Religion, Culture, and Globalization

Communal conflict is becoming a hallmark of globalization, although it is not totally attributable to globalization itself. Regardless of the cause, the United States is unprepared to deal with it, either diplomatically or militarily.

...And if the things most finely French
Are better done in France—
Might not Americanisation
Be best applied to its own nation?
Ere every shop shall be a store
And every trade a trust...
Lo, many men in many lands
Know when their cause is just.
There will be quite a large attendance
When we Declare our Independence.

“Americanisation”
G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

INTRODUCTION:

One of globalization’s major side effects has been the accelerated revival of religious and cultural identities that were once thought to be in decline as a result of the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the technological advances of the twentieth century. In his insightful article “Jihad vs. McWorld,” Benjamin Barber describes the contemporary world’s dynamics as a clash between tribalism and globalism—between “a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths against every kind of interdependence, every kind of artificial social cooperation and civic mutuality” on the one hand and “one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce” on the other. “The planet,” Barber writes, “is falling precipitantly apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment.”

This chapter looks at the religious and cultural realities of globalization and attempts to chart a viable via media between these interpretations. Contra Jihad, it will discuss how religion can be a force for good as well as a divisive cause of conflict. Contra McWorld, it will point out the dangers of exiling religion and culture to the private sphere and show how the failure to take these factors into account analytically constitutes a serious error both normatively and descriptively. Finally, it will provide suggestions for shaping public policy with respect to these issues.
Those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary affairs do so at great peril.

- Peter Berger

Definitions

For purposes of this discussion, culture is defined as the comprehensive worldview through which one perceives and interacts with the outside world. Religion, by contrast, is a personal or institutionalized set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity.

KEY PHENOMENA AND TRENDS

Clash of Civilizations…or Not?

A cursory glance at recent ethnoreligious hostilities—Kosovo, Indonesia, Nigeria, Chechnya, Sudan, Kashmir, and Sri Lanka, to name only a few—suggests that Samuel Huntington’s predictions about faultline conflicts may indeed be coming to pass. The fundamental assumption underlying these predictions is that dislocations of rapid technological and social change driven by economic globalization are creating a widespread crisis of identity in certain parts of the world and a corresponding longing for traditional values, often embedded in religion.

There are at least two grounds for challenging Huntington’s basic thesis that conflicts between civilizations will dominate the future of world politics. First, considerations of power politics more often than not overwhelm cultural affinities. A recent example of this is the Christian West attacking the Christian East to aid the Muslim populations in Bosnia and Kosovo. Second, a reasonably persuasive case can be made that the impact of modernity and interdependence will ameliorate cultural differences as the next and future generations communicate directly with their peers in other countries, relatively unencumbered with the ethnic and religious overhangs of the past.
The above challenges notwithstanding, Huntington identifies religion as the most important defining element of any civilization (as contrasted with race, language, or way of life). As such, it is also portrayed as a defining element in future conflicts. Whether religion is the root cause of a particular conflict or merely a mobilizing vehicle for nationalist or ethnic passions, it is certainly central to much of the strife currently taking place around the globe. Equally sobering, the level of discontent is likely to grow worse over time (1) as an increasing fraction of the world’s population is left behind by rapid technological change, (2) as the economic gap continues to widen between the “haves and have nots”, and (3) as secular governments in hard-pressed areas fail to meet the legitimate expectations of their populations.

With people increasingly turning to religion in such situations, western governments are ill-equipped to deal with the consequences. As evidenced by its missteps in handling situations from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to the later intervention in Lebanon to the breakup of Yugoslavia and beyond, traditional diplomacy’s neglect of religious factors has rendered the West ineffective both in dealing with religious differences and in combating demagogues who adeptly manipulate religious labels to their own purposes.

U.S. diplomats are a product of the nation-state model of international relations, with its attendant emphasis on maximizing power and all-but-total neglect of religion and its dynamics. A rather glaring example of Western indifference to religious imperatives was the recent NATO decision to bomb Serbia on Orthodox Easter. It was arguably unnecessary from a military point of view (one could have more bombed more intensely the day before and/or the day after), and it is the kind of decision that will never be forgotten. Serbs were quick to point out that the only others to have bombed them on this holy day were the Germans in World War II.

Adding to the problem and as amply illustrated by the list of conflicts mentioned earlier is the
fact that religious institutions have on more than a few occasions strayed from their original purpose and become an integral part of the problem. Rather than alleviating human suffering, they have ended up exacerbating it.

The reasons why religion and culture have become such important factors in understanding and dealing with today’s international environment extend well beyond the reaction to globalization mentioned above. A better understanding of these reasons will be important to developing an effective approach for the challenges that lie ahead. First, a bit of history.

Religion in the Cold War

Having successfully vanquished the Axis powers in World War II and thereby averting, in Winston Churchill’s words, “a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science,” the victors turned against one another. Religion’s role in the daily conduct of the resulting confrontation was minor at most. In certain sectors of society (e.g., the religious conservatives who provided much of Reagan’s electoral support), the Cold War took on the quality of a crusade against the godless “evil empire.” For the most part, though, it was a battle between the world’s two most formidable modern (and essentially secular) ideologies: liberal democratic capitalism, grounded in a strong commitment to the separation of church and state (if not the expunging of religious expression from the public sphere altogether); and Marxism-Leninism, built on the complete suppression or elimination of religion as “the opium of the people.”

In such an environment, religion was given only passing mention, if any at all. When dealing with an atheistic foe, the only religious factor that may enter the policymaker’s calculus is the possible cause-and-effect relationship between disbelief in an afterlife and non-suicidal behavior (thus enhancing the rationale for nuclear deterrence as a curb to aggressive tendencies). As
Soviet Communism was beginning to fall of its own weight, Alexander Solzhenitsyn was sounding a prescient warning in his Commencement Address to the Harvard class of 1978. He chastised both communism and capitalism alike for their failure to address the essential spiritual needs that lie at the center of human existence and identity:

On the way from the Renaissance to our days we have enriched our experience, but we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. In the East, it is destroyed by the dealings and machinations of the ruling party. In the West, commercial interests tend to suffocate it. This is the real crisis. The split in the world is less terrible than the similarity of the disease plaguing its main sections.⁵

The end of the Cold War brought with it a sense of elation in the West. The major ideological competitor with democratic capitalism had collapsed, leading at least one scholar to speculate that “liberal democracy may constitute the ‘end point of mankind’s ideological evolution’ and the ‘final form of human government,’ and as such…‘the end of history.’”⁶ Fukuyama’s argument was that “while earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their collapse, liberal democracy was arguably free from such…internal contradictions…[T]he ideal of liberal democracy could not be improved upon.”⁷

The hubris was short-lived as the events of the 1990s in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Sudan, and Indonesia made clear. Western modernity was not going to rule the world by default anytime
soon. A number of ideologies and belief systems, many religious in nature, are more than eager to compete.

**Religion’s long-standing appeal**

Although effectively suppressed by the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War, the fact is that religion and culture have never lost their appeal; the West has just been in a state of denial for the last two centuries. Boston College sociologist Peter Berger points out that the current surge of academic interest in religion (e.g., the MacArthur Foundation’s funding of the multi-million dollar “Fundamentalism Project”) is based on “an upside-down perception of the world”:

> The notion here was that so-called fundamentalism (which, when all is said and done, usually refers to any sort of passionate religious movement) is a rare, hard-to-explain thing. But in fact it is not rare at all, neither if one looks at history, nor if one looks around the contemporary world. On the contrary, what is rare is people who think otherwise. Put simply: The difficult-to-understand phenomenon is not Iranian mullahs but American university professors.  

The decline of religion’s importance in the policymaker’s calculus thus has more to do with the eye of the beholder than with any objective appraisal of reality. The anti-traditionalist and rationalist assumptions of the Enlightenment have blinded the West to an important part of the picture. As Mark Juergensmeyer points out in *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, many of the West’s difficulties in dealing with non-Western states stem from its ignorance of the growing confrontation between secular nationalism and “parochial
[political] identities based on ethnic and religious allegiances.”10 Through its neglect of the religious and historical factors underlying this confrontation, the West is now crippled in its ability to rightly diagnose and respond to these developments.

Perhaps the best example of this neglect was America’s inattention to the religious dynamics underlying the 1979 Iranian revolution. In the years leading up to the revolution, the one recorded suggestion within the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that it might be a good idea to monitor the complex and volatile religious situation in Iran was scornfully rejected as “sociology”11—“a term,” Edward Luttwak writes, “used in intelligence circles to mean the time-wasting study of factors deemed politically irrelevant.”12 Furthermore, when the U.S. government finally detected the brewing crisis, it was misdiagnosed as a political, economic, and social problem, with religion playing only a superficial role, if any at all. As Luttwak notes, “It must be admitted that the situation probably allowed no successful policy, but false diagnosis was inevitably followed by false prescriptions,” making recovery even more doubtful.13

IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND TRENDS

In assessing the relationship between religion and culture on the one hand and economic globalization on the other, this chapter makes five related points. First, it is impossible to understand adequately the development of and changes within the current international system without a proper understanding of how the international order has been shaped by the world views (identity, norms, and preferences) of its major players. Specifically, in his groundbreaking article “The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,” Daniel Philpott argues that the formation of the Westphalian international system characterized by sovereign
nation-states was inextricably linked to the religious debates raging during the Reformation. In his words:

The Reformation's indispensability emerges most saliently through the following correlation: those polities that experienced a Reformation crisis were the same ones that adopted an interest in Westphalia; those that saw no such crisis did not. In plumbing the causal logic behind this correlation, I argue that the intrinsic content of Protestantism itself points to sovereignty.\textsuperscript{14}

Still more fundamentally, as University of Virginia religion scholar John Milbank points out, the notion of a secular sphere free of religious influence is itself a theological construct grounded in the metaphysical debates of medieval academia. As he argues, “theology enters into the very construction of the new realities ‘property’ and ‘sovereignty,’” helping to create a new space for human maneuver.\textsuperscript{15} If how the world is perceived—even by non-religious people—is, therefore, integrally connected to a particular theological perspective, then in a very real sense the question of how religion and culture shape globalization answers itself: they undergird the very concept of globalization itself. More practically, and closely related to an argument frequently made by Muslim intellectuals, since the concept of an autonomous secular realm is itself a theological concept, imposing this secular construct on the non-Western world is an explicitly religious action as narrowly sectarian as anything attempted by one’s non-secular opponents.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Cultural Expressions of Religion}

\textbf{Second}, as infamously illustrated by many nineteenth-century Christian missionaries in the non-Western world, \textit{quite often what passes for religion in the eyes of particular believers is}
their own culturally specific expression of their religious beliefs. As missionaries have taken a harder look at both anthropological insights and the New Testament’s account of the shift within the early Church from predominantly Jewish to predominantly Gentile, they have—with few exceptions—acknowledged the bias in their interpretations and sought ways to winnow out what is culturally specific from what is theologically essential in their beliefs. University of Edinburgh church historian Andrew Walls makes this point in his highly acclaimed work *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, where he argues that Christianity has been—and should be—contextualized into specific cultural settings, but that, in doing so, one should not lose sight of the essential core that unites all Christians: “There is nothing wrong with having local forms of Christianity--provided that we remember that they are local.”

Such an understanding of theology “as prisoner and liberator of culture,” has profound implications. A similar debate within Islam of what constitutes “true Islam” in light of its different manifestations around the world (from the more tolerant forms of Southeast Asia to the more rigid of the Middle East) suggests that the concept of contextualization crosses religious boundaries. If one can legitimately argue that the rigidity of Middle Eastern Islam (speaking very generally) is culturally contingent rather than theologically essential, then there is room to maneuver in asserting that a more tolerant stance is not only theologically possible but theologically necessary. One does not convince religiously committed people to be more tolerant because their beliefs don’t matter enough to go against the cultural grain but rather because they matter so much that they are worth getting right. Such an approach opens questionable practices justified on religious grounds to the charge that they are rooted more in cultural particularity or vested interest than in essential religious tenets. It also enables the West to compete for the religious high ground rather than conceding it *ipso facto* to the militants.
The Problem of Objective Sources

Third, portrayals of the clash between the Enlightenment belief systems dominant in the West and the non-Enlightenment belief systems dominant elsewhere are not without their own biases. To properly understand this claim, it is necessary to examine the beginnings of the Western Enlightenment. The Enlightenment’s driving motive was nicely summarized in Immanuel Kant’s aptly titled essay “What is Enlightenment” (1784):

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage...[whose] cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another.

Sapere aude! "Have courage to use your own reason!"- that is the motto of enlightenment.\(^{21}\)

The goal of this process was to create a modern society of autonomous individuals unfettered by ties of blood, community, or religion and dominated by the over-arching structures of the state and the market. For the purposes of this paper, both the forces driving the process and its end goal will be referred to as modernity.\(^{22}\) What the forces of modernization sought to oppose—that which was “premodern,” and, in its reaction to modernity, “antimodern”—was defined largely in terms of being opposed by modernity: the bonds of community—be they religious, social, ethnic, or familial; the realm of particularity rather than abstraction, where the “unenlightened” carry out their normal life-cycle processes; “public goods” not fully supported by market forces; in short, anything standing in the way of the free, “unfettered” reign of modernity.\(^{23}\)

The champions of modernity have polarized the debate by portraying themselves as Promethean figures “stealing fire from the gods” and empowering humankind to exist and flourish
independently (as opposed to the unenlightened, sinister, and “medieval” defenders of premodernity). They tend to regard premodernity’s resurgence, at best, as an obstacle to “progress,” and, at worst, in terms reminiscent of “the twilight of the gods” in Norse mythology, in which the dull, brutish giants are destined to finally overcome the noble gods and consign the world to an endless Ice Age—or worse. To quote one such portrayal,

The irrational precinct of the mind which needs invisible spirits can be dangerous, and has brought untold misery. Thinking people must strive constantly to hold it in check….The evidence seems clear: To find living conditions that are safe, decent, orderly, and ‘civilized,’ avoid places with intense religion.24

In trying to make sense of the modernity-premodernity dichotomy, it is helpful to realize that the proponents of each side are adversaries, not dispassionate observers. Advocates of the shift from premodernity to modernity claim with Max Weber that this is a natural part of human development. Similarly, critics of modernity tend to lay the lion’s share of the blame for contemporary societal problems at its the feet, since it disrupted the idyllic “way things always were.” Rather than viewing the premodernity-modernity dichotomy as either an intermediate phase in human evolution from the former to the latter or the marring of an idyllic past with a regimented present, one should keep in mind that this dichotomy is nothing new; it has existed at least since the Renaissance, and likely even before that. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, the dawn of the information age has forced the modern world to adopt many of the characteristics of premodernity in order to adapt to new technological realities, thus increasing the likelihood that the relationship between these two outlooks will be “mostly one of harmony, not conflict.”25
In this light, each side’s demonization of the other should not be taken at face value. To bring
this notion to the practical level, the perception among many in the West, for example, that
premodernity’s “exaltation of communitarian values over individual ones” is fundamentally and
irreconcilably inconsistent with Western visions of international human rights is little more than a
self-fulfilling prophecy.26 When grounded in the primacy of the individual, the effort to enforce
basic human rights around the world is resisted as cultural imperialism by those from cultural or
religious backgrounds that emphasize community over individualism.27 Many of these seeming
opponents of the human rights agenda are actually quite sympathetic to its underlying themes of
justice and human dignity and could likely be turned into allies if the agenda were articulated in a
way that is consistent with their religious and cultural norms.28

To summarize, the hostility of modern individualists toward anti-modern communitarians
stems in large part from the fact that the Enlightenment’s assertion of atomistic individualism is
predicated on a polemic against the twin terrors of tradition and authority. Thus individualists
will assert that they are the only legitimate defenders of justice and human dignity despite
communitarians’ equal (if not greater) claims to that role, not so much because there are
fundamental differences in their respective outlooks on these matters but because ascribing
legitimacy to communitarianism undermines their polemic and thus the basis for their religion-free
public sphere.

The Information Revolution

The fourth point is that, unless proper safeguards are taken, information technology can
dramatically increase the inequalities and tensions between the developed world and the
developing world. The meteoric rise in the capability of affordable information and
communications technologies has been heralded as the vanguard of a kinder, gentler, more well-
connected world order. While such technology does indeed improve the capacity for genuine
dialogue and understanding between people with diverse national, ethnic, and religious identities,
it is much more likely that the new ease of information access will sacrifice depth and
insightfulness for shallow, half-baked approaches to intercultural communication. While the
advent of satellite-broadcast television news has made it easier for people to keep track of events
around the globe, it has also forced news providers to condense to a twenty second sound byte
the kind of in-depth historical and cultural background that is required for a true understanding of
the issue in question (as contrasted with the more thorough treatment characteristic of newspaper
journalism). Careless television coverage actually accentuates differences and tensions rather than
ameliorating them. Communications have become faster, but understanding takes time.

Beyond any compromise in content, the existing inequalities in access to information
technology act to limit its benefits to those above a certain socioeconomic threshold. Below that
threshold, much of information technology’s impact is negative to the extent that it exacerbates
inequalities and leads to the automation of tasks previously requiring paid labor. Since these
disenfranchised populations tend to be the most insular (and, as the least educated, the most open
to religious demagoguery), the much-hailed “global culture” will pass them by. As Henry
Kissinger speculates,

> [t]he world could evolve into a two-tiered system in which
globalized elites are linked by shared values and technologies while
the populations at large, feeling excluded, seek refuge in
nationalism and ethnicity and in attempts to become free of what
they perceive as American hegemony.²⁹

Such a system could create a dangerous alliance between those who are opposed to the global
élite because of resource and power inequalities and those who are opposed because of the élites perceived disrespect for their value systems. The battle lines would be drawn between rich and poor, “New class” morality and “traditional morality,” urban and rural, center and periphery. As governments in the developing world continue to slip behind in the globalizing economy, the religio-cultural differences between Westernized élites and the more traditional non-Western masses will be fertile ground for a demagogue hoping to base his or her rise to power on a global version of the American “culture wars.” Whether such a system would be stable or not depends on whether the global élites can successfully divide and conquer their “silent, sullen peoples” and, perhaps more importantly, whether its implementation is just. If the system is just, then with proper precautions it could prove to be stable; if it is unjust then it will come crashing down in short order.

A Silver Lining?

Although advances in technology have done little to improve ties between divergent religious and ethnic groups, they have been extremely influential in improving the cohesiveness within these groups. As instant communications becomes the rule rather than the exception, a civil war is no longer waged solely within a country’s borders; rather, it is waged on the rhetorical level by its diaspora. In addition, e-mail has greatly improved the ability of Western Christians to monitor the status of their “persecuted brethren” abroad and to raise public awareness of existing abuses. This informal network exerted a great deal of influence in making the case for the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Electronic globalization also tends to strengthen the position of ethnoreligious minorities vis-à-vis the nation-state. A recent example of this is the successful Internet-based public relations campaign run by human rights activists on behalf of the Zapatista Indians of Chiapas, Mexico.
Whereas the state’s control of conventional information resources used to be more than adequate to enable it to crush rebellious indigenous movements without fear of international condemnation, the ease and speed of internet-based communications has rendered it much more difficult.

A similar pattern repeated during the NATO bombing campaign of 1999, in which interested people around the world were kept in constant touch with the human face of the Serbian people. Through well-written, emotionally intense e-mails and graphic color photos of collateral casualties and damage, the sterile black-and-white official footage of smart bombs neatly sliding into ventilation shafts gave way to a more squalid perspective. The myth of a clean war engendered by our successes in the Gulf War did not survive the Kosovo conflict.

A notable example of what may lie ahead occurred when a NATO plane accidentally released one of its bombs over Hungary, demolishing the roof of a house but causing no injuries. While such accidents are an unavoidable consequence of any war (in World War II, they were too common to be reportable), the details were flashed around the world to web-accessible populations. This tendency to turn minor incidents into major public relations embarrassments (“NATO bombs Hungary without provocation”) suggests that the bar for conducting war is being raised to the point where warfare will become an increasingly difficult option; no friendly casualties, no civilian casualties, no mistakes, and a quick exit strategy make for good rhetoric but little else.

The success in reversing modernity’s depersonalizing effects is likely to be further enhanced by the technological advances driving globalization. As University of Colorado sociologist Otomar Bartos argues in “Postmodernism, Postindustrialism, and the Future,” “Since postmodern society will be shaped by free communication, it will emphasize the values that are inherent in such communication, especially…the value of similarity, friendship, and free interaction…. [It] will have
many of the features that classical sociologists have linked with preindustrial societies." In such an environment, the depersonalized bureaucratic structures that worked so well in emerging industrial societies are no longer the most effective. Instead, Bartos argues, the most rational organization is one “that is small, decentralized, informal, utilizes complex roles, and favors workers who are creative and possess interpersonal skills.” As illustrated by the proliferation of ethics courses in MBA programs and the increasing salience of management concepts such as servant leadership, formerly impersonal aspects of society are incorporating characteristics thought to have been abandoned with the rise of industrialization. The public square has been reclothed after its extended experiment with impersonal objectivity.

The Other Side of the Coin

On the other hand, transnational affinities can sometimes prove problematic. As Huntington points out, conflicts between states of different civilizations have the potential to escalate as they draw in other countries with similar cultural and religious affinities (“civilizational rallying”). The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a case in point. Germany and much of Europe rallied to Catholic Croatia’s side, while Russian and “Greater Slav” nationalists actively supported their Serbian Orthodox brethren. During the peak of the war, for example, one could find Orthodox clergy manning tables on heavily traveled Moscow sidewalks collecting donations for their “Serbian brethren.” By the same token, Bosnian Muslims were reinforced by Islamist mujahideen from throughout the world who came to the aid of their Muslim brethren in their struggle against the Christian infidels. More recently, the war in Chechnya has also galvanized the Islamist world, prompting both moral and financial support. For example, the website “Jihad in Chechnya” (www.qoqaz.net) has posted e-mails from all over the world supporting the Chechen guerrillas and providing advice to those who are interested in joining the struggle.
Religion as a Positive Force

Finally, religion is not merely a divisive force in the affairs of humankind. In some situations, it can unite people across ethnic, racial, and political lines through a common allegiance to their Creator. To the extent that religious ties can, in fact, provide common ground (and a complementary, if not common, world-view and morality) between opposing nationalities or ethnic groups, they should be harnessed accordingly. A striking example of this took place in 1978 when Chile and Argentina were about to go to war over their mutual claims to the Beagle Islands. An invasion order had been given, and the warships of the two countries were just hours apart. A call went to Rome and the Pope sent an envoy. Once the Vatican envoy appeared on the scene, the passions subsided. It took the envoy six years to work out a solution, but his presence provided a face-saving way for these two Catholic countries to avoid going to war.

To explore this aspect of religion in peacemaking, the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) undertook a study in 1985 that resulted in a book entitled Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft. Published in August 1994 by Oxford University Press, this book examines through a series of case studies the positive role that religious or spiritual factors can play in actually preventing or resolving conflict while advancing social change based on justice and reconciliation.

Among the major findings to evolve from the study, two particularly stand out: (1) religious contributions to peacemaking have been under-appreciated, if not totally ignored, by most foreign policy practitioners and (2) there are substantial under-utilized assets within religious communities which, if properly trained, could be applied to peacemaking. In today’s environment of increasing
disorder, the world can no longer afford to overlook the significant contribution that religious and spiritual factors can bring to resolving conflict. Not only do the theologies of the major world religions share in common some version of the Golden Rule, but they also incorporate specific moral warrants for peacemaking. The need to apply religious principles and instruments based on these warrants to the practical work of conflict resolution is becoming increasingly urgent.

**A Model for the Future**

Another illustration of how religion can be a positive force for change can be found in the successful collaboration between the lay Catholic Community of St. Egidio and official diplomats in resolving the brutal civil war in Mozambique that ended in 1994. The final breakthrough to peace evolved from the Community’s recognition that it would have to do something to resolve the conflict if the humanitarian assistance it was providing was to have any useful effect. Accordingly, they set out to win the trust of both sides, taking initiatives that governments would never consider: escorting guerrilla fighters to their first dental appointments; buying them their first spectacles. In short, through winning trust on a personal level, and rehumanizing the situation, they were able to persuade the two sides to come together to negotiate their differences.

It took ten rounds of talks before an agreement was reached to end the war. Early in this process, it became apparent to these religious peacemakers that the overt backing of the international community would be required in order to monitor a cease-fire agreement or to guarantee fair multi-party elections. Accordingly, in the ninth round of talks, they invited diplomats from Italy, the United States, Portugal, France, and the United Nations to attend as official observers. In the tenth round, they passed the baton to these diplomats who, in turn, brought the resources of their respective nation-states and the UN to bear in overseeing the signing of the peace agreement, the monitoring of the cease-fire, and the holding of fair elections.
Today there is peace in Mozambique under a democratically elected government, with the economy on the rebound—at least prior to the recent floods—all because official diplomacy was able build upon the trust developed by a religious third party. One point that is crucial to understand is that the work of religious peacemakers is not something for governments to own (the State’s political agenda will undermine the credibility of the process), but rather for them to reinforce and build upon.

A Need for New Tools

From the research for Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft, it became clear that there was a pressing need to carry out four operational functions on a coordinated and systematic basis:

• To facilitate greater understanding and collaboration between diplomats and religious leaders in addressing confrontations where the normal tools of diplomacy are inadequate;

• To recruit and deploy multi-skilled, inter-religious action teams to trouble spots where conflict threatens or has already broken out;

• To recruit and train religious clergy and laity in the tasks of peacemaking; and

• To provide feedback to theologians and clergy on interpretations of their teachings that are contributing to strife and misunderstanding.

The strategic premise of all this is that religious peacemakers, properly trained and supported, can add a critically important dimension to the work of diplomats and non-governmental organizations in addressing ethnic conflict and other problems of communal identity that are proving beyond the reach of traditional diplomacy. In some situations, this added capability can make the difference between failure and success by providing a transcendent environment for dealing with the secular obstacles and an improved ability to identify and deal with any deep-seated religious issues. This is the premise upon which the new International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) was established in Washington this past July.
**Implications for U.S. Interests**

In a globalizing world, it is no longer expedient—or even possible—for the United States to retreat behind its two-ocean moat and insist that the world can be explained without reference to the religious and cultural views of others. In both its diagnosis and treatment of foreign (and, increasingly, internal) policy problems, it is imperative that the United States take these views into account. Further, in the wars of identity that are likely to plague the 21st century—whether ethnic, religious, or cultural in nature—doctrines of nuclear or even conventional deterrence may be rendered increasingly moot, as may conventional diplomacy. With this as a distinct possibility, how can the United States promote political stability in such a context and what role can the military play? It is time to begin thinking outside of the box.

Rather than reacting to events after conflict has erupted, we need to think in new and creative ways about prevention. And here we run into a problem. Moving from a culture of conflict management to a culture of conflict prevention is not as easy as it sounds. Among the challenges:

- the need to think beyond the “crisis of the immediate” in thoughtful and discerning ways,
- the difficulty of demonstrating the effectiveness of such initiatives (like nuclear deterrence, how does one prove that something that did not happen was a result of the preventive measure in question?), and
- the overriding need to muster the political will to take action.

A recent case in point regarding the latter: for several years, we lamented the likelihood that the tinderbox of Kosovo would ignite at any time, yet did next to nothing to prevent it. Of course, we were absorbed in Bosnia at the time, which points to another related problem: the difficulty of addressing more than one crisis at a time.

The problem runs even deeper, though, as evidenced by the substantial cuts in the foreign
affairs budget in recent years—this at a time when the demands of interdependence require that we become even more engaged diplomatically. Even before the cuts, though, political will was a problem. Another case in point: some time ago when Admiral Bill Owens was Sixth Fleet Commander, he received a message from the then President of Yugoslavia requesting more port visits by U.S. naval vessels—to show the flag and help keep the lid on. The State Department recommended against it and the request was denied. The reason given was that the United States should not get involved in what was seen to be a European problem. Whether or not such visits could have made a difference is something we’ll never know. But when one contrasts the cost of doing that versus the price we are now paying in Bosnia and Kosovo, it causes one to wonder what might have been.

All this is by way of saying that preventive diplomacy or even preventive defense doesn’t come naturally in a democracy where outright crisis is the normal prerequisite for intervention. This suggests a need for the military CINCs to play a special role in this area. The relative freedom of action that they enjoy in their respective theaters of operations puts them in a better position than most to take such considerations into account and to act upon them.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite the obstacles, there are several straightforward initiatives that would go far to enhance our capabilities for preventive action:

1. With respect to diplomacy, consideration should be given to posting a religion attaché to diplomatic missions in those countries where religion has particular salience (such as Israel, Nigeria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, to name only a few). This will greatly enhance the mission’s ability to monitor religious movements and to deal more effectively with complex
religious issues. As missions are currently configured, attention to religious developments is forced to compete with a myriad of other, seemingly more pressing, concerns on the part of the cultural attachés or the political or consular officers. In some locations, the stakes are simply too high to continue on this basis. They are also too high to dismiss such a suggestion out-of-hand because of resource constraints.

To be sure, the Foreign Affairs budget taken a beating in recent years. At the very time when growing global interdependence should be causing us to increase our diplomatic assets, we have, for the most part, been cutting back. As the richest nation on earth, we can and should do better. The case for increasing our capabilities is as close to air-tight as a case can be and needs to be forcefully presented for as long as it takes to get us on a proper track.

2. In the meanwhile, help may be forthcoming from another quarter. Early next year, the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy will be conducting training for all Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard chaplains in “the complex and profound role of religion in statecraft as it shapes both cultural and political attitudes toward war and peace across the international geopolitical spectrum” (quoting from the governing directive). The intent is to provide the sea service commands with a new and valuable asset for pursuing the preventive aspects of their missions. Although not currently planned, Army and Air Force chaplains should receive such training as well.

With an expanded mission statement and proper training, chaplains can serve an invaluable early-warning function for their commands based on personal interactions with local (overseas) religious communities and with religious-based, non-governmental organizations. Not only will they be able to develop a grassroots understanding of the religious and cultural nuances at play, but they will be able to pass on the concerns of indigenous religious leaders
about incipient threats to stability posed by ethnoreligious demagogues. At times, they may also be in positions where they can provide a reconciling influence in addressing misunderstandings or differences with these communities. Finally, they can advise their commanders on the cultural aspects of decisions that are being taken (or that should be taken). In other words, in addition to their normal function of addressing the human casualties after conflict has erupted, military chaplains can become an important tool in preventing its eruption in the first instance.

3. In addition to the expanded role for chaplains, it is recommended that sensitivity training be provided for U.S. military personnel serving in countries where religious customs differ markedly from our own. Consistent with their evolving charter, the chaplains themselves could provide such training.

As embassies and military commands tune in more closely to religious concerns and to one another in dealing with these concerns, it will require walking a fine line between accurate reporting and undue entanglement in religious affairs. In this regard, although it was intended for domestic application—specifically relating to the constitutionality of state-sponsored salary increases for teachers in nonpublic schools—the tripartite test set forth by the Supreme Court in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* in 1971 provides useful guidance for religious monitoring overseas:

1) A policy or action must have a **secular purpose** as its primary motivation

2) “Its principal or **primary effect** must be one that **neither advances nor inhibits religion,**” and

3) It must not “foster ’an excessive…entanglement with religion’” on the part of the United States government.37

In cases where it looks questionable as to whether such a test can be met, consideration should be given to handling the situation through the influential NGO sector rather than the traditional
“track one” channels. In recent years, various departments of government have become quite adept at working in tandem with NGOs. As the influence of non-state actors continues to rise, it seems likely that the U.S. government will increasingly find itself dividing responsibilities into those which it must do by itself and those which it can share.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter, a contrast was drawn between the tribalism and fractionating influences of Barber’s “Jihad” on the one hand and the universalizing tendencies of his “McWorld” on the other. As the chapter goes on to show, however, neither view has an exclusive claim on reality. Just as Barber’s (and Huntington’s) treatment of religious antagonisms overlooks the positive role that religious and spiritual factors can play in conflict prevention and in advancing social change based on justice and rule of law, so too do advocates of economic globalization neglect the religious and cultural imperatives through which many people find life’s deeper meaning. In this chapter, a middle ground has been attempted in which the benefits of both paradigms can be achieved. While the recommendations listed above help point the way, they are only a beginning. Much more will be required.

In today’s world of ethnic strife and high-technology weaponry, old concepts of security based on a competition of armaments will no longer suffice. Increasingly, security will be a function of the strength and durability of national, super-national, and most particularly sub-national relationships. This suggests a need to move toward new mechanisms for international relations that reach beyond the normal methods and channels of diplomacy to uncover and deal with the deeper sources of conflict, to rebuild relationships, and to make the necessary
concessionary adjustments wherever possible. With wisdom and discernment, the reconciling
dimension of religious faith could prove to be one of the more effective mechanisms for dealing
with the growing challenges of an interdependent world.
Notes

2 Boston University sociologist
5 Karl Marx, Contribution To The Critique Of Hegel's Philosophy Of Law (http://csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/communist/archive/marx/works/1840/djahr/law.htm).
8 Ibid.
12 Luttwak 12.
13 Ibid.
16 A similar argument was made by Dr. Murad Hoffmann in a panel presentation on “Islamic Vision for the 21st Century” at the conference “America, Islam, and the New Millennium” (co-sponsored by the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and the United Association for Studies and Research), 26 April 2000.
17 To quote Mark Noll, McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College, “If a more important book on the general meaning of Christian history is published this year--or even this decade--it will be a surprise.” Mark A. Noll, “Translating Christianity,” Books & Culture 2:6 (November/December 1996): 6.
18 Qtd. in Noll 6.
22 This nomenclature was first popularized by Ferdinand Tonnies in his book Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft) (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1988 [orig. 1887]).
23 For the sake of readability and at the risk of oversimplification, the categories of premodernity and modernity have been used to encompass much more complex categories. In the interests of avoiding excessive anachronism, “anti-modern” is used to describe premodernity’s current manifestations, since arguably “premodernity’s” critique of modernity only became coherent (or even necessary) after the onset of modernity. A better set of labels is perhaps to refer to “premodernity” as Community (Gemeinschaft) and modernity as Society (Gesellschaft). This nomenclature was popularized by Ferdinand Tonnies in his book Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft) (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1988 [orig. 1887]). This distinction between


25 Otmar J. Bartos, “Postmodernism, postindustrialism, and the future.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 37 (Spring 1996) [Obtained via FirstSearch Online; page numbers unavailable].

26 Juergensmeyer 196.


28 A good example of such an articulation in an Islamic context is Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).


31 See James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991). Hunter describes recent American politics in terms of a “culture war” between traditional/orthodox/conservative forces and a rising nontraditional/progressive/“liberal” New Class. Interestingly, this division cuts across racial and religious boundaries, so that progressive Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims unite in squaring off against their more culturally conservative co-religionists.


33 To use the example of the Sudanese conflict, a constellation of websites has been created by the different factions as well as other interested groups to provide news (of various stripes) and debate the issues; for a good starting point, see www.sudan.net.

34 Bartos.

35 Ibid.

36 Servant leadership first gained a prominent place in management theory through Robert Greenleaf’s book *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Paulist Press, 1977), in which Greenleaf argues that the nature of leadership—and authority in general—is beginning to change:

A fresh critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways. A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader (9-10).

It has reached a wide degree among certain parts of the business community. For example, Max DePree, Chairman of the Herman Miller Company and author of *Leadership is an Art* (Doubleday, 1989) and *Leadership Jazz* (Dell Publishing, 1992), has said that “the servanthood of leadership needs to be felt, understood, believed, and practiced.” And Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (Doubleday, 1990), reportedly tells people “not to bother reading any other book until you read Robert Greenleaf’s book, *Servant-Leadership*. I believe it is the most singular and useful statement on leadership I’ve come across.”

37 Chief Justice Warren Burger, Opinion of the Court in *Lemon et al. v. Kurtzman, Superintendent of Public*