddhist majority use their sacred text in order to justify their violent acts against their opponents and to gain political advantages. *Mahavamsa*, for instance, which was written by a group of Buddhist monks in the fifth century, presents Buddha as the initiator of the idea that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese people, by inviting them on the island and commanding them to keep forever the purity of Buddhism there. Moreover, it presents Buddha engaged in what we call today an ethnic cleansing, freeing the island of Sri Lanka by its foreign inhabitants. Thus *Mahavamsa* along with other writings such as *Pali Chronicles*, provided legitimacy for Buddhists' fight against the 'infidel' Tamils as far back as the antiquity. In the same manner, both Israelis and Palestinians draw from their sacred texts to legitimize their territorial claims.

Undoubtedly, there are verses both in the Bible and the Quran that can be used for radical and violent interpretations. Chilton,²² for instance, focused on the Old Testament story of Abraham and Isaac, a key episode for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, but at the last moment, because Abraham had proved his faith, being prepared to slay his son, God stopped him and pointed out a ram caught in a thicket as a sacrifice to substitute Isaac. Chilton argues that, although the true and original meaning of the story is that human sacrifice is not desired by God, all the three monotheisms have altered the meaning of the story in times of persecution, glorifying martyrdom.

Quran also contains verses such as this: 'And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush.'²³ But the Surah continues as this: 'Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace.' And then continues like this: 'if any of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God seeks thy protection, grant him protection, so that he might [be able to] hear the word of God [from thee]; and thereupon convey him to a place where he can feel secure: this, because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth]'.²⁴

Although all the sacred books contain concepts or texts that can be used in cer-

21 See Sheril Boxall, 'Sri Lanka', in *International Security and the United States. An Encyclopedia*, Karl DeRouen Jr. & Paul Bellamy, eds. (Vol.1, Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger Security International, 2008).

22 Bruce Chilton, *Abraham's Curse - The Roots of Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

23 Surah 9, stich 5.

24 Ibid.

tain circumstances, by some people, to justify violence, at the same time, it is obvious that every religion has also been interpreted in more peaceful ways. Pallmeyer's affirmation that 'God's liberating, punishing, or apocalyptic violence is the named or unnamed assumption behind nearly every passage, story, and theological claim in the New Testament'²⁵ is hard to apply to Jesus' healing ministry and to the example of his perfect love and forgiveness offered to the humankind. And although the most feared concept of Islam is 'jihad', the interpretation of Jihad as a war against the infidels is just one of the meanings of this term which also mean an inner struggle against evil temptations for wrong doing, as a way to get closer to God and to achieve the inner peace. For many centuries, Muslims lived in peace with their neighbors, without waging holy war against them. Moreover, there are millions of Muslims that still live in peace with their neighbors and do not feel compelled by their scriptures to run jihad, in the bellicose sense of the concept. Even in the wake of the tragic events of 11 September, Muslim scholars and leaders worldwide condemned the terrorist attacks and declared that terrorists distort Islam.

On the other hand, there are some unconditionally peaceful Christian denominations (like Quakers and Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, who refuse to touch any kind of arms), who guide their social life according to Jesus' words: *'But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also'* (Matthew 5:39). The Anabaptist tradition is also built upon the idea that all kind of violence is prohibited by the Bible and take the words of Jesus: *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God'* (Matthew 5:9) literally, considering that those who promote war under any circumstances are not genuine Christians. However, the very same Christianity has produced the just war doctrine according to which under certain circumstances, war can be pursued.

We can deduce, therefore, that the interpretative apparatus of each religion is very important when we discuss religions' involvement in violent actions. It is obvious that Osama bin Laden's aggressive interpretation of Islam is considerably different than the moderates' interpretations, just as the Christianity's Holy Scriptures are differently interpreted by different Christian denominations or persons. Therefore, we cannot affirm that Islam, Judaism or Christianity, or any other religion is inherently violent by concentrating on isolated texts from the Holy Scriptures - the interpretative apparatus make the difference in each case. The interpretation of the sacred scriptures by some radical religious leaders calling for violent combat against the infidels is just one interpretation amongst others. The diversity that exists within each of the religious traditions has to be considered in order to avoid biased conclusions.

Secondly, when analyzing the relationship between religion and violence it is imperative to avoid the trap of considering our own religion in idealistic terms, by taking into account only the peaceful paragraphs and ideas of our sacred Scriptures, while considering other religions through the lenses of its extremists' acts of terror and violence. Researchers' subjectivism is often responsible for errors in analyzing the involvement of religion in conflict.

In the next place, when analyzing the relationship between religion and violence it is imperative to consider the particular context in which certain interpretations of

25 Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *Is Religion Killing Us?*

the sacred texts emerge. The context in which a religious group finds itself determines which aspect of a religious tradition is given preeminence and is used. The excessive use of collocations such as the 'Islamic terrorism' or the 'war against terrorism', which has in view only the Muslim communities and not other religious terrorist networks like the Tamil Tigers, the IRA or the ETA, for instance, could foster radical interpretations of Islam, by discontented Muslims who may very well perceive themselves as being under siege, and thus the call for a jihad against the infidels to defend Allah's community may find more supporters than under ordinary conditions. Discrimination (which can be political, cultural, economic or religious²⁶) against a religious tradition or against a religious minority determines that minority to form grievances over this discrimination. These grievances determine the minority group to mobilize and there is a great probability that mobilized groups take part in conflicts.²⁷ This is certainly the case in Sri Lanka, for instance, where the discriminatory policies of the Sinhalese majority determine violent reactions from the Tamils and contribute, thus, to a circle of an endless violence.

One of the most important things when analyzing the relationship between religion and violence is therefore to make a distinction between religion as a metaphysical and ethical system and politicized religion as an anti-system revolt, presented in a religious garb and legitimated in a religious language.²⁸ Taking as a case study the violent acts perpetrated by some of the Muslims in Europe, for instance, Olivier Roy argued that there is in fact nothing like an Islamic element in such violent acts. When Muslims go to the streets, they are actually driven by the frustration of not being integrated enough and their riots are actually a call for a better integration within the western societies from which they are alienated and which do not meet their expectations.²⁹ In the global context, the attraction of the radical Islamism is not surprising, given the fact that the Muslim world feel that it is denied a decent place within the global system, which is run by the non-Muslims, while it lives in a constant fight with poverty, famine, illiteracy and decayed infrastructures.³⁰ The analysis of the specific context of each so-called religious-based conflict would most probably prove that the causes and the stakes of those conflicts are more political, structural and geographical than religious.

When analyzing the relation between religion and violence it is also important to consider that during the last decades an important religious transformation took place under the influence of the globalization forces. Globalization has created a favorable context for religion to become more 'democratic', in the sense that the individuals and groups increasingly think for themselves and contest the role of the formal religion and of the religious authority and become directly responsible to God rather than to

26 See Fox, 'Counting the Causes and Dynamics'.

27 Fox, 'The Effects of Religious Discrimination'.

28 Tibi, *Political Islam*, p. 22.

29 Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). See also Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent. Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

30 See Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage Publications, 1994).

'man-made' religious institutions.³¹ In other words, religion becomes increasingly distanced from the religious hierarchy and thus less 'institutionalized', decision-making becoming the appanage of the individual or of the small groups. Accordingly, as Otis observes, 'individuals and groups on all continents and in all social strata have begun constructing a new religious politics based on the relationship between a transcendent being and themselves – bypassing or redefining traditional forms of state/church authority. The new reality is the emergence of particularistic do-it-yourself religion(s), in which some individuals use a peculiar form of logic to perpetuate violence in order to fulfill what they believe is God's will. Thus, the structure of violence and warfare in the modern world... is violence perpetuated by individuals on the global stage in pursuit of transcendent goals – albeit by earthly means'.³² Accordingly, the terrorist acts are individual acts, not acts endorsed by the institutionalized traditional religious communities. Although individuals pertaining to all religions can be and sometimes are engaged in violent conflicts, their acts are hardly the result of those religions' theologies. As Mark Juergensmeyer³³ – one of the leading experts in religious violence today – argued, the terrorist acts in the name of religion are the acts of individuals which believe that there is a grave social injustice in the world, which is an offence against God and that any action on His behalf against those responsible for this injustice is approved by God.

Under these circumstances, I contend that no religious tradition as a whole can be blamed for violent acts perpetrated by groups or individuals. Nor Islam or Christianity, nor Judaism or Buddhism, nor Hinduism or Sikhism is inherently violent, nor are they inherently peaceful. Not all the Muslims are violent, just as not all the Christians or the Jews or the Hindus or the Sikhs, for example, are violent; and certainly, not all of them are always peaceful. Distinctions and nuances are to be made in each case when analyzing the nexus between religion and security.

Moreover, when analyzing the nexus between religion and security, it is essential to consider also the positive contribution of religion to stability and security. Religious actors themselves have a positive role to play in preventing violence and solutions to enhance global security can be found not in spite of the presence of religion within the public stage, but because of it.

The positive nexus between religion and security

As has been stated above, no religion is inherently violent or peaceful and in each situation the IR practitioners and policy-makers have to determine the specific role played by religion in each conflict. It is true that religion is often politicized and can serve as a tool in the hands of the warring parties, but religion is also a significant element in the conflict management. It can be noted that religious actors have been key players in many conflicts around the world, and they have made an essential contribution to the conflict prevention, the peaceful resolution of the differences, the mediation of the conflicts and the reconciliation of the conflicting parties, due to their unique

31 Otis, 'Religion and War', pp. 18, 19.

32 Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

33 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*; Juergensmeyer, 'Is Religion the Problem?'

set of moral values and beliefs that can motivate changes of attitude and action.

In this respect, and drawing from the field experience of some of these religious actors, some authors promote *faith-based diplomacy* as an essential form of diplomacy especially in those situations that involve communal (predominantly religious) identities for which traditional diplomacy is not enough prepared. The concept of *faith-based diplomacy* was popularized by Douglas Johnston³⁴ to designate the need to introduce the religious concerns in the practice of the International Relations, and it means a way of making religion part of the solution to some of the world's worst conflicts, as part of the Track Two diplomacy.³⁵ This kind of diplomacy relies on virtues, discourses and practices of different religious traditions as essential components of diplomacy and although it is a rather new type of diplomacy, it is already a part of the training of diplomats in the US³⁶ and will probably soon be introduced by other countries, too.

The introduction of the spiritual dimension in the conflict management efforts is very important, one reason for that being the fact that a significant part of the human conflicting behavior is based on emotional feelings that cannot be changed by negotiations and rational bargaining; accordingly, the use of the spiritual/religious element can make actors to critically examine their actions and attitudes.³⁷

According to the supporters of the faith-based diplomacy and as the experience has already proved, the religious leaders and institutions, and the religious-based NGOs are best trained for this kind of diplomacy. As Thomas argue, the religious actors are particularly well placed to act as mediators, to provide a 'neutral' space for negotiations, because they are respected for the set of values they represent and promote, they know very well the local problems, they enjoy credibility and trust, they have the ability to mobilize national and international support for the peace process and they have the possibility to employ such spiritual elements like the prayer or other religious rituals that can represent efficient means in the process of healing and reconciliation. Also, their legitimacy allows them to reach out to the parties in conflict, especially at times when the other diplomats and Track One actors fail to. Moreover, having the sense of a vocation, the religious actors involved in the peace process are more perseverant, in spite of the obstacles and they work alongside the people, long before and long after the diplomats arrived. Their religious values and convictions give them the strength and the will to work until peace and justice are restored.³⁸

A new form of conflict management seems to be on the rise in the conflict regions of the world – *religious peacebuilding* – although it is still in an incipient form and it is

34 Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003); Johnston, 'Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: The Religious Dimension', in Paul Van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven, eds., *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society* (Project of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention), (L. Rienner Publishers, 2005).

35 Some scholars would include it within the Track 7, part of those nine tracks of the multitrack diplomacy - according to Diamond Louise and John McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace* (West Hartford, CN: Kumarian Press, 3rd edition, 1995).

36 Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*, p. 15.

37 David R. Smock, ed., *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking – When Religion Brings Peace, Not War* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, *Peaceworks*, Nr. 55, 2006).

38 Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*; Otis, 'Religion and War'; Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy*.

still fragile and uncoordinated, as Appleby³⁹ notes and there are numerous examples of conflicts that were transformed through the actions of the religious actors, throughout the world. The Holy See, for instance, has successfully mediated the conflicts in Argentina and Chile, due to some unique assets, like its moral legitimacy and neutrality, its ability to influence the international public opinion, its confidentiality and the extended network of contacts and information of the Catholic Church, information channels distinct from those of the traditional diplomatic channels being crucial in such localized disputes. St. Egidio Community was actively involved in the peace process in Mozambique, Burundi, Congo and Kosovo, using a Catholic-inspired approach. Monsignor Jaime Gonçalves, archbishop of Beira, had an important contribution in the peace agreement in Mozambique, in 1992, an agreement that put an end to a war that had cost millions of lives and determined half of the population to flee. In Zaire, Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo has played a crucial role during the negotiations between president Mobutu and his opponents.⁴⁰ A crucial role was played by the religious actors in Nicaragua in the 80s, as well as in the end of the apartheid in South Africa and also in the collapse of the communism in some Eastern European countries.⁴¹ Religions for Peace has successfully mediated the conflict in Sierra Leone and contributed to the creation of a reconciliation climate in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The Quakers (The Religious Society of Friends) were involved in the mediation of the conflict in Sri-Lanka. The Mennonites have created the Mennonite Conciliation Service in the late 70s, the Christian Peacemaker Teams and the International Conciliation Service and through these institutions they were actively engaged in the reconciliation efforts between the Sunnis and the Shia in Iraq and activated in South Africa, from the 70s until the end of the apartheid. In South Africa, a special importance had the truth and reconciliation commissions, which have proved the force of religion in overcoming hostility and antagonisms.⁴²

The Plowshares Institute, created by the Methodists, has trained religious leaders for actions of peacebuilding throughout the world, based on a spiritual and moral approach. The World Conference on Religion and Peace is the biggest international coalition formed by the representatives of all of the major world religions, dedicated to maintaining peace in the world. It is currently present on all continents and in the worst conflict areas of the world, trying to create multi-religious partnerships to mobilize the moral and spiritual resources of religious people, in order to resolve their mutual problems.

There are many other religious organizations besides the already mentioned ones, that incorporated the principles of the faith-based diplomacy in their practice: among them the American Friends Service Committee, the Catholic Relief Services, the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the International Center for Reconciliation, the Coventry Cathedral, the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy, the International Peace Research Institute, the Life and Peace Institute, the Mennonite

39 Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*.

40 Reyhler 'Religion and Conflict'.

41 Thomas, 'Outwitting the Developed Countries?'

42 David Little, 'Religious Dimensions of Conflicts and Peace' in *Harvard International Review*, Energy, 26, 4 (Winter 2005).

Central Committee, the Mercy Corps International, the United States Institute of Peace, the Religion and Peacemaking Program, University of Notre Dame, the Program in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding, the World Vision, the World Council of Churches, the International Islamic Forum for Dialogue etc.⁴³

Although faith-diplomacy cannot replace the power and authority of the governmental officials in the negotiations, it can achieve at least these two things: on the one hand, it can determine a transformation of the local leaders' and civil society's attitudes, on which a durable peace depends and on the other hand, it can lead to the creation of a network of leaders of the civil society, devoted to a common cause – to achieve a just and durable peace.⁴⁴

Therefore, there are numerous useful actors, roles and methodologies within the religious sector that can be employed in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts around the world. Religions inspire men and women by their peaceful teachings to work in perseverance and tirelessly toward ending some of the deadliest conflicts around the world, within or outside their own religious institutions, in order to 'create an environment of lasting peace and stability'.⁴⁵ And these religiously motivated men and women are 'a necessary component of Track Two diplomacy. They are the answer to other people who, in the name of their religion, preach race-hatred, assassination, the killing of innocent bystanders, and war'.⁴⁶

For all these reasons, we can agree with Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke: 'If you are interested in peace in the twenty-first century, you cannot ignore religion... [..] Focusing on religion as an instigator of conflict is only half of the story and, quite frankly, dangerously inaccurate.'⁴⁷

Conclusions

It is commonplace to speak about religion as a cause of violent conflicts throughout the world. The media is filled with examples of religious-based violence almost on a daily basis and 11 September 2001 is only one example of how religious fervor can lead to disgraceful acts of violence and of how religious texts and concepts can be used by some people, under particular circumstances, to legitimate violence and brutality against innocent people. Without minimizing the gravity of such instances, it must be said that the equally important role of religion in resolving armed conflicts and in conflict prevention and its positive nexus with security tend to go unnoticed and unheralded in the media. In this paper, I tried to draw attention to this issue and to signal the need to give this positive nexus the attention it deserves.

A few arguments stand out in the current analysis. The first one is that no religion is

43 Johnston, Faith-Based Diplomacy.

44 Daniel Philpott & Brian Cox, 'What Faith-Based Diplomacy Can Offer in Kashmir', in David R. Smock, ed., *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking – When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks, Nr. 55, 2006) pp. 6,7.

45 Richard C. Holbrooke, 'Foreword', in David Little (ed), *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2007).

46 Holbrooke, 'Foreword', in Little, *Peacemakers in Action*, p. xii.

47 Holbrooke, p. xi.

inherently violent but under specific circumstances any religion can (and did) serve as a utilitarian tool exploited by the warring parties. The interpretative apparatus and the specific social and political context in which a religious community finds itself dictate the weight given to certain concepts and images provided by religion. Moreover, given the „democratization“ of religion (in the sense that religion is becoming less institutionalized, so that the individuals increasingly think for themselves and contest the role of the formal religion and authority) under the impact of globalization's forces, no religious tradition as a whole can be blamed for violent acts perpetrated by groups or individuals.

On the other hand, every religion provides sacred stories and teachings meant to emphasize the crucial importance of forgiveness, social harmony, inclusivity, collectiveness and peaceful relations, that can offer a very useful tool for peace process and the religious actors – religious individuals and faith-based NGO's - are best equipped to deal with those conflicts that involve a religious dimension. Religion inspires men and women of faith to mobilize in peacemaking efforts, within the Track Two diplomacy framework and it provides the ideological framework for the pursuit of peace by nonviolent means, it provides the strength and the will for forgiveness and reconciliation, principles anchored in the Holy Scriptures. Religion thereby is both a promise and a threat to global security.

Below there are a few ideas that could serve as starting points in the process of increasing the positive contribution of religion for the global security.

First of all and before making any attempt to co-opt religion as a partner in the peace process, the national security and foreign policy practitioners have to treat religion as one of the significant variables in the conduct of the international relations. It is sad that due to the deliberate disregard of religious considerations, the West is ill prepared to deal with those situations that involve religious differences or political grievances dressed in religious forms, or with demagogues who manipulate religion for their own purposes. The secularization thesis' paradigmatic status within the international relations field should therefore be revised and a concurrent and more adequate frame of reference for dealing with problems raised by communal identity, which often involves a religious dimension, should be considered.

In addition, it must be considered that religious freedom is one of the defining elements of the national and international security and it has to be treated accordingly, especially in the context of the multicultural societies. If the nation-states fail to grant religious liberties and full rights of religious expression, if they discriminate some religious categories, they risk facing political unrest and instability.

Special attention should be paid to the language used in the public arena with respect to the nexus between religion and violence. Words like 'crusade', 'religious warfare', 'Islamic terrorism', 'Islamic *umma* vs Christian *brotherhood*' and other similar collocations that suggest that a war between the religious traditions is going on should be avoided at any cost. Otherwise, those engaged in the 'cosmic war' between the forces of Good and those of Evil, would find in this inappropriate language the confirmation of their prejudices. Instead, the focus should be on how to make the violent ways of acting less appealing and on promoting non-violent just alternatives for the political engagement of the discontented actors.

Likewise, the media should stop hyperbolizing the negative role of religion with

respect to the global security or at least it should offer a more balanced account by also presenting the pacifist teachings, the peacemaking efforts and the positive social roles and practices of the religious actors. Religion does not account only for some of the bloodiest conflicts around the world, despite the fact that these are the events that attract the widest audiences. Religion, for instance, also inspires the conviction of several millions of Christians that all people have within them the goodness of the Creator and accordingly they should be never harmed, regardless of the circumstances. It inspired the Jain ascetic leader, Sri Sahaj Muni Maharaj's 365 day fast on behalf of world peace and universal brotherhood, as well. It is not right that the media highlights so strongly Islam's violent tendencies but deliberately or ignorantly obliterates, for instance, the Muslim spiritual and political leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan's non-violent opposition to British rule in India, for which he has been nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1985. Given its crucial role in forming the public opinion, it is therefore imperative that the media stop applying facile stereotypes with respect to the relation between certain religions and violence and emphasize more the yearning of most religious people for a world where they and their children and grandchildren may live together in peace and harmony.

Equally important, as part of the solution and as an opportunity for enhancing the national and global security, the engagement of religious leaders and institutions in the peace process – both in prevention and in reconciliation of the conflicts – should be more firmly fostered and promoted. Initiatives such as Johnston's⁴⁸, for instance, who proposed the creation of a new position (within the US Foreign Service, but it should be extended elsewhere): that of a religious attaché, trained to be assigned to diplomatic missions in countries where religion is salient, well prepared to help the states' missions deal more effectively with situations where religion is deeply involved, should be taken seriously by the political decision-makers.

A special role should be assigned and considerable funding should be granted to those NGO's dedicated to interreligious and intercultural dialogue and to training leaders for interreligious peacebuilding. It is imperative therefore, that religious values and actors be involved in the peace process and scholars and diplomats do all their best to learn about the religions of those with whom they collaborate. Violence is not an inevitable characteristic of the human condition. It can and must be avoided and religion has an important role to play in this respect.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the problems raised by the politicization of religion cannot be answered by force alone. It is an illusion that ideas and worldviews can be extinguished by force, or by the so called 'global war against terror'. A better solution would be to create the framework for an intercultural/intercivilizational dialogue about the values that are to govern the global society, in order to achieve global peace and security and to include the world's religions as interlocutors. The world religions have a significant contribution to make – they all share a common set of moral and ethical values and principles that can protect against violence and have the ability to make people live according to such values. They can provide the foundation for values such as peace, justice, truth, responsibility, empathy, compassion and above all LOVE.

48 Johnston, "Foreword" in Robert A. Seiple & Dennis R. Hoover, *Religion and Security*, pp.ix-xi.

What other words would be more appropriate, at the end of our argument, than Martin Luther King's: "Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is LOVE!" ?

And what other force could better inspire, teach and motivate people to love, I would add, than religion?

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Наталиа Влас

ДА ЛИ ЈЕ РЕЛИГИЈА НАСИЉЕ САМО ПО СЕБИ? РЕЛИГИЈА КАО ПРЕТЊА И ОБЕЋАЊЕ ЗА ГЛОБАЛНУ БЕЗБЕДНОСТ

Резиме

Овај рад се бави изузетно опасним односом између религије и безбедности и тврди да је религија истовремено и претња и обећање за глобалну безбедност. Методолошки, рад спада у област концептуалне анализе. Користећи се обема методама, и индуктивног и дедуктивног закључивања, покушало се наћи одговоре на следећа питања: Да ли је религија насиље само по себи? И шта су изгледи да религија пре доприноси миру и стабилности него сукобу и уништавању у оквиру међународног система? Рад се састоји од четири дела.

Први део је истакао позадину дискусије, наглашавајући да се свет суочава са глобалним оживљавањем религије, и покушао да процени смисао политизације религије за глобалну безбедност. Други део састоји се од неколико размишљања о вези између религије и насиља, покушавајући да докаже да ниједна религија није насиље само по себи, али није ни мирна сама по себи, као што многи претпостављају. Трећи део истражује позитивну везу између религије и безбедности, а последњи део чине закључци и неке препоруке са намером да се побољша способност стручњака за међународне односе и креатора политике како би религија постала део решења за дилему глобалне безбедности, а не да се третира искључиво као део проблема.

Кључне речи: глобална сигурност, религија, мир, насиље.

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