

Global Jihad:
Three Approaches to Religion and Political Conflict

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Assignment presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of International Studies at the University of Stellenbosch



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December 2002

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Abstract

The horrific terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, in America, and the bombing of a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, have forced many people to seriously consider the impact of religion on political conflict. This literature review readdresses the serious neglect of religion in political studies by examining the three theoretical approaches to religion and political conflict, on the domestic and international level, that can be identified.

Primordialists argue that differences in religious traditions should be viewed as one of the most important factors in explaining violent interactions in and between nations. They stress how differences in cultural identity and cosmologies can lead to violent conflict in and between nations. They illustrate how the deep malaise of modern secular society is leading to a backlash of alternative worldviews. This approach is culturally too simplistic in not providing a complex enough framework for understanding the dynamic social forces that constitute cultural identity.

Instrumentalists admit that conflicts might be aggravated by diverging religious creeds but are rarely if ever caused by them; instead most conflicts are about power and wealth. They emphasize the role played by political entrepreneurs, who use religion as an instrument to further their own goals. This approach is guilty of the other extreme – downplaying the role of religion and culture.

Constructivists regard social conflicts as being embedded in cognitive structures like ideology, religion, nationalism and ethnicity. Constructivists can theorize about cultural identity, social structures, actors and forces together with the material world of power and wealth and are therefore best suited to give an adequate description of religion and political conflict. Despite its great promise constructivism still needs to step up to the board and deliver theories about religion and political conflict. The serious neglect of religion in political studies needs to be addressed and the most likely framework within which to do so seems to be constructivism.

Opsomming

Die skokkende terroriste aanvalle op die World Trade Center en die Pentagon in Amerika en die bom in 'n nagklub in Bali, Indonesië, het baie mense gedwing om die impak van godsdiens op politieke konflik ernstig te oorweeg. Die literatuuroorsig herondersoek die ernstige verwaarloosing van godsdiens in politieke wetenskap weer eens, deur te kyk na die drie benaderings wat ten opsigte van godsdiens en politieke konflik, op plaaslike en internasionale vlak geïdentifiseer kan word.

Primordialiste glo dat verskille tussen goddienstradisies gesien moet word as een van die vernaamste faktore vir politieke konflik binne en tussen nasies. Hulle beklemtoon die wyse waarop verskille in kulturele identiteit en kosmologie kan bydra tot gewelddadige konflik binne en tussen nasies. Hulle illustreer verder hoe die diep malaise van die moderne sekulêre samelewing besig is om te lei tot 'n teenreaksie van alternatiewe wêreldbeskouings. Die benadering is egter kultureel gesproke te simplisties deurdat dit nie 'n raamwerk kan skep wat kompleks genoeg is ten einde die dinamies sosiale kragte wat kulturele identiteit vorm, te verstaan nie.

Instrumentalste gee toe dat politieke konflik dalk deur uiteenlopende godsdienstige tradisies vererger kan word, maar dat dit selde indien ooit daardeur veroorsaak word. Inteendeel, die meeste konflik handel steeds oor mag en rykdom. Hulle beklemtoon die rol wat gespeel word deur politieke entrepreneurs, wat geloof as 'n instrument gebruik in die bevordering van hulle eie doelwitte. Die benadering is skuldig aan die ander uiterste – die rol van kultuur en godsdiens word as minder belangrik beskou.

Konstruktiviste beskou sosiale konflik as gewortel in kognitiewe strukture soos ideologie, godsdiens, nasionalisme en etnisiteit. Konstruktiviste kan teoretiseer oor kulturele identiteit, sosiale strukture, akteurs en kragte saam met die materiële wêreld wat bestaan uit mag en rykdom, en is daarom die beste geskik om 'n voldoende beskrywing te gee van godsdiens en politieke konflik. Ten spyte van die belowende potensiaal van konstruktivisme moet die perspektief nog begin om teorieë oor godsdiens en politieke

konflik te verskaf. Die ernstige verwaarloosing van godsdien in politieke wetenskap moet ondersoek word en die beste benadering hiervoor blyk konstruktivisme te wees.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: RELIGION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

1.1 The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion

“One of the most unexpected events at the end of the twentieth century is the global resurgence of religious ideas and religious social movements (Thomas, 1995:289)”.

Scott Thomas (1995:289) is correct when he asserts that the global resurgence of religion has caught many International Relations (IR) scholars off guard. This religious resurgence is not merely an apolitical re-spiritualization, but rather is linked to the interaction of religion and politics, facilitated by the process of globalization and encouraged by the global communications revolution (Haynes, 2001:143).

This global phenomenon is taking place amongst diverse cultures, different countries and in states with different levels of development (Thomas, 1995:289). The resurgence of religion transcends the vision of the classical model of modernization and the nation state (Eisenstadt, 2000:591). It is contrary to the widespread expectations that religion would gradually disappear as a political force in modernizing societies. Instead religion is putting forward grievances about discrimination, raising claims as to how the state and society should be organized, mobilizing the faithful into action, influencing social institutions and shaping political policy (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:641).

These developments challenge accepted ideas about political development, modernization and secularization (Thomas, 1995:289). Some believe that the Western culture of modernity and the institutions of international society embedded in it are being challenged by this resurgence (Thomas, 2000:815). Does this mean that the resurgence of

religion is of great political significance or is secularization generally continuing, with exceptions under certain limited circumstances and conditions (Haynes, 1997:709)?

Whatever the situation, religion and its politicization are now among the issue areas that should be studied by political science scholars (Tibi, 2000:843). Most of the studies done on the global resurgence of religion were done within the fields of religious studies, sociology and politics and have been confined to comparative studies of fundamentalism or specific case studies on the influence of religion in specific areas or countries (Thomas, 1995:290). IR has consistently understated the role and power of religion as a defining, shaping and constitutive force in world affairs (Thomas, 1995:290). Added to this is the fact that most existing theories have little to say about these phenomena (Tibi, 2000:843).

Yet, some believe that political scientists can readdress this neglect of religion and contribute to the worldwide study of the resurgence of religion (Kubalkova, 2000:675). In fact the authors discussed in this literature review attempt to do so. There is, however, disagreement and debate over just how religious values, norms and beliefs influence various phenomena.

This literature review will look at one of the most visible and controversial areas of the debate, namely political conflict¹. It is only a small part in the larger debate about the resurgence of religion in politics, but certainly one of the most visible and provocative aspects of the debate.

1.2 Religion and Political Conflict

Often the political resurgence of religious communities is accompanied by violent clashes in and between nations (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:641). The examples of conflict in the Balkans, Algeria, East-Timor, Kashmir, Nigeria, Palestine, Sri Lanka and the

¹ The focus of this literature review is on religion and political conflict. Most of the theoretical implications and conclusions that can be drawn also apply to political violence. It was decided to broaden the theoretical scope to religion and political conflict rather than to narrowly focus on political violence.

Sudan all give evidence of religious violence (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:641). The horrific terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, in the United States, and the bombing of a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, have forced many people to seriously consider the impact of religion on political conflict.

These ostensibly religiously motivated terrorist attacks have received a lot of attention in the mass media which has subsequently spilled over into the political science discipline. Indeed this has caught many scholars off-guard, believing, that we had finally shaken of the shackles of religion and entered a world of secular and rational politics. It is unfortunate that it was necessary for such serious and horrific acts to bring to attention the curious neglect of religion within the political science discipline. This said, many authors discussed in this literature review have been far more vigilant and perceptive, realizing the importance of religion and its resurgence, long before the tragic events of 9-11.

Scholars differ significantly on the correlation between religion and political conflict. Three main theoretical points of view can be identified, that offer different interpretations and explanations of the relationship between religion and political conflict.

Primordialists argue that differences in religious traditions should be viewed as one of the most important factors in explaining violent interactions in and between nations. They stress how differences in cultural identity (religious or civilizational) and cosmologies can lead to conflict within and between nations. They locate the current resurgence of religion within the context of modernity and the accompanying backlash of alternative cosmologies against the deep malaises of modern secular society.

Instrumentalists admit that conflicts may be aggravated by diverging religious creeds, but they insist that they are rarely if ever caused by them; instead most conflict is still about power and wealth. They emphasize the role played by political entrepreneurs, who use religion as an instrument to further their own agendas. They believe that the current

resurgence of religion is just a temporary aberration, on the road to the establishment of a universal modern secular society.

Constructivists regard social conflicts as being embedded in cognitive structures like ideology, religion, nationalism and ethnicity. These cognitive structures that consist of inter-subjectively shared meanings, understandings and knowledge provides actors with value-laden concepts of themselves and others; that consequently affect their behavior. Constructivists occupy the middle ground to the extent that they incorporate culture, power and wealth within a larger cognitive framework, consisting out of social and material structures and influences, to account for conflicts.

1.3 Methodology

These three theoretical perspectives differ in terms of the way they understand and explain religion and political conflict. The literature on this topic, religion and political conflict, is not very well organized and clearly presented in an understandable framework. As already mentioned, religion has received very little and limited attention in IR literature and has often been limited to specific case studies. As such currently no broad framework exists for understanding the role of religion in political conflict.

Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Rittberger (2000), in *Millennium*, identified three theoretical approaches to understanding the impact of religion on political conflict. Their three theoretical perspectives will form the framework for this literature review, as it attempts to classify and understand the literature on religion and political conflict.

1.3.1 The Theoretical Literature Review

One of the primary goals of a literature review is to integrate and summarize what is known in an area (Neuman, 2000:446). This is primarily the purpose and focus of the theoretical literature review. A theoretical literature review presents different theories that purport to explain the same thing, then evaluates how well each accounts for findings

(Neuman, 2000:447). A good theoretical review points out areas of agreement, areas of disagreement and areas where major questions remain. It collects what is known up to a certain point in time and indicates the direction of future research. It tests the consistency of predictions with findings, where possible, and compares theories for the soundness of their assumptions, logical consistency and scope of explanation (Neuman, 2000:446-447).

The goal of this literature review is to evaluate the theoretical literature concerning religion and political conflict. It will summarize and evaluate the three broad theoretical approaches, as identified by Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000). It hopes to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement between the three theoretical approaches as well as the shortcomings of each. In the process it aims to evaluate how well each of the three theories accounts for religion and political conflict, by testing their predictions and the soundness of their assumptions, logical consistency and scope of explanation.

Using the three theoretical approaches to religion and political conflict as a framework this literature review hopes to address the issues discussed above and in this way contribute to the study of IR.

1.3.2 Limitations of Study

There are, however, some limitations to the study. As already mentioned, there is a serious neglect of religion as a factor in political discourse and many of the studies that exist are very diverse in scope, addressing various issues of religion. Since this study is limited to religion and political conflict, only literature dealing with the topic of political conflict or violence has been considered.

Not all of the literature deals explicitly with religion and political conflict. Some of the literature discussed is concerned with culture, civilizations and identity. In all the literature discussed in this review the link to religion can, however, be made and doesn't influence the conclusions drawn in any significant way.

Another limitation is that not all of the authors identify themselves with the three theoretical perspectives, meaning that they don't refer to themselves as instrumentalists, primordialists or constructivists. Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000), themselves, identify a number of authors than can be classified as falling into the three theoretical perspectives. Since the study is based on their framework, authors that they regard as belonging to a certain perspective, have been accordingly classified in the same manner in this study.

Since this is an evaluative theoretical literature review, the criteria for classifying literature as belonging to a certain perspective are always critically justified. In this regard it can be added that authors who do not explicitly refer to themselves as belonging to a specific theoretical approach, have been divided according to their theoretical assumptions and arguments. The study therefore not only contributes to discussing and evaluating the three theoretical perspectives but also to classifying literature into the three perspectives.

It could be argued that this is problematic, but for the sake of keeping a stable and understandable framework, it has been done and if deemed perhaps a bit harsh on the author it has been made explicit and justified. It is by no means a comprehensive overview of all the literature concerning the three perspectives, but the most important and relevant authors and literature available have been used.

The aim of the evaluative theoretical literature review is simply to try a get a better understanding of the literature on religion and political conflict, by examining and evaluating it through the framework of the three theoretical perspectives.

1.4 Outline of the Study

The outline of this literature review is based on the three theoretical perspectives on religion and political conflict, identified by Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000).

Chapter two deals with primordialist approaches to religion and political conflict. After a short introduction to the primordialist perspective and its origins, the reader is eased into one of the most provocative piece of literature concerning religion and political conflict. Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations?* gives a comprehensive and broad overview of the primordialist perspective and some of the general issues at stake in this debate, at the international and domestic level. From here on in, this distinction between the international and domestic level has been followed throughout the literature review.

Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations?* is followed by an overview of some of his most famous critics. Next, the discussion turns to domestic conflict and an evaluation of Gilles Kepel and Mark Juergensmeyer. The chapter concludes with some of the most important implications and limitations of the primordialist perspective, most notably for the current world order. Throughout the chapter each author is critically evaluated in terms of the criteria set out in the theoretical literature review.

The third chapter deals with instrumentalist approaches to religion and political conflict. It starts with a general introduction to the instrumentalist approach and is followed by a discussion of instrumentalist perspective on religion and political conflict, on the domestic and international level. On the domestic level the findings of Ted Rober Gurr concerning ethnic conflict is evaluated, followed by Katerina Dalacoura's discussion of Islam in the Middle East.

On the international level, empirical studies of Huntington's thesis are evaluated, together with their most important findings and Huntington's response to them. In conclusion the most important implications of the instrumentalist approach and its constraints are evaluated.

The fourth chapter deals with constructivist approaches to religion and political conflict. It starts out with a comprehensive introduction to constructivism, since it cannot be assumed that the reader will understand this relatively new and different approach. The foundations, different strands, common ground between strands and added value of constructivism are elaborated upon.

The reader is then introduced to constructivist concepts and logic in the work of Scott Appleby. An evaluation of Appleby is followed by an evaluation of the constructivist model of Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Rittberger, for an understanding of the strategic choice confronted by elites in conflict. Constructivist arguments on the international level concerning key IR puzzles, are next evaluated. In conclusion, an evaluation of Vendulka Kubalkova's constructivist framework (for understanding religion) is done.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, an overall conclusion is given, concerning the utility of the three theories, possible avenues of future research and the contributions this study has made in solving some of the original problems set out in the study.

Chapter 2

THE PRIMORDIALIST APPROACH TO RELIGION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

2.1 Introduction

Civilizations and cultures are two concepts that have been with us for a very long time. A casual glance back in history and time might lead one to conclude that these two concepts unavoidably refer to conflict and warfare. It is not difficult for one to imagine ethnicity, religion, language, norms and identity - all element of culture - contributing to differences, disputes and ultimately violent conflict. The Balkans, Africa, Middle East, South-East Asia and Central Europe all offer seemingly striking examples of cultural and religious conflict.

The modernization paradigm, perhaps itself a victim of civilizational and cultural construction, suggests that we have evolved from this barbarian and medieval perspective to a civilized world in which religious, cultural and civilizational disputes have disappeared (at least from the civilized part of humanity) and have been replaced by a universal global village (liberal world) of equality and freedom, no longer bound by the chains of culture and tradition¹.

Many primordialists question this assumption and believe that cultural and civilizational differences are vital to our understanding of modern political conflict. We start this chapter with a short introduction to the primordialist perspective. We then move on to discuss some of the most prevalent works and theories within this perspective. As in most perspectives, the authors disagree about a variety of issues, but they all agree that cultural and civilizational differences matter. Finally we conclude by looking at the implications that can be drawn from the perspective.

¹ Jeff Haynes (1997) makes an interesting argument that secularization might be well advanced in the developed world but in the Third World this is not the case and that the postmodern condition stimulates a return to religion under certain circumstances.

2.2 Primordialists

The term primordialism originated in the debate surrounding national identity construction or nationalism. Without leaving the boundaries of this discussion it is necessary to briefly place the primordialist approach within its historical and theoretical context².

Primordialists presuppose an ancient, prehistoric and even a primitive existence of national and ethnic identity. In this view, people historically identified with a national and ethnic identity, in an evolving and collective process, even before the creation of the modern nation-state. Modern nation-states in this view are essential and basic units of social cohesion. Subsequently cultural identities and constructs are viewed as relatively stable, enabling stable national identities to develop over time.

Anthony Smith, arguably the most prominent primordialist, believes in the historical longevity of nationalism and ethnicity. He believes that the modern nation-state can only be understood in terms of these ancient ethnic identities and that all successful nation-states today depend on some form of historical ethnic identity³.

Walker Connor, another prominent primordialist, believes that nations are the result of a web of collective myths, kinships, common origins and memories that are built up over centuries and are as old as human society itself⁴.

Without getting into the deeper debate, it is important to note that both Smith and Connor don't regard themselves as primordialist as such. They don't believe in nations as naturally given entities as such but rather that cultural construct remains relatively stable and clearly defined over time.

² See Anthony D. Smith, "The Politics of Culture: Ethnicity and Nationalism" in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (1994) for an excellent discussion on primordialism and instrumentalism in ethnicity and nationalism.

³ See for instance Smith, A.D. 1986. *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*. Blackwell: New York.

⁴ Connor, W. 1994. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton University Press.

In contrast to the primordialist, the modernist views nationalism and national identity within the context of the development of modern society. Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm, all argue that modern nationalism and national identities are a result of the unique material condition encountered in modern society. The process of modernization (Anderson), industrialization (Gellner) and capitalist development (Hobsbawm) - all within the modern context - required the construction (invention) of national identities⁵.

The modernist approach does not deny the existence of ancient ethnic identities, but believes that the material conditions of modernization necessitated the construction of national identities, independent from the existence of primordial national identities. Instrumentalist accounts rely heavily on modernist approaches to identity formation, believing that cultural identities (religious or civilizational) are largely constructed (invented) to serve the goals and needs of political entrepreneurs. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

2.2.1 Religion and Primordialism

From the above discussion it is clear that the primordialist perspective views ethnic and cultural identities as fixed or relatively stable. Religion is an important part of cultural identity and often forms the basis on which the normative content of a culture is built. In this regard authors in this chapter are regarded as primordialists to the extent that they view religious identity and other cultural identities as relatively stable and fixed over time⁶.

The primordialist approach views religion as one of the most important independent variables that should be used in explaining political conflict in and between nations (Hansenclever & Rittberger, 2000:641). In this view actors at both the international and

⁵ Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. Verso; Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca; Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

⁶ As Cederman (2002:412) points out there is a tendency to dismiss sophisticated work as “primordialist” just because it highlights the inertia of cultural constructs.

national level tend to form alliances around common cosmologies and tension can arise and escalate between alliances with different cosmologies. This perspective closely resembles what some call “cultural realism” (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:318)⁷. Cultural realists view cultural factors as determinants of foreign policy and agree with the primordialist view of cosmological alliances.

Samuel Huntington and Gilles Kepel are most likely the best-known exponents of the primordialist view, which is reflected in the titles of some of their most famous works. *The Clash of Civilizations* and *The Revenge of God* certainly manages to convey the apocalyptic nature of the two books and the perspective of the primordialist approach.

They both argue that the cultural embeddedness of nations in civilizations will be the most important determinants of world politics in the 21st century (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:643). In accordance with the primordialist view, the nature of the conflict is cultural. According to this view the cultural similarities and differences between nations produce converging and diverging state interests that lead to nations forming alliances around cosmologies (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:643).

Bassam Tibi and Mark Jurgensmeyer bring a further, although slightly different, angle to the primordialist perspective. They also make use of cultural analysis, but come to different conclusions about what these cultural cosmologies entail.

In many ways, as will become evident, these authors attribute a very important role to religion and in many instances it forms the core and foundation of their conception of culture or national (even civilizational) identity. Apart from Huntington, all the authors discuss political religion or religious conflict per se. Huntington’s cultural analysis is to a large extent dependent on the main religions which he believes form the basis of these different civilizations.

⁷ Cultural realism is a derivative of realism that focuses on cultural factors as determinants of a state’s foreign policy; moreover, it posits that, ceteris paribus, status belonging to different cultural backgrounds are more likely to become involved in conflict than those that share a common cultural background (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:318).

2.3 Huntington – The Clash of Civilizations?

Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis has become the most influential and controversial scholarly work on the impact of cultural factors on international conflict (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:318).

Huntington, as already mentioned, believes that the dominating source of conflict in the post-Cold War era will be cultural. These conflicts will be fought along the new battle lines of the future – the fault lines between civilizations (Huntington, 1993:22). Cultural politics and differences were mostly held in check by Cold War politics and ideologies, but in the post-Cold War era the most important conflict variables are not political systems, economic development levels or ideologies but cultural and civilizational characteristics (Huntington, 1993:22-23) (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:643).

His central argument is therefore that nations belonging to different civilization are more likely to be involved in political conflict, than nations belonging to the same civilizations in the post-Cold War era. He believes this to be the case both at the domestic level and international level, where civilizational fault lines meet, so to speak (Huntington, 1993).

2.3.1 Culture and Religion

Huntington defines culture to include common objective elements like language, history, religion, customs, institutions and subjective self-definitions. He believes that civilization is the highest cultural identity grouping short of what defines humans from other species. In other words this is "the biggest we" within which we feel comfortable associating ourselves culturally and that distinguish us from the other "thems" out there (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:319). It is the broadest cultural identity with which people can identify.

The idea that cultural differences can produce conflict has its roots in social psychology and the distinction it makes between the in-group and the outsider (Russet et al, 2000:585). Social identity theory points to the fact that intra-group cohesion can be enhanced or fractured by confrontation with others. Especially when invidious comparisons occur

between parties, in which individuals are led to believe that they are “backward” or the have-not’s, because of whom and what they are⁸.

Huntington’s thesis also has relevance to the larger debate about the role of culture and identity politics in international relations theories such as democratic peace, security arrangements and economic cooperation (Russett et al, 2000:585-587). The constructivist school of international relations has been especially active in this debate and will be tackled latter in the fourth chapter (Hopf, 1998).

Huntington acknowledges the dynamic nature of culture and civilization, believing that they can bend and overlap, rise and fall, divide and merge. He believes that historically civilizations have been more important than nation-states, only a very recent development (Huntington, 1993:25). This of course implies that he believes that civilizational identity is fundamentally more powerful than that of “state identity” or nationalism. It also confirms the primordial nature of Huntington’s civilizational thesis.

Huntington believes that religion is the central defining characteristic of a civilization and possibly the most profound difference that can exist between people (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:319) (Fox, 2001:461). It is therefore no surprise that all the civilizations Huntington identifies can be associated with one of the major world religions. Africa might be an exception but Huntington generally regards Saharan Africa as part of the Islamic civilization⁹.

2.3.2 Why Civilizations Will Clash

Huntington (1993:25-27) believes that civilizations will clash for various reasons. First, he believes that cultural and civilizational differences are very real and basic, which means they are difficult to change and overcome. This also means that basic cultural identity is difficult to change and likely to remain stable. Linked to this is the fact that these differences are also far less mutable than political or economic differences. This makes it

⁸ See Donald Horowitz (1985:166-180) for an excellent application of social identity theory to ethnic conflict.

⁹ Many critics of Huntington point out that his eight major civilizations and corresponding religions are not without problems, especially when trying to test his thesis empirically. See Russett et al (2000), Henderson and Tucker (2001) and Fox (2001).

far more difficult to resolve and to find compromise (Huntington, 1993:25). In line with social identity theory this implies the necessity of changing your identity, who and what you are, which in many cases is difficult if not impossible (race and ethnicity).

Secondly he believes that globalization and the developments in communication, mass media and travel will increase the interactions between different civilizations, leading to greater awareness of commonalities among and differences between them (“haves” and the “have-nots”). This enhances the “civilizational-consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities” (Huntington, 1993:26). You are different because of who and what you are.

Thirdly, he believes that the process of modernization is separating people from local identities, leading to the weakening of the state and an “unsecularization” of the world¹⁰. Fourthly, connected to this is the dual role played by the West according to Huntington. At the peak of its power the West is shaping the world in Western ways, increasing its global hegemony but at the same time creating counter-hegemonic movements that emphasize non-Western values (Huntington, 1993:26-27).

Finally the economic regionalisms throughout the world form the geographic and economic bases for civilizational boundaries that are being drawn (Huntington, 1993:27).

2.3.3 Kin-country Syndrome and Torn Countries

The Huntington thesis is largely based upon an “us versus them” or more specifically “West versus the rest” mentality (Huntington, 1993:29&39). Huntington believes that the clash of civilizations will take place at both the domestic and international levels. The “kin-country syndrome” and “torn country” concepts used by Huntington are very useful in explaining the type of conflict he foresees.

¹⁰ The argument that modernization leads to the loss of identity in many non-Western countries due to the western nature of the modernity programme is frequently used to explain the rise of fundamentalist movements throughout the world. It forms part of the argument in Huntington (1993), Kaplan (1994), Juergensmeyer (2000), Tibi (2000), Haynes (1997) and Appleby (2000).

The “kin-country syndrome” concept refers to the inter-civilizational rallying that countries belonging to similar cosmologies or civilizations engage in, when in conflict with opposing civilizations. This, according to Huntington, leads to double standards and a decrease of inter-civilizational conflict (Huntington, 1993:35-38).

The “torn country” concept refers to countries that are divided by civilizational fault lines. They are divided over whether their society belongs to one civilization or another. As the most important examples Huntington cites Turkey and Russia (Huntington, 1993:42).

We can therefore see how the clash of civilizations plays out on domestic and international levels. Torn countries have to deal with the identity crisis confronted within their own countries. When civilizations meet in heterogeneous countries this could lead to intense conflict which can escalate internationally as the Balkans suggest. At the international level countries faced with conflict often rally the support of their kin civilizations.

2.3.4 The West versus the Rest

What it all boils down to, however, for Huntington in the end, seems to be a situation where it is the “West versus the rest”. With Western power at its peak with an almost unrivaled hegemony at economic, political, institutional and military levels it is not difficult to conclude that Western dominance, willingness to protect and maintain its interests and promote its values, is likely to encounter resentment from non-Western civilizational blocks (Huntington, 1993:40).

In the end the power struggles for economic, political, institutional and military power between the West and other civilizations is a very real source of conflict. Huntington warns us, however, that differences in culture, basic beliefs and values might be a very important second source of conflict (Huntington, 1993:40). He warns us that Western values are fundamentally different from those of other countries and that the very idea of a universal or cosmopolitan world culture is uniquely Western (Huntington, 1993:41).

He believes non-Western countries are faced with three options. They can pursue a course of isolation (North Korea), they can attempt to join the West and accept its values and

institutions (sacrificing their own unique values) or balance the West by developing economic, military, political and institutional powers to compete against the West (Huntington, 1993:41). The third option he sees as modernization without Westernization.

His concluding remarks of advice to the West are rather conservative and in favour of the status quo. Huntington believes that it is in the best interests of the West to continue to promote its values, goals and hegemony. In fact it is in the best interests of the West to continue to do whatever it takes to strengthen its own civilizational alliance – incorporating compatible candidates and exploiting and weakening opposing civilizations. Only when the power of non-Western civilizations equals that of the West do commonality and understanding of ideas enter Huntington’s framework (Huntington, 1993:48-49).

2.3.5 Huntington’s Critics

The Huntington thesis has had and continues to have its fair share of criticism even leading to the writing of a volume entitled “Preventing the Clash of Civilizations”, by four renowned scholars (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:318). The Huntington thesis has become increasingly influential in policy circles and one of the most frequent criticisms is that the thesis contains a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy that should be avoided (Russett et al, 2000:589) (Walt, 1997).

Numerous studies have been done to test the empirical validity of the Huntington thesis. Some concentrate exclusively on interstate conflict and others on intrastate conflict. So far there doesn’t seem to be an inclusive study of the Huntington thesis that addresses both intrastate and interstate conflict. Nevertheless these studies give a fair indication of the degree to which the Huntington thesis has or has not been validated by post-Cold War conflict. This will be addressed in the next chapter that deals with instrumentalist explanations of religious conflict.

2.3.5.1 Stephen Walt, Political Rhetoric and Nationalism

Stephen Walt (1997:178) believes that the Huntington thesis can be scrutinized for three reasons. Firstly, that Huntington is not clear on why identity loyalties should suddenly shift from the nation-state to that of civilizations. Secondly, he believes that some of his central claims are contradicted by historical and contemporary evidence. Finally, that the role played by nationalism in the post-Cold War period has been largely overlooked by Huntington.

Walt makes the statement and realist assumption that for the last 200 years states have been the key actors and that although cultural differences did matter, it was within the context of nationalism. Walt also points to the occurrences of inter-civilizational conflict, before and during the Cold War. "Sometimes states with different cultural backgrounds fight with one another"; why then bother to formulate a new paradigm if nothing has changed (Walt, 1997:183)? Walt believes that Huntington simply doesn't go far enough to explain his theoretical basis as to why civilizational loyalties are triumphing over nationalism.

Huntington can also be criticized for taking the political rhetoric of political leaders at face value far too selectively when it suits his thesis. Stephen Walt (1997:184) argues that Huntington to a large extent runs the risk of ignoring the real state interest and issues underlying the political rhetoric.

Drawing on the Gulf War and the Balkans, Walt illustrates that these two examples, also used by Huntington, might not be as straightforward as Huntington suggests. He points out that the Gulf War started out as a war between two Islamic states, Iraq and Kuwait (intra-civilizational). Furthermore the West allied behind one Islamic state (Kuwait) and opposed another (Iraq). Drawing on selective sentiments in some Islamic countries among certain individuals and groups is not sufficient justification for viewing the war as a "clash of civilizations" (Walt, 1997:185). In any case this just confirms that states will still act in accordance with self-interest despite popular sentiments.

In the same way the war in Yugoslavia fails as a civilizational conflict for various reasons. First the West deployed troops to protect Muslims in the case of Bosnia and Kosovo (ethnic

Albanians). Secondly, in terms of aid the West contributed more aid to Bosnian Muslims than fellow Muslim countries did (Walt, 1997:185)¹¹.

Walt (1997:187), however, believes that the greatest shortcoming of the Huntington paradigm is the fact that it underscores the role played by nationalism. Walt believes that nationalism rather than civilizational identity plays a bigger role in the post-Cold War era, as exemplified by the many independence struggles fought within civilizational borders.¹² In fact, Walt believes that we are witnessing a split of political communities into smaller units along ethnic and national lines, rather than a coalescing of multinational civilizations (Walt, 1997:187).

He also believes that Huntington is right when he contends that states will remain the most important actors for now (and the foreseeable future) but he believes that Huntington has ignored the reason why this will be so. According to Walt the fact that states are political agents with decision-making power, economic resources, the ability to mobilize citizens, wage war and give agency to cultural affinities by acting and doing something (through the state as agent) makes them more meaningful than an ideal construct like civilization (Walt, 1997:187).

2.3.5.2 Fouad Ajami – Civilizational Identity?

Ajami (1993:2) is very skeptical about the whole concept of clear and uninfluenced civilizations. He believes Huntington's concept of civilization is too rigid. Many empirical studies of the Huntington thesis also find this to be a big problem. This will be discussed in the next chapter. He is also critical of the role of states in the Huntington thesis (Ajami, 1993:2). He agrees to a large extent with Walt and his views on this aspect and his views on this aspect will therefore not be further discussed.

¹¹ Walt (1997:186) also makes the interesting point about US support for Israel. Using Huntington's civilizational and cultural perspective here makes no sense to Walt.

¹² Walt (1997) mentions the independence struggles of the Abkhaz, Armenians, Azeris, Chechens, Croats, Eritreans, Georgians, Kurds, Ossetians, Quebecois, Serbs or Slovaks.

Ajami (1993:3) believes that Huntington has underestimated the power of modernity and secularization, especially the resourcefulness of the middle class to partake in global culture and norms. He believes that the resurgence of fundamentalist religion is an indication of a last-ditch attempt to stay alive, “for traditions are often most insistent and loud when they rupture, when people no longer believe and when age-old customs lose their ability to keep men and woman at home” (Ajami, 1993:3).

He points to Algeria, Turkey, Iran, Egypt and Southeast Asia as examples of where fundamentalists have been and will be unsuccessful in bringing about revolutions due to middle class opposition, economic concerns and the secularization of society (Ajami, 1993:4-6). He concludes that secularism, the state system and the balance of power, pop culture, jumping tariff walls and barriers and the welfare state have all been internalized in the remotest of places.

Finally he echoes Walt by stating that nations juggle identities and control civilizations; we remain in a world of self-help (Ajami, 1993:9).

It is not difficult to see the realist assumptions and perspectives in some of Huntington’s critics. In fact most instrumentalists rely on liberal and realist accounts of international conflict to explain religious conflict at the international level. They argue that cultural factors might play a role in cultural conflict but that the real culprits are political, military, economic, demographical and socioeconomic variables. Ajami also shares the instrumentalist assumption that the modernization programme is being globally implemented and accepted.

In the chapter dealing with instrumentalist accounts of religious conflict we will return to the critics of Huntington and look at the validity of their arguments. Suffice to say that Huntington and cultural approaches in general have many critics.

2.4 Kepel – The Revenge of God

Gilles Kepel agrees with Huntington about the clash of civilizations. Kepel, however, offers a deeper understanding that is not merely limited to primordial differences among civilizations. He contends that the recent resurgence of religion is a result of attempts to express dissatisfaction and to introduce alternative approaches in response to the deep malaise found in society and more particularly in the modernization programme. Kepel brings into the picture the notion of alternative ontologies or counter hegemonies that challenge the current Western hegemony and its modernization paradigm. In fact he views the process as a legitimate and rational attempt at introducing alternative world orders.

2.4.1 Global Religious Resurgence

Gilles Kepel identifies the resurgence of religion as having taken shape around 1975 when a new religious approach started to form, built around the failures of modernization and aimed at bringing the sacred foundations back to society as opposed to adapting to secular values (Kepel, 1994:2). He believes that this phenomena has spread all over the world, leading to civilizations that differ both in their cultural origins and their level of development (Kepel, 1994:2). His study is limited to Judaism, Christianity and Islam but nevertheless takes an international approach.

He starts by making the very important point that fundamentalism and religious conflict are often studied from Western religious perspectives, leading to oversimplification and sidestepping of the important issues. He suggests that we leave behind these outdated theoretical spectacles and start dealing with the phenomenon of religious resurgence in its totality (Kepel, 1994:3)¹³. He chooses to start by looking first at Islam and therefore removing the mental laziness often viewed as self-explanatory from the study.

Kepel makes various observations concerning the resurgence of religion and religious conflict. First he mentions that a high proportion of the followers of these new religious

¹³ This view is also advocated by Juergensmeyer (2000) and Kubalkova (2000). They argue that modernization programme conception of religion belonging to the private sphere, removed from politics and the public sphere, should not be taken for granted by scholars.

movements have secular education and are not illiterate aged rural people. In fact many of them have been educated at schools which are very much the product of modernization and secularization (Kepel, 1994:4)¹⁴.

This suggests that these followers are not simply religious and secular uneducated obtuse and obscure groups. This seems to be at odds with the instrumentalist and constructivist approaches that contend that socio-economic development and religious education reduce the likelihood of someone belonging to fundamentalist religious groups. In fact the recent terrorist attack in the United States and suicide bombings in Israel perhaps best illustrated that viewing terrorists as young, uneducated, poor and depressed males might be wrong. This might indicate the emergence of a new “type” of terrorist (Sprinzak, 2001:72).

Secondly another characteristic of these religious movements is that they are opposed to official religion, which they believe is trying to accommodate secular values. He contends that their battle is against the value emptiness found in modern secular alternatives like liberalism or Marxism. Their aim is not a short-term seizure of power and a revolutionary transformation of society but a meaningful and rational expression of the deep malaise found in society that cannot be interpreted by traditional explanations (Kepel, 1994:11).

2.4.2 The Crisis of Modernity

Kepel (1994:191-192) concludes that there has been a genuine resurgence of religion from 1975 onwards that can be attributed to the crisis of modernity¹⁵. These religious movements have plans for rebuilding society away from the failures of modernity, based on their holy scriptures. Apocalyptic conditions like poverty, AIDS, corruption, and all the

¹⁴ Again this observation is made by numerous authors from various perspectives but probably most notably not by the instrumentalists. This includes Huntington (1993), Haynes (1997), Juergensmeyer (2000), Sprinzak (2001) and Appleby (2000).

¹⁵ Kepel (1993) is not perhaps as clear as one would like on why he dates the resurgence at 1975 specifically. He does, however, mention some important “signposts” during this period. In 1977 the Labour Party lost for the first time in Israel, largely due to Zionist movements becoming more prominent in Israeli politics. Secondly in 1978, Jon Paul II was elected as Pope, leading to a resurgence of charismatic Catholic politics throughout the West. Finally, 1979 saw the Iranian Revolution and the attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca, calling attention to the potential and resurgence of Islam in many parts of the world.

other scourges lend themselves to validating that modernity has failed them and that they need a new approach (Kepel, 1994:191-192).

They have the dual perspective of fixing labels on to the confusion and disorder experienced by their followers and breathing fresh life into contemporary religious thought about the world. Secondly, they plan to change the social order in line with their holy scriptures (Kepel, 1994:191).

All of these religious movements have in common the rejection of secularism but not necessarily of faith and reason. They are comfortable with their mastery of science and technology and see no contradiction in their acceptance of a faith not bounded by reason (Kepel, 1994:192). However, their different plans for society diverge and become deeply antagonistic, with the potential for bitter conflict. None of the doctrines of truth can afford to compromise for fear of losing followers (Kepel, 1994:192). It therefore becomes a clash of clear and stable identities or cosmologies.

Kepel (1993:198-203) goes on to further distinguish between two kinds of religious movements; religious movements that want a revolution from above and those that want a revolution from below¹⁶. The construction of society on religious grounds through education, gradualism and political mobilization can be seen as a revolution from below (Muslim Brotherhood, FIS in Algeria and American Christian fundamentalists).

Revolution from above attempts to confront the godless, impure society and government directly (Iranian revolution and Gush Emunim in Israel). Kepel acknowledges that the different religious cultures or communities will react differently in terms of how they view the state, law and democracy, based on their peculiarities.

Kepel, however, seems to believe that these religious movements have very different attitudes to democracy, law and political violence from those of the West - especially movements from below. Critics point to the attempts at "Islamic civil society" and its compatibility with democracy (Thomas, 1995:294). Kepel, however, seems far less

¹⁶ Haynes (1997:719/721) makes a similar distinction between religious fundamentalists and religious cultural groups.

optimistic and believes that the strong assertion of religious identities fundamentally opposed to many Western values and concepts will be a deep and bitter source of conflict.

2.4.3 Evaluation

Kepel (1993) believes that there has been a genuine resurgence of religion throughout the world, especially among Abrahmic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism), that can in large be contributed to the failures of modernization. He fails however to account for why these fundamentalist religious groups differ so much in their levels of violence and mobilization. Admittedly, he writes that how these groups view the state, law and democracy impacts on their actions and what they regard as necessary and appropriate action.

He is not clear on whether this is a result of their inherent peculiarities or different religious ontologies, although he seems to allude to these aspects (Kepel, 1993:198-203). Secondly he is not clear on whether the lack of a legitimate state, law and democracy, in any way impacts on the position taken by these religious groups towards these institutions. It is perhaps best to conclude that Kepel believes that it is a combination of both, together with the deep malaise found within these societies and how these groups choose to respond to them, that determines their behavior and actions.

Kepel has to be commended for his attempts to point out that the resurgence of fundamentalist religious groups is taking place around the globe, secondly, that they all stress their dissatisfaction with the modernization programme and secular society and finally, that these groups are responding in a rational manner to the deep-rooted problems of modern society and the secular state by bringing religion back into public life.

2.5 Juergensmeyer – Terror in the Mind of God

Juergensmeyer looks at religious terrorism committed by religious groups from around the world. He distinguishes this from secular, ethnic and nationalistic forms of terrorism. In fact he focuses exclusively on terrorism that draws its justification, ideology, motivation and organizational structure from religion (Juergensmeyer, 2000).

He confirms the current resurgence of religion with some frightening statistics. In 1998, thirty of the world's most dangerous groups listed by Madeleine Albright were religious groups (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Unlike most of the authors discussed so far, Juergensmeyer takes a slightly different approach to religion and violence. He doesn't believe religions' recent ties to violence can be explained away as aberrations of political ideology or mutant religions like fundamentalism. In fact he looks far deeper into the imagination and symbolism of religious tradition themselves.

2.5.1 Communities of Violence and "Cosmic Wars"

He proposes to study religious violence within its own cultural context and within the framework of global social and political changes that are distinctive of our times. He wants to understand the worldviews of perpetrators and supporters of religious violence. He chooses therefore to focus on communities of violence and the motivations behind them¹⁷.

These communities of violence are linked to the terrorist willingness to commit acts of terrorism since they draw from the moral, ideological and organizational support of these communities. A significant aspect of these communities is the perception that they are under attack or even engaged in "cosmic war". In these "cosmic wars" the religious images and symbols of struggle and transformation have been evoked and applied to worldly social struggles (Juergensmeyer, 2000).

His chapter on "cosmic war" is a fascinating and provocative chapter in which he examines the long, eerie and intimate relationship between religion and warfare. He believes there is a distinct symbolism that links the two¹⁸. War provides cosmology, history, eschatology and the reins of political control and perhaps even more importantly the hope of victory and the means of achieving it. Religion has applied symbols to deny death and control-related concepts such as disorder, destruction and decay. Religious images have used mechanisms

¹⁷ In fact Juergensmeyer (2000) is not comfortable with the word "terrorism" for a number of reasons. "For one thing, the term makes no clear distinction between organizers of an attack, those who carry them out, and the many who support it both directly and indirectly".

¹⁸ A detailed and complete discussion of this link cannot be given here. Chapter Eight of *Terror in the Mind of God* should be consulted for a detailed explanation.

to conquer violence and chaos through peace and order - but why then have it lead to real acts of violence?

Social struggles are more likely to be seen as “cosmic wars” in the following situations, according to Juergensmeyer. These are firstly, when the struggle is perceived as being in defense of basic identity and dignity, secondly, if losing the struggle would be unthinkable and finally if the struggle is blocked and cannot be won in real time or real terms.

In these desperate situations, the actors on both sides of the conflict can easily sketch the conflict as “cosmic conflict”. In fact, shaping it in these “cosmic terms” might be the only way of escaping a seemingly desperate situation. War or a cosmic struggle becomes a means to conquer death, struggle, evil and disorder.

Is religion then simply used for political purposes? It seems that Juergensmeyer thinks the picture is far more complex and not as simple as it may at first appear. He believes that in some parts of the world religion and political ideologies are so intertwined that it is difficult to isolate them, especially in the renewed role that religion plays in public order and religious nationalism in some parts of the world. More importantly, he contents that religion itself is not innocent. Usually it takes a peculiar set of circumstances; political, social and ideological, to fuse religion with violent expressions of social aspirations, personal pride and movements for political change.

2.5.2 Evaluation

Mark Juergensmeyer, to a large extent, supplements and complements Kepel in his conceptualization of communities of violence and “cosmic wars”. He adds the needed socio-psychological elements to the expressions of dissatisfaction with modernization and the deep malaise of secular society encountered in fundamentalist religious groups. His “communities of violence” concept is especially useful in trying to understand the actions and behavior of fundamentalist religious groups. The appropriate response and behaviour of an actor will depend to a large extent on the support and justification he gets from within his own community. In this context actions and behaviors concerning democracy, law and

state will depend largely on how these concepts are viewed and understood within the community.

When conflict meets the criteria to be perceived as a cosmic struggle, it is likely that the norms and values encountered within these communities of violence will to be hardened and be likely to become more fundamentalist. The “cosmic war” and “deep malaise” concepts reinforce the notion that desperate times call for desperate measures. When cultural identity and political survival are at stake, political ideology and religious fundamentalism often intertwine to such an extent that it is almost impossible to separate them.

Jurgensmeyer also needs to be commended for the impressive and vast amounts of empirical material discussed in his book. Few, if any, have interviewed such a large number of people connected to religious violence.

An important question, however, remains unanswered concerning just exactly where Juergensmeyer fits in. If communities of violence draw their moral and ideological support from religion and cultural identity, then this confirms that Juergensmeyer is a primordialist. However, if these communities of violence are subjected to political manipulation by political elites, a result of socially constructed “cosmic wars”, then he gravitates towards the constructivist side.

Perhaps the fact that Juergensmeyer views terrorism from the perspective of the individual practitioners complicates matters. From the individual point of view the actor (terrorist) is to a large extent dependent and limited by the structure (community of violence) and Juergensmeyer is unclear as to what extent agency can influence structure. However, his cultural approach, combined with various sociological and psychological explanations, leads to a non-reductionist understanding of religious violence. The fact that Juergensmeyer believes that religion (in its nature) has some part to play in political violence means that he will be classified as a primordialist in this discussion, admittedly perhaps incorrectly.

2.6. Implications - A Threat to World Order

What are some of the implications of the primordialist approach for international relations? Before this question can be addressed it is necessary to look briefly at the work of Bassam Tibi and his views on world order, Islamism and the Westphalian system.

2.6.1 Bassam Tibi – Alternative World Orders

Bassam Tibi (2000:859) also concludes that the politicization of religion is a significant factor in international affairs. He believes that it is not only the result of social discontent but also a legitimate attempt to establish an alternative divine order opposed to the secular nation-state and Westphalian order (Tibi, 2000:859). He believes that Islamism is an example of an attempt not only to establish a divine state order but also an attempt for an alternative vision of world order. It reflects more than a mere political revolt against Western dominance but includes a deeper rejection of secular Western values (Tibi, 2000:859).

Islamism is therefore an attempt at a counter hegemonic world order based on politicized Islam. The new divine order forms the blueprint for the establishment of a new political order not based in the Westphalian system (Tibi, 2000:859). Islamism is not just a rejection of Western hegemony and dominance, but a much deeper rejection of Western values and norms. It is an attempt to build a new world order on Islamic foundations. The best example of such an attempt is the Iranian Revolution¹⁹.

Tibi, not unlike Huntington, stresses the fact that conflict between the West and Islam revolves around the concepts of order, power and values. However, he puts a different spin on the concept. Tibi wants to move away from Huntington's security analysis view to that of conflicting civilizational worldviews. He calls for inter-civilizational dialogue rather than security concerns and world peace without Western dominance (Tibi, 2000).

¹⁹ The attempt ultimately failed for various reasons; most notably the inability of the Iranians to export their view of civilizational Islamism to the rest of the region, combined with the cultural and political distinctiveness of Iran (Tibi, 2000:857).

Tibi is however not so much concerned with the developments of politicized Islam, as with its implications. He can also be accused of perhaps being caught up too much in the rhetoric of the Huntington thesis rather than the actual theory itself.

2.6.2 The Westphalian System Under Threat?

Scott Thomas (1995:293) raises the implications posed by the primordialist paradigm: “Does the resurgence of religion pose a threat to order in the international society?” His reading of Huntington and Kepel seems to suggest that that is exactly what the primordialist concludes. Two of the pillars of the Westphalian state system are under siege by the resurgence of religion. State sovereignty is being challenged by new transnational movements that compete for people’s loyalties while at the same time a new set of beliefs and values is being brought into politics (Thomas, 1995:293).

What we see in the resurgence of religion worldwide is therefore twofold. Firstly, the rejection of the Westphalian system, leading to the establishment of alternative political systems. Both Huntington and Kepel argue that democracy, liberal institutions and “western” law might be alien to many civilizations. Tibi goes further and mentions that Islamism is inherently opposed to the nation-state as such²⁰. What then is under attack is the set of institutions and structures associated with the Westphalian system.

Secondly and more fundamentally, what is being challenged is the values and norms underlying the Westphalian order. The ontologies on which Western hegemony is built, are being challenged by various counter-hegemonic movements around the globe. What they all seem to have in common is a rejection of the modernization program, including mainstream religion that has adapted to the secular state. Tibi contends that what we are facing is a genuine attempt at alternative world orders and political systems.

The origins and underlying basis from which these alternative movements develop is an important question that needs to be addressed. Huntington and Tibi seem to imply that

²⁰ Tibi (2000:853), for instance, argues that Islamism is an attempt to do away with the Westphalian political systems, including the monarchies and dictatorships found in the Middle East. An alternative political order would entail something along the lines of what was originally attempted with the Iranian revolutions, but which failed, according to Tibi.

basic civilizational differences alone account for differing worldviews and ultimately alternative ontologies. Kepel seems to suggest that it is a combination of differing worldviews (cultures) and the failure (deep malaise) of the modernization programme (Westphalian system/ western values...) in these countries.

Jurgensmeyer adds to the Kepel thesis by showing how this deep malaises can lead to “communities of violence” and “cosmic wars”. War and religion become the only way to justify or remedy the seemingly evil and godless malaise of modern society.

The first implication posed by the primordialist paradigm therefore seems to be clear. Huntington concludes: “For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead a world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with others” (Huntington, 1993:49). Across the board primordialists agree that we live in a world of differing worldviews and that to presuppose that the Westphalian order, secular state and modernization programme are universally embraced (at least the Western conceptualization of it) might be premature and inherently unlikely.

Religion remains a stable and culturally important construct that plays a vital part in people’s identities, especially when differing cultural identities clash.

2.6.3 A New Cold War?

Thomas (1995:293) also suggests that a new link is being made between non-Western religious resurgence and a “new Cold War”²¹. American foreign policy analysts and authors are already sketching religious fundamentalism and Islamism as the new bogeys replacing the communist threat in a post-Cold War era (Thomas, 1995:293-294) (Walt, 1997).

But is this a rather simplistic and alarmist reading of the primordialist perspective? Bassam Tibi, himself categorized by Hasenclever & Rittberger (2000:643) as primordialist - perhaps a bit less primordial than the latter, gives a more balanced view of the primordial

²¹ Juergensmeyer, Mark. 1993. *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. University of California Press: Berkeley CA.

approach. Admittedly Huntington's writing is West-centric biased and overtly concerned with security analysis but to deny the important contribution made by him in bringing culture/civilization into IR would equally be a big mistake (Tibi, 2000:858).

In Huntington's defense, he has perhaps revoked a bit from his initial analysis as exemplified by his *The West is Unique not Universal* follow-up article to the *Clash of Civilizations*?²². It is easy to be politically correct or to dismiss primordialist works as conservative doom prophecies. Tibi (2000:858) alerts us to the dangers of the two extremes: either downplaying all kinds of cultural conflict or overemphasizing the differences leading to conflict.

Francis Fukayama, might be very wrong in contemplating the end of history and the global triumph of liberal democracy and market economy. The modernization programme according to the primordialist, hasn't so far won over the globe. Instead we encounter resistance, be it in the form of civilizations, cultures, countries, communities or individuals, to much of the Fukayamian world. Even Fukayama (2002:7) has concluded that Europe and America differ over what type of democracy to defend in terms of the ultimate source of liberal democracy (within the nation-state/international community).

These blocks of resistance can be explained away as aberrations in an otherwise modernizing and enlightened world - an unfortunate consequence of poverty, marginalization, inequality, corrupt regimes and the birth pains of political transition. Alternatively they can be viewed as legitimate and rational attempts at providing alternative worldviews where others have failed or lacked legitimacy. Do we run the risk, not of starting a new Cold War, but perhaps of initiating a new form of global Apartheid?

If anything, the primordialist alerts us to the multi-cultural and multi-civilizational world in which we live and the dangers in ignoring different civilizational worldviews in a search for universalistic morality. Also, as Juergensmeyer (2000) suggests, there might be some blame to be found in the flirtatious relationship between religion and violence.

²² Huntington, Samuel. 1996. "The West Unique, Not Universal" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75(6).

Although clash of civilizations might not be on the cards for the foreseeable future, there is undoubtedly a strange allure to the Huntington thesis. The very essence of this allure is very difficult to grasp. In many ways a clash of civilizations sounds a lot more realistic than the possibility of a global village. Is there an inherent human need to be viewed as different and to belong to different groups? Most primordialist thinks so or are of the opinion that a large part of the world is not in favor of a universal Western culture. Is there a flirtatious relationship between religion and violence (defending differences in uncompromisable ways)? Again most primordialists allude to the strong links between religion and identity. It seems that some ask very hard questions, to which many do not like the answers given.

2.7 Variation in Conflict, Cultural Identity and Institutions

It has already been mentioned that the primordialist approach cannot adequately explain the variation in levels of conflict and political expression over time and space. If cultural identity and religion are really so important why is the world not (if indeed it isn't) inflamed in religious and cultural conflict? Exactly when is the tolerance threshold crossed when conflict turn into "cosmic struggles" and "clashes of civilizations"? When do cultural and identity differences in themselves, if ever, become a source of violent conflict?

Secondly primordialists sometimes inadequately distinguish between cultural identity and politically relevant cultural identity. When is it really a clash of cultural identities and when is it mere political rhetoric? Are cultural identity and religion not often used to promote state interests rather than to advocate an emotive and romantic notion of cultural cohesion? Was the Iranian Revolution really about Islam or about Iran becoming a regional superpower?

Thirdly just what exactly is it about culture and identity that makes people engage in acts of violence? Is it, as social identity theory seems to suggest, a result of invidious comparisons: a battle between the haves and the have-nots?

Finally, what is the role played by political institutions? Can they be used as a vent for expression of grievances or are they often part of the problem? These are important questions that the primordialists don't always have adequate answers for. This is the type of doubt that especially the instrumentalists express with regard to the primordialist perspective. It is this perspective that we turn to in the next chapter for some answers to these questions. We will also compare the instrumentalist account with the primordialist perspective.

2.8 Conclusion

Can we therefore conclude that the primordialist view boils down to culturally based realignments and wars of religions? Hasenclever & Rittberger (2000:644) thinks so, leaving us with a clash of civilizations on domestic and international levels. This however is an overtly alarmist reading that doesn't take into account the differences and alternative worldviews that can be found across the globe. Neither does it take into account that many of these movements are involved in sincere and rational attempts at remedying a world that ultimately is not working for them.

Huntington, Kepel and Tibi share the view that culture is an important variable that should be taken into account in political conflict. All share the notion that common or close cultures will group together, forming civilizational alliances. They are at one in stressing the mutual rejection of Western modernization and the secular state by the new religious groups. This rejection of the Western modernization programme and secular values is based on legitimate and rational responses to the failures and emptiness of the modernization programme within these societies. Underlying the competitiveness and conflict in terms of economic, political, institutional and military power with the West, is a very real and basic conflict in beliefs.

Chapter 3

THE INSTRUMENTALIST APPROACH TO RELIGION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the instrumentalist accounts of religion and political conflict. Instrumentalist accounts have traditionally dominated the literature on ethnic and religious conflict. Central to the instrumentalist argument is the role played by political entrepreneurs in political conflict. Instrumentalists also stress the role played by the state, institutions, socio-economic variables and traditional concerns for wealth and power.

The chapter starts with an introduction to the instrumentalist perspective and its main arguments. Next, a more detailed account of instrumentalist explanations of domestic political conflict and international political conflict will be given. On the domestic level the empirical evidence concerning ethnic conflict will be examined. The role of religion in propaganda, nationalism and human rights will also be explored. On the international level empirical evidence of the Huntington thesis will be discussed, together with a criticism of these studies. Finally we conclude by looking at some of the most important limitations of the instrumentalist account of religion and political conflict.

3.2 The Instrumentalists

The instrumentalist approach is predominantly used in ethnic conflict to illustrate how political elites or political entrepreneurs use ethnicity as an instrument to further political and economic interests. The instrumentalist approach most of the time doesn't believe that religion and ethnicity cause conflict. Religion might be used to mobilize people, gain support and justify the conflict, but is not the underlying cause. The underlying and original causes remain economic and political in nature. Within this traditional

framework, culture and religion often have a very limited role as opposed to the traditional concerns of power and wealth.

As discussed in the previous chapter, instrumentalist accounts can be traced back to the original debate concerning nationalism. Instrumentalists mostly believe in the modernist approach that cultural identities (religious and civilizational) are largely constructed and invented to serve the purposes of political entrepreneurs. Religion as a cultural identity is therefore created to serve the goals and needs of political entrepreneurs that abuse and manipulate this identity according to their needs.

3.2.1 Instrumentalists and Religion

The instrumentalist approach rejects the assumption that religion and cosmologies are “genuine” causes of political conflict (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:644). They do not deny the current resurgence of religion but believe that it is a result of economic, social and political inequalities in and between nations. The unequal distribution of power and wealth between parties remains the underlying cause of the conflict. Consequently there is no departure from the traditional power and wealth perspective on conflict at the domestic or international level (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:645).

The instrumentalist perspective will therefore be defined, in this discussion, as an approach that highlights the traditional concerns of wealth and power as causes of political conflict and that emphasize how religion is used as an instrument by political entrepreneurs to further their own pursuits of wealth and power.

The instrumentalists have two main arguments to support the notion that political conflict will remain largely about power and material interest, rather than culture or religion. The first argument concerns political conflict at the domestic level and the second, political conflict at the international level. We will first address the former and leave the international dimension for later in the chapter.

the above conditions through economic aid, refugee relief, public health campaigns, democracy promotion and diplomacy (Talbot, 2001:75-76).

Although this reasoning in itself is not all that different from the other perspectives, a clear omission is present – that of culture or identity. However, the instrumentalist emphasis is on political and economic cleavages, economic decay, state collapse and unequal distribution of power and wealth. There are substantial differences (as well as similarities) between the ways in which primordialists, instrumentalists and constructivists address the issues of modernization, secularization, globalization and the deep malaises of modern society.

It is, however, important first to take a look at how instrumentalists view political conflict in general. Ted Robert Gurr is probably one of the most renowned scholars of ethnic conflict and frequently used in instrumentalist accounts of political conflict.

3.3.1 Ted Robert Gurr – Minorities at Risk

Many observers believe that ethnic conflict has been on the increase in the aftermath of the Cold War¹. Gurr, however, believes that ethnic conflict has been on the decline since the early nineties (Gurr, 2000) (Peace Watch, 2000:6). Three important observations can be made to support this claim.

3.3.1.1 Ethnic Warfare on the Wane

First, the shocks of state reformation, in the aftermath of the Cold War, have largely passed (Peace Watch, 2000:6). Gurr (2000:53) believes that most ethnic wars started during the Cold War, in the 1950's, and that the conflict in the nineties was a culmination of this long-term general trend. The end of the Cold War resulted in a peak in this long-term trend, as the door was opened for new ethnic and national claims. Most of these wars started between 1985 and 1993 (two thirds); only very few have started since. New episodes of ethnic and political conflict are therefore limited in the post-Cold War era.

¹ Gurr (2000:60) argues that objectively speaking ethnic conflicts are on the decrease, but they get more attention and coverage than before; leading to perceptions among policy makers and analysts that they are on the increase.

Secondly, he believes that wars of self-determination have been halved since the Cold War era. Thirdly, parallel to this trend is the willingness of parties to accommodate and settle disputes, before they escalate into armed conflict (Gurr, 2000:53-55).

Why then is ethnic warfare on the wane in the post-Cold War era? Gurr (2000:55) looks at the concentrated efforts of actors, the growing importance of minority rights and willingness to negotiate settlements as explanations for the decline of ethnic conflict.

3.3.1.2 New Approaches to Ethnic Conflict

The first major change is often the willingness of regimes to accept and protect minority rights (Gurr, 2000:55). Gurr (2000:56) points to the growing amount of autonomy given to ethnic groups within the state, especially in the West. This is, however, not without its problems. Elites will want to hang on to power, threats of succession are very real and pleasing everyone in cases of autonomy is not easy. Yet Gurr (2000:57) believes that most recent ethnic wars began with demands for complete independence but ended with autonomy. The cost involved in complete autonomy are often too high, which means that many ethnic groups will settle for some form of autonomy.

Minority rights, collective rights and democracy remain crucial instruments for dealing with ethnic heterogeneity, according to Gurr (2000:58).

Finally, Gurr (2000:58) believes that accommodating behavior and the settlement of disputes are on the rise. The active promotion of democratic institutions by the West, the engagement of the UN, NGO's and regional bodies on behalf of minorities, universal consensus over maintaining global and regional order and finally the costs of ethnic conflicts have all contributed to the willingness of parties to accommodate and settle disputes (Gurr, 2000:59).

3.3.1.3 Some Problems

Gurr (2000:61) believes that there are some problems, however, with the liberal assumptions that state sovereignty can be trumped by humanitarianism and that the international community will come to the rescue of minorities. He believes that a new strategy is needed to manage ethnic conflict that takes into account states, minorities and regional/international organizations as important actors. Gurr (2000:63) concludes that states remain the most important actors within this process but that the ability of regional and international organizations to implement these new strategies remains crucial.

An unintended consequence of these new strategies to accommodate ethnic conflict is that political entrepreneurs might make similar demands with the hope of gaining power or concessions. The danger for Gurr, however, remains hegemonic elites who use the state to promote their own people's interests at the expense of others. These political entrepreneurs have traditionally tapped into the reservoir of material inequality, political exclusion and government predation and channeled it to their purposes (Gurr, 2000:64).

More significantly, Gurr believes that there is the potential threat of alternative popular movements emerging to replace ethnical political movements. As he points out, most ethnical political conflicts are ending in compromise and settlements. This can, however, lead to disillusionment - opening up the door for other cultural identity-based popular movements to drain the support from ethnic movements. Gurr (2000:64) points to the very real possibility of religious and class-based popular movements supplanting ethnic movements (as they themselves replaced revolutionary social movements) as the dominating form of mass cultural-political movements.

3.3.1.4 Evaluation

It is not difficult to identify the underlying instrumentalist assumptions in the work of Gurr. His emphasis on democracy, minority rights and liberal institutions is typical of the instrumentalist agenda in combating political conflict. He also clearly believes that political entrepreneurs, to further their own agendas, use ethnicity and religion as instruments. They

tap into the reservoir of material inequality, political exclusion and predatory governments to transform socio-economic and political conflicts into religious and ethnic struggles.

Gurr's findings also seem to contradict the hypothesis of Huntington that intrastate conflict will increase in the post-Cold War era. His findings that there is a downward trend in the occurrence of ethnic conflict and that increasingly these disputes are being settled and his argument that many ethnic conflicts in the early nineties are merely a continuation of Cold-War struggles seem to directly contradict the empirical evidence on which Huntington bases his thesis.

Critics, however, point out that Gurr's study does not take into account the unique position and role played by refugees (Peace Watch, 2000:6). Although the number of refugees is down globally the number of internally displaced persons is increasing – as states are closing their borders to refugees.

Although Gurr's study deals with ethnic conflict, it is relevant to our discussion on religion. It highlights the same approach taken by instrumentalists dealing exclusively with religion. Ethnicity and religion are both vital parts of cultural identity and to a large extent ethnic conflict can often be viewed as religious conflict, except of course if the parties share the same religion. In any event religion and ethnicity are both important elements of cultural identity.

3.3.2 Dalacoura and Islam

Katerina Dalacoura is a good example of the instrumentalist perspective applied to religion. Her main argument is that Islam is shaped by politics and not the other way around. She also concludes that Islamic fundamentalism is an ideology and that Islamic authenticity is a myth (Dalacoura, 2000:879). By Islamic authenticity she is referring to the widespread conception that Islamic politics are exceptional and should be studied with the unique influence of Islam in mind. She believes that Islam does not warrant a different approach and that universal categories can be applied to an explanation of politics in the region.

She therefore argues against the notion of Middle Eastern exceptionalism and the fundamental notion that religion should be studied as an independent and vital force in the international relations of the region (Dalacoura, 2000:880).

Dalacoura (2000:880) concludes that: “Islam is important for the analysis of IR but only if we recognize that its role is shaped by economic, political and social developments which are unrelated to the precepts of the religion or the contents of the Koran. Religion should therefore not be privileged as an independent field of study in the context of IR”.

Dalacoura (2000) explores war propaganda, nationalism and human rights within this context by looking at recent studies and concludes that giving religion a special role in this region is not warranted.

3.3.2.1 War and Religious Rhetoric

She starts by looking at a recent study done by Saskia Gieling dealing with religious rhetoric and the justification of war. The study focuses on the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980's and on the use of religious propaganda by the Islamic Republic of Iran². Dalacoura (2000:881) concludes that the study shows that Islam was not the driving force behind the war but was moulded to serve Iran's purposes. Terms such as “Jihad” and concepts such as “martyrdom” were as a matter of fact hijacked by the government to serve far less holy and sacred purposes.

The study also makes the link between religion and nationalism, showing how the “Iranian leadership began to emphasise the role of Iran as the defender of Islam” as the war progressed (Dalacoura, 2000:881). Thus, according to Dalacoura, religious symbolism was used as an instrument to promote national interest and breed solidarity and patriotism in the Iran-Iraq war.

Dalacoura (2000:882) quotes Gieling's summation of the war as: “a struggle between Islam and unbelief and between truth and falsehood, and of the United States, in its role as ‘great

² Gieling, Saskia. 1999. *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran*. I.B Tauris: London.

Satan' and vanguard of 'worldwide arrogance' as the main enemy of the Islamic Republic, in reality the Iranian leaders regarded the war as one with Iraq only".

3.3.2.2 Nationalism and Islam

Next she looks at the relationship between Islam and nationalism, by drawing on the work of Fred Halliday³. He challenges the notion that religion and secular nationalism cannot compete for people's loyalties in the region (Halliday, 2000:45-50).

Halliday believes that nationalism in the region can compete with religious transnationalism and to suggest that the only real form of nationalism in the region is religious in nature is incorrect. He directly challenges the exceptionalist argument that religious transnationalism (alliance to Islamic civilization rather than the state as such) is the only "real" nationalism in the region. He points to the numerous examples of where state interest was put first before that of religion, including Iran, Algeria and Palestine. He therefore challenges the notion that secular nationalism only has a superficial hold on people in the region and that religion has a stronger hold over people's loyalties (Halliday, 2000:50).

Secondly, he locates nationalism in the Middle East within the broader debate between primordialism and modernism. Halliday is in favor of the modernist account of nationalism and believes that it can also be applied to the region. This leads him to conclude that "behind the seeming continuity of culture and identity there exists not so much a reproduction of identity or tradition as the selection, reformation and invention of symbols and narratives to support present purposes" (Halliday, 2000:7).

He goes further and states that there is no inherent association between Islamism and terrorism also that there is no traditional and scriptural support for monarchy in the region. This leads Dalacoura to conclude that Halliday's study is a clear example that: "the interplay of political forces, rather than culture or religion, determines the outcome of political struggles" (Dalacoura, 2000:884).

³ Halliday, Fred. 2000. *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*. Saqi Books: London

3.3.2.3 Human Rights

Finally, Dalacoura looks at human rights by drawing on the work of Mayer⁴. She concludes that the study shows that there is no authenticity in the Islamic human rights schemes and that they are in fact creations of conservative Islamic thinkers and institutions. These attempts at an Islamic human rights scheme occupies a rather uncomfortable middle position, a hybrid of traditional Islamic precepts and international human rights norms. In the end they are nothing but instruments of control that need a repressive policy to enforce and have no popular support (Dalacoura, 2000:885).

Dalacoura (2000:886), drawing on the above three areas of study, comes to the conclusion that there is no Islamic essence that shapes politics in the region that deserves to be studied independently. She sees no fault lines being drawn between Islamic and non-Islamic nations. Instead she concludes that “a helpful understanding of the role of religion is one that takes into account the social, economic and political concerns that lie behind the religious terminology or imagery. Mundane and universal issues such as social injustice, political legitimization and the defense of the homeland...” (Dalacoura, 2000:887).

3.3.2.4 Islam No Special Case

It is clear that the instrumentalist approach believes that in most cases religion doesn't deserve any special attention. Although instrumentalists are not oblivious to religion and show an interest in its study, they more often than not conclude that it plays a secondary role in political conflict to that of power and wealth. Subsequently, religion as an independent variable is often weak and is generally viewed as a spurious variable, masking the real causes. Religion is viewed in most instances as political rhetoric that political entrepreneurs use to promote their own ends. Religious identity is also subject to manipulation by political entrepreneurs, thus negating the unique and special influence of religious identity as a cause on its own.

⁴ Mayer, Elizabeth Ann. 1999. *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*. Westview Press: Boulder CO.

They point out how in times of war and conflict religion is often used to justify state action or to help gain support for the ruling regime. In the war against Iraq, Iran used religion as an instrument to help win the war against Iraq and uphold the values of the Revolution (Dalacoura, 2000:886). Religious rhetoric and symbolism was used to serve the purposes of the state.

In the case of nationalism, instrumentalists find that behind the seeming exceptionalism of religious transnationalism lie concrete political explanations. Applying a modernist reading of nationalism, instrumentalists show how Islamic identity is selected, reformulated and invented to serve the purposes of the state and its leaders. The same can be said of terrorism and the monarchy in the region. Terrorists, the monarchy and the state all mould religion to their purposes by taking religious identity and reformulating and creatively inventing it as needed.

Finally, they conclude that Islamic human rights are not authentic and in the process they clearly reaffirm the legitimacy of international human rights norms. Even Muslim attempts at human rights are seen as an instrument of control by which conservative Muslim government aims to control their population (Dalacoura, 2000:886).

The Western liberal assumptions inherent in these instrumentalist accounts cannot be more vividly expressed. Dalacoura (2000:884) correctly asserts: “ By denying the essentialist view of culture, Halliday re-emphasizes the universality of liberal principles”. Furthermore Mayer’s rejection of the authenticity of Islamic human rights, is a direct affirmation of cosmopolitan values and the legitimacy of international human rights norms. Gieling’s study shows that traditional concepts of IR like propaganda, political rhetoric and defensive and offensive war can be universally applied.

Dalacoura (2000:887) concludes that the above approach to Islam and the Middle East can be applied to religion and international relations in general. Does this then mean religion and culture have little or no space within the discipline of international relations? Dalacoura (2000:887) doesn’t think so and believes that the recent rise in interest in religion and culture in international relations redresses a curious neglect and should be commended.

She, however, believes that it should be limited to regional and area studies, so as to limit the reductionism and simplification which such studies are often prone to.

The instrumentalist contribution to religion and political conflict cannot be overlooked they make important observations and claims about the validity of viewing political conflict in religious terms. However one should be careful of not falling into the same trap in applying instrumentalist theories to all instances.

3.4. Instrumentalist Accounts of International Conflict

One of the biggest criticisms against Huntington and other cultural theories are that they are guilty of reductionism and simplification⁵. Instrumentalist accounts of international conflict, on the other hand, rely heavily on traditional liberalism and realism. Empirical studies of Huntington's thesis highlight the many realist and liberal accounts behind the façade of cultural theories of international conflict (Fox, 2001) (Russet et al, 2000) (Henderson & Tucker, 2001).

At the international level, instrumentalists believe that no new alliances are being formed along cosmological fault lines and that material and power interests remain the biggest concerns.

In the security area they believe that the coalition of Arab states against Iraq in the early nineties is an good example of where civilizational or religious factors were disregarded for more traditional concerns like a regional balance of power. Secondly, they believe that recently too many religious homogenous wars have been fought to support the primordialist argument.

In fact, Joseph Nye argues that we are not seeing anything like a clash of civilizations but rather a process of fragmentation and regionalization, based on narcissisms of small differences (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:647). Stephen Walt also believes that we are witnessing a split of political communities into smaller units along ethnic and national lines, rather than a coalescing of multinational civilizations (Walt, 1997:187).

⁵ See for instance Henderson & Tucker (2001), Bruce Russet et al (2000) and Stephen Walt (1997).

They conclude therefore that the empirical evidence does not support the autonomous conflict-generating power of religion, but that religion only becomes important in times of economic, social or political unrest when it is exploited by political elites. Subsequently they see no alliances being formed along civilizational lines or of religious concerns surpassing those of power and material concerns in international relations (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:647).

3.4.1 Empirical Studies

As noted in the previous chapter, many studies have been to test the empirical validity of the Huntington thesis. These studies reveal that behind the façade of cultural factors there lie traditional realist and liberal factors like geographical proximity, power parity, democratic peace and economic cooperation. They also find little if any evidence in favor of the Huntington thesis and his predictions about post-Cold War conflict.

Although the authors discussed do not claim to be instrumentalists, their views are consistent with the instrumentalist approach that emphasizes power and wealth as the most important factors in international conflict. They are also at odds with the primordialist accounts that emphasize religion and culture; choosing rather to rely on traditional liberal and realist accounts (centering on power and wealth).

3.4.1.1 Henderson and Tucker

Henderson and Tucker (2001) empirically tested the Huntington thesis on inter-civilizational warfare between 1816-1992. They tested three propositions that can be drawn from his thesis. First, that during the post-Cold War era, inter-civilizational differences are associated with an increased likelihood of interstate war (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:321). Secondly, that during the Cold War era, inter-civilizational differences are negatively or insignificantly associated with the likelihood of interstate war (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:322). Finally, that during the pre-Cold War era, inter-civilizational differences are positively associated with an increased likelihood of interstate war (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:322).

Their research design also makes provision for control variables like geographical proximity, regime type and relative capability (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:325-327). These three variables are more traditional realist and liberal accounts for interstate conflict and give a good indication of the validity of Huntington's thesis.

Henderson and Tucker (2001:328-329) find that the first proposition, concerning interstate conflict in the post-Cold War period, can be largely turned on its head. They find that in the post-Cold War period states of different civilizations are less likely to fight one another than those of the same civilization. Controlling for the three control variables, they find that joint democracy and geographic distance greatly reduce the likelihood of international conflict. Civilizational membership is not statistically significant during this period (Henderson & Tucker, 2001: 328-329).

During the Cold War they find some support for the second proposition, but contend that this might simply be a case of the wide scale of inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational conflict during the period, effectively cancelling out (rather than suppressing) the dominance of civilizational conflict (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:329-330).

In the pre-Cold War period they find that states of differing civilizations were less likely to fight one another than those of the same civilization. Controlling for geographical proximity, joint democracy and power parity did not cancel out this relationship (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:330).

These findings seem to suggest that Huntington is wrong about the period that matters most: the post-Cold War period. This leads the authors to conclude that Huntington's prediction about fault line conflicts is wrong and therefore also his prescription for cultural containment. As a matter of fact a view such as Huntington's would only serve to blind decision-makers, worsen conflict, create more enemies and ignore opportunities for cooperation (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:331).

The authors contend that much of the problem lies in Huntington's extreme cultural relativism - in that he views civilizations as being largely incommensurable and bound by fundamental differences. They don't accept the Huntington argument that Islamic states are

largely not susceptible to democracy and other liberal values and point to the fact that there is some compatibility between Western democracies and Islamic states, that might reduce the possibility for conflict in the foreseeable future (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:332)⁶.

3.4.1.2 Jonathan Fox – Islam and the West

Jonathan Fox (2001) applies the minorities at risk dataset (by Gurr) to test the validity of the Huntington thesis concerning civilizational conflict within states⁷. What is interesting is that he explains the result from three distinct perspectives. From the global perspective he finds that there has been little change in the ratio between civilizational and non-civilizational conflict since the end of the Cold War. Civilizational conflict still accounts for only 38% of all ethnic conflict (Fox, 2001:463).

From the perspective of Islam he also finds that there has been little change in the involvement of Islam in civilizational conflict since the Cold War. The majority of civilizational ethnic conflicts involve Islamic groups (65.4% post-Cold War and 60.7 during) and the majority of ethnic conflicts involving Islam are civilizational (62.4% post-Cold War and 63.5% during) (Fox, 20001:463). A minority of Islam's civilizational conflict is with the West, 17.4% after the Cold War and 15.3% during it.

He finds, however, that from a Western perspective the involvement of Western groups in civilizational conflicts with Islamic groups have increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War. The majority of Western civilizational conflict in the post-Cold War era has been with Islam (55.9%) - an increase from the Cold-War era (39.4%). It seems therefore that the Huntington thesis of a "West versus Islam" civilizational conflict in the post-Cold War era has some support.

⁶ An interesting article by Ray Takeyh (2001) in *Foreign Policy* explains why fundamentalism is failing in the Islamic world and what a possible Islamic democracy might look like. It is interesting to note that he believes that Islamic democracy would differ from Western liberal forms of democracy.

⁷ The Minorities at Risk dataset focuses on ethnic conflict, but as Fox (2001:460) correctly argues, nearly all domestic civilizational conflicts are also ethnic conflicts. Huntington's definition of civilizations basically involves ethnic groups identifying with some general civilizational identity, making it likely that opposing civilizational groups would be from different ethnic groups.

This is, however, slightly misleading if you take into account the global and Islamic perspectives. Globally, ethnic civilizational conflicts have increased in number but remain a small percentage of all ethnic conflicts. Also from the Islamic perspective there has been little change since the Cold War. Thus the West versus Islam civilizational conflict has to be seen within the larger rise in ethnic civilizational conflict globally and within Islam. Fox (2000:459) concludes therefore that from a Western perspective the Huntington theory has some support but not from a global and Islamic perspective.

This approach can perhaps account for Huntington's belief that there is a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam in the post-Cold War era. It is an interesting study that reminds us of how important it is to view things from a holistic and global perspective. The study is, however, limited to civilizational conflict within states and a similar study exploring conflict on the inter-state level remains an unfortunate omission.

3.4.1.3 Russet, O'Neal and Cox

Bruce Russet and his associates find that traditional realist influences like contiguity, alliances, relative power, together with liberal influences like joint democracy and interdependence provide much better accounts for interstate conflict than that of civilizational explanations (Russet et al, 2000:583 and 602). They tested the empirical validity of the Huntington thesis for militarized interstate disputes between 1950 and 1992.

They reaffirm the trend in previous studies, discussed so far, that civilizational conflict have decreased in the post-Cold-War period. They also found little support for a West versus Islam clash (Russet et al, 2000:602). Furthermore, they find that civilizational influences have little if no impact on traditional realist and liberal accounts of conflict. They help to predict alliance patterns, but have little to say about political institutions and commercial interactions (Russet et al, 2000:583 and 601-602).

This is an important finding since it contradicts not only the assumption that civilizations influence interstate conflicts directly but also that they shape traditional accounts of security arrangements, political institutions and economic practices. Russet et al, therefore not only deny that civilizations are the root causes of interstate conflict but also that they

significantly influence political and economical institutions, norms and practices. This means simply that they deny that civilizations significantly impact upon traditional realist and liberal accounts of interstate conflict (Russett et al, 2000:601).

Russett et al (2000:602) concludes by stating that the common bonds of economic interdependence and democracy unite many states and account for explanations of interstate conflict. Realist influences like geographical proximity and alliance patterns best explain the behavior of non-democratic states that are guided by traditional *realpolitik* (Russett et al, 2000:602).

3.4.2 Evaluation of Empirical Studies and Huntington's Response

It is clear that, according to the above studies, there is little empirical support for Huntington's thesis regarding civilizational conflict on both the interstate and intrastate level. All the empirical studies (Russett et al, Cox & O'Neal, Fox) found that civilizational conflict is on the decrease in the post-Cold War era. It seems as if Huntington is wrong about the past, selective about the present and wrong about the future (Russett et al, 2000:584-585). The empirical studies also conclude that there is little evidence to suggest a civilizational clash between the West and Islam, unless you view it from a narrow Western perspective. Also in conceptualizing civilizational identities, these studies all seem to indicate that this is problematic and that classifying countries along civilizational identities might not be as easy as Huntington suggests (Russett et al, 2000:588) (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:325) (Fox, 2001:461).

These empirical studies found that traditional realist and liberal accounts of international conflict far better explain conflict than the civilizational accounts. Geographical proximity remains one of the biggest determinants of international conflict between nations. Since Huntington predicts that most of the civilizational conflict will take place between civilizational fault lines, this seems to be especially relevant. Yet, the studies find that civilizational influences have little if any impact on traditional realist accounts, except in terms of alliances.

At the same time these studies find that liberal concepts like democratic peace or regime type are far better indicators than civilizations. Democracies are less likely to go to war against one another and civilizational identity does little to change this relationship. Finally, civilizational explanations cannot account for why different civilizations are willing to cooperate economically.

Yet, these empirical studies have some limitations. The Henderson & Tucker (2001) and Russett et al (2000) studies are all limited to 1992 and therefore exclude some important conflicts that could be regarded as civilizational. They defend this shortcoming by arguing that their data is still appropriate because when Huntington presented his argument in 1993, he drew on the same timeframe to validate his data (Russett et al, 2000:590). Henderson and Tucker (2001:329) also argue that there is no point in making claims that cannot be verified by historical records and that they drew upon the same cases available to Huntington when he first promulgated his argument (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:329).

In response to the article of Russett et al (2000), Huntington (2000) feverishly protests that his hypothesis is concerned with the post-Cold War period and that analysis of conflicts during the Cold War can neither prove nor disprove his central argument (Huntington, 2000:609). This is a strong argument since over 90% of the period that Russett et al (2000) analyze falls within the Cold War period. They respond, as already mentioned above, that Huntington himself used history to justify his own hypothesis. It perhaps then boils down to the issue of whether evidence is to be used systematically or anecdotally. Huntington himself seems to think that his civilizational theory is a paradigm rather than a work of social science (Henderson & Tucker, 2001:324).

Secondly, Huntington also believes that these studies are limited because they focus on interstate conflict (Huntington, 2000:609). He argues that it is widely accepted that violent interstate conflicts are on the decline and violent intrastate conflicts are on the increase. However, if we examine both Fox (2001) and Gurr (2000), we find that here too the clash of civilizations thesis holds little ground. Gurr (2000) in fact believes that ethnic intrastate conflict is on the decline. As Russett (2000:612) correctly points out “where then is the clash of civilizations?”

Finally, Huntington makes the interesting point that his study is mainly concerned with the escalation of inter-civilizational conflict in the post-Cold War period (Huntington, 2000:609). He is therefore not concerned with the frequency of conflicts as such (which his critics measure) but rather with the escalating dynamics of civilizational conflicts for contemporary global politics. Russett's (2000:611) rather cynical response is a question which asks whether we should simply wait for another world war, to conclude that civilizations are important determinants of international conflict? He believes that it is rather disingenuous for Huntington to conclude that the influence of civilizations will only be evident in the most violent wars.

3.5 Religion as an Instrument

We can now briefly summarize the main instrumentalist explanations concerning the impact of religion on political conflict. First, on the domestic level they find that religion is often used as an instrument by political elites (states, organizations and political entrepreneurs) to mobilize people around traditional concerns for power and wealth. These elites exploit economic, political and social cleavages and conflicts by attributing a religious dimension to them.

Secondly, behind the façade of religious rhetoric, nationalism and human rights arguments there lie the mundane and traditional agendas of self-interest, power and wealth. Religious symbolism and rhetoric are therefore shaped by political, economic and social concerns and not the other way around.

Thirdly, in terms of interstate and intrastate conflict, the instrumentalists find little empirical evidence for primordialist arguments. More significantly, they find that traditional realist and liberal explanations better account for the occurrence of interstate and intrastate conflict than cultural and primordial arguments.

3.6 Some Limitations of Instrumentalism

The instrumentalist perspective most on the whole denies the roles played by culture or religion as “strong” independent variables in political conflict. Religion and culture are instruments used by political elites to mobilize communities, in accordance with their own agendas, that resolve around the traditional political concerns of power and wealth (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000).

They admit that religious and cultural symbolism takes on very significant meanings in times of political, social and economic unrest, especially in societies with deep socioeconomic and political cleavages (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:646). Culture or religion themselves do not contribute to the violence per se, but can add flames to the fire, so to speak. Instrumentalists therefore remain rather oblivious to the role that religion and culture can play on their own accord in political conflict.

3.6.1 Political Entrepreneurs and Religion

Instrumentalists do not adequately explain why people would be willing in the first place to support these political entrepreneurs. This gives political entrepreneurs an awful amount of credit in terms of their ability to mobilize people around political and economic cleavages. It assumes that people are willing to fall for the religious rhetoric without examining the rationale behind this. This either implies that they are too blind and stupid to see what is happening or that they genuinely believe in the validity of the political rhetoric (which of course validates the primordial argument).

In fact instrumentalist accounts are especially silent on this matter and can be accused of not adequately explaining how political entrepreneurs manage to mobilize people religiously. A criticism that can therefore be leveled against the instrumentalist approach is that by ignoring religion as a significant independent variable, it underestimates the role that religion plays as a social structure. Religion itself can be reinterpreted and constructed by both political entrepreneurs and the community and can therefore be applied either positively or negatively to political conflict.

This debate will be taken up in the next chapter that deals with constructivist accounts of religion and political conflict. It is sufficient to conclude for now that instrumentalists largely view religion as a negative variable that leads to the escalation of conflict (Rittberger & Hasenclever, 2000:647). Little is written about or attributed to the ability of religion to help de-escalate political conflict and the ability of actors to interpret religious propaganda. Instrumentalist, therefore, conclude that it is best whenever possible to exclude religion from political conflict, including conflict resolution.

3.6.2 The Relationship Between Religion and the Conflict

Traditionally, instrumentalists believe that this process of indoctrination (mobilization by political entrepreneurs) occurs more easily under conditions of extreme poverty, inequality and civil unrest, also that a lack of democracy, civil liberties and political repression contribute to the breeding of hatred, despair and anger. In these conditions it is easier for political entrepreneurs to mobilize people by giving cultural, ethnic and religious meaning to these cleavages.

By emphasizing that these conditions make it easier for political entrepreneurs to manipulate communities and breed hatred, anger and despair, the instrumentalists imply that the underlying causes are social, economical and political in nature. This also implies that the conflict is never really “religious” in nature. This raises two important questions. First, if the conflict is never really about race, culture or religion why is it often viewed as such by participants? Secondly, at what point does a social, economic and political conflict turn into a religious conflict?

It is true that many regimes in the third world are marked by undemocratic regimes, lack of civil liberties, repressive political authorities and large social inequalities. It is also true to a large extent that religious and cultural cleavages become less important as populations grow more affluent⁸. The fact of the matter remains that most conflicts regarded as religious or cultural take place in societies with deep socioeconomic and political

⁸ See for instance Adam Przeworski who argues that democracies consolidate and endure if they can maintain a per capita income of more than \$1 000, experience economic growth and reduce income inequality. Przeworski, Adam. 1996. “What Makes Democracies Endure?” in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7(2).

cleavages. In most cases the immediate future for people caught up in this conflict looks very bleak.

The many “resource wars” in Africa illustrates this complicated relationship. It is estimated that of the twelve contemporary conflicts in Africa in 2000, up to 66% could be classified as religious or cultural⁹. Essentially resource wars are about scarce resources (land, water, minerals and food aid) but often take on the form of religious and ethnic conflicts. The Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Sierra Leone are all examples of where resources and religious/ethnic strife coincide within the conflict.

Chris Allen (1999), for instance, argues how patterns of barbarism, economics of war, globalization, political systems, state collapse and social, cultural and religious factors all account for warfare and endemic violence in Africa. He believes “spoil politics” are a result of these patterns and that the historical circumstances of these conflicts should not be argued away. It is therefore an oversimplification to attribute only economical, political and social concerns to the conflict, without taking cultural and historical circumstances into account.

In a similar way Robert Kaplan sketched, in his usual controversial and provocative manner, some of the conflicts of the future. Kaplan (1994:54) believes that environmental scarcity, cultural and racial clash, geography (artificial borders) and the transformation of war are all factors that will influence the way we view war, borders and ethnic politics in the future. He writes: “ an increasingly large number of people will be stuck in history, living in shantytowns where attempts to rise above poverty, cultural dysfunction, and ethnic strife will be doomed by a lack of water to drink, soil to till and space to survive in.”

Not unlike many primordialists discussed, he concludes: “In the eyes of these uneducated but newly empowered millions, the real borders are the most tangible and intractable ones: those of culture and tribe. Economic modernization is not necessarily a panacea, since it

⁹ Breytenbach, W. 2000. *Conflicts in Africa: Towards an Explanation for the Continent's 'Resource Wars'*. University of Stellenbosch: South Africa.

fuels individual and group ambitions while weakening traditional loyalties to the state” (Kaplan, 1994:60).

Kaplan concludes that for a large part of the world in these desperate environments, to whom the comfort and stability of middle class life is unknown, war is a step up - a liberation from their daily woes¹⁰. This connects closely with Jurgensmeyer’s concept of a “cosmic war”.

It seems therefore that the instrumentalist argument is problematic. In these desperate conditions, which are unlikely to improve, religious and cultural symbols take on very real and frightening proportions, especially if these conditions are marked by a weak state, artificial borders, refugees and resource scarcity. The conditions and underlying causes might be socio-economical and political, but for those trapped within these deadly and brutal conflicts it becomes essentially one of survival in which religion and ethnicity become the defining identities, the difference between the haves and have-nots.

This view also helps to resolve the problem of the timeframe in which the conflict turns from an instrumentalist conflict into a religious conflict. For people on the ground trapped in the conflict it often seems as if it is essentially religious and ethnic in nature. They don’t have the benefit of always viewing conflict from a systematic and holistic perspective. The instrumentalist analyst, however, does and with the benefit of hindsight and a holistic perspective it is easy to identify the underlying causes of the conflict. However, for those staring down the barrel of a gun or experiencing genocide this is of little value.

The dilemma remains: should the conflict be viewed as religious (primordialist) or as socio-political (instrumentalist) in nature. The answer lies somewhere in between, encompassed within, the constructivist approach to religion and political violence.

¹⁰ For an excellent discussion on environmental influences and a description of the situation in many developing countries, especially West-Africa and the Middle East see the following authors. Kaplan, Robert. 1994. “The Coming Anarchy” in *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994. 44-76. Homer-Dixon, Thomas F. 1991. “On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict” in *International Security*, Vol. 16(2).

3.6.3 Assumptions Inherent in Instrumentalist Accounts

Finally, there are some inherent assumptions within instrumentalist accounts that need to be explored to better understand some of the limitations of the perspective.

First, the inherent assumption that the classical modernization programme has been exhausted, meaning that it has been accepted and implemented globally needs to be addressed. This implies that the current resurgence of religious movements is therefore just a temporary aberration. They believe that we have indeed reached the end of history; that the only viable modernization programme is the Western liberal model (Eisenstadt, 2000:591)¹¹. Jeff Haynes (1997), however, warns us that under certain circumstances the postmodern condition stimulates a return to religion and that in the third world the secularization trend is not reversing.

Religious and cultural pluralism can therefore not be accommodated within the liberal visions of cosmopolitanism which removes religion from public life and views religions as a set of privately held beliefs (Thomas, 2000)¹². The problem is that in many parts of the world this transition has not been made and is unlikely to be made as alternative cultural programmes for modernity exist. The instrumentalist therefore dismisses the possibility of alternative forms of modernity existing while at the same time dismissing such attempts as current aberrations in the quest for a cosmopolitan secular society.

Islamic human rights, nationalism and alternative worldviews are seen as aberrations and illegitimate attempts at establishing modern societies. Instead they are viewed as instruments used by the state, political entrepreneurs and fundamentalist groups to manipulate people according to their own sinister agendas. In the process they dismiss the primordialist claims that these movements are genuine and legitimate expressions of the failures of modernity, secularism and alternative world orders.

¹¹ See Eisenstadt (2000) for an excellent discussion of multiple modernities and the huge role played by religion within these movements.

¹² See Thomas (2000) for a fascinating discussion on how it was necessary for religion to develop from being a public community of believers to becoming a private set of beliefs in order for the modern Westphalian international order to be created.

The inherent assumption of the instrumentalist perspective; that religion is a private set of beliefs that should be kept out of public the international sphere, limits the perspective's ability to sufficiently address the resurgence of religion. Ironically the perspective often forgets, rather conveniently, its own religious origins.

A second assumption that has become apparent in this chapter is the reliance on traditional realist and liberal explanations of political conflict on the international level within the perspective. The shortcomings of realism and liberalism are beyond the scope of this study but are nevertheless important to understand.

3.6.4 Shortcomings of Realism and Liberalism

As noted above, it is not within the scope of this study to focus on the shortcomings of realism or liberalism. Some of these shortcomings directly impact on the way instrumentalists view religion and political conflict on the international level.

One of the first major shortcomings is the traditional emphasis on the state as the primary actor in international relations. This in itself makes it difficult for this perspective to deal with bigger affiliations (identities) like civilizations or smaller ones like religious terrorist groups. Realism is especially prone to this shortcoming and it is therefore no accident that little is found within the mentioned studies concerning terrorism. This also leads to realists' seeking traditional state interest behind all conflicts.

Secondly, realism leaves little room for culture and normative theory within the perspective. Currently there is a big debate between constructivists and neo-realists concerning the role of culture and normative theory within international relations. This debate will be addressed in the next chapter. It is sufficient to conclude that there are cultural and normative explanations for traditional realist security concepts such as the balance of power, the security dilemma, anarchy and state interest.

The same applies for neo-liberal theories such as democratic peace, cooperation theory and international institutions. Also the concept of identity, at whichever level, is fairly alien to the two traditional international relations theories. If primordialists can be accused of

focusing too much and too rigidly on cultural identities and constructs, instrumentalist are certainly guilty of ignoring them.

In much the same vein, realism and liberalism are guilty of not sufficiently dealing with history, context and change. This can be attributed to the underlying positivist roots within the perspectives that are essentially geared to “problem solving” and a rational actor approach, rather than a theory that can discriminate between social time and space. Without getting into the debate concerning positivism, we can conclude that the instrumentalist perspective has little to say about social context, changing historical structures and structural transformation.

This leads to two of the biggest limitations, namely the inherent assumption and belief in the universal existence and acceptance of the Westphalian international order and the universal application of realist and liberal concepts. The instrumentalist perspective is by design built so that it is unable to understand and incorporate culture, religion and identity within its ontological framework.

3.7 Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the instrumentalist perspective directly contradicts that of the primordialist. Religion is not viewed as a “strong” independent variable worthy of special attention in political conflict. Instead it is viewed as an instrument used by political entrepreneurs, like states, elites and fundamentalist organizations to mobilize people around political and economical cleavages and other traditional conflict-generating variables.

Instrumentalists also find little if any empirical evidence for the claims of primordialists concerning civilizational conflicts at domestic and international levels. Here too they find that traditional realist and liberal explanations far better account for the occurrence of interstate and intrastate conflict than those of religion or culture.

Yet, the instrumentalist argument is limited by its own design. If primordialists are guilty of emphasizing cultural variables too much, leading to generalizations and oversimplification,

then instrumentalists are guilty of the same offences by completely ignoring culture and religion.

It is with this in mind that we now turn to constructivism, which attempts to find a middle ground between the two extremes.

Chapter 4

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO RELIGION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

4.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters we examined the primordialist and instrumentalist approaches to religion and political conflict. The primordialist account relies heavily on basic and fundamental differences between cultures or different worldviews to account for political conflict. They locate the current resurgence of religion within the context of modernization. They see religion as the expression of the failures of modernization and as a rational attempt at an alternative approach to that of secular western modernity. Within this approach, religion plays a central role, as it is at the core of what constitutes a cultural identity, alternative worldview and even a civilization.

In contrast to this view the instrumentalist account views religion as an instrument used by political entrepreneurs to mobilize the masses around traditional concerns of wealth and power. They believe that political and economical cleavages enable political entrepreneurs to exploit these grievances to their own advantage. They believe in the modernist argument that cultural identities are largely shaped, created and manipulated according to the needs of political entrepreneurs like states, organizations and charismatic individuals.

Consequently, instrumentalists believe that little has changed in international relations which are still best explained by realist and liberal accounts centering on the state, power and uncertainty (anarchy). On the domestic level, emphasis is still placed on the role of institutions, socio-economic variables and democratic governance. Instrumentalists remain hopeful and optimistic that the modernization programme will essentially reach all parts of the globe and transform it into a cosmopolitan society with western liberal democracy, human rights and international law.

Between the two opposite approaches of primordialism and instrumentalism we find the constructivist approach, which tries to bridge the gap between the two viewpoints. Constructivism is a rather recent addition to the theory of IR and brings a refreshingly new approach to the traditional problems and concepts of the discipline. It is also an approach that is “designed” to focus on new issues and concepts previously neglected or completely ignored within the “mainstream” IR discipline.

This chapter starts with a brief introduction to constructivism in general. Next, constructivism within the context of religion and political violence is explored. Starting with constructivism on the domestic level, the discussion will move to constructivism on the international level. Finally, a possible framework for accurately assessing the position of religion with the context of IR will also be examined.

4.2 Constructivism

Before looking at constructivist approaches to religion and political violence, it is important to briefly look at constructivism in general. Constructivism is a relatively new approach in IR, only coming to prominence in the late 1980's (Adler, 2002:96). The origins of constructivism are often traced back to the end of the Cold War, the third debate in IR and the rise of post-positivist theories (Adler, 2002: 98-100)¹. Mainstream IR scholars have often viewed constructivism with scepticism by miscasting constructivism as anti-positivist and postmodern (Hopf, 1998:171).

It is not the aim of this chapter to explore constructivism in any great detail, but because the approach is so new and unfamiliar to many, a brief overview is necessary. It is important to take note from the start that constructivism is a very lively and reflective school of thought, with many debates and different strands within the perspective.

¹ This is perhaps a rather simplified view of the origins of constructivism and its evolution in IR. For a more complete assessment see Adler (2002).

Whenever constructivism is referred to in this chapter, the common ground (that will be outlined below) between the different strands will serve as the proper reference.

The following discussion on constructivism will also highlight how constructivism differs from traditional IR approaches like realism and liberalism. The link between the traditional approaches and instrumentalism was made in the previous chapter and therefore the discussion also relates to the differences between constructivism and instrumentalism. Therefore in this discussion, references to the differences between constructivism and traditional approaches will inherently also imply instrumentalism.

4.2.1 Constructivism – Sociological and Philosophical Foundations

Constructivism focuses on describing the contingent, dynamic and culturally based conditions of the social world. Constructivists believe in the social construction of knowledge and the construction of social reality. In this view the material world doesn't come classified and the objects of our knowledge are therefore not independent of the interpretations and language attached to them. Interpretation of the world, when imposed on material reality, becomes knowledge for the world (Adler, 2002:95).

In contrast to realism, constructivists believe that interests and identities are not given, but created, and once created, take on a meaning of their own. This important difference will be discussed later in the chapter. It is, however, sufficient to note that realist and liberal mainstream IR theories view interests as largely given. Power, material interests, rational self-interest and anarchy are assumed to exist prior to any conflict. The same can be said of identity, which is often viewed as fixed by realists and liberals alike.

In opposition to primordialists, constructivists stress the ability of identity and interests to change over time and therefore challenge the primordialists' assumption that religious and cultural identities remain relatively stable and independent of other social influences (agency and structure). Constructivists therefore ascribe a more dynamic and socially

constructed contingent nature to identity as opposed to the more stable and fixed (often given) identity of primordialists.

Constructivist therefore doesn't take the world as it comes but sees the world as a project under construction - as "becoming" rather than "being". In this sense there is no ontology before epistemology. This is in contrast to positivism and materialism (found in mainstream IR theories like realism and liberalism) that view the world as it is². Unlike idealism or postmodernism (which takes the world only as it can be imagined or talked about), constructivism accepts that not all statements have the same epistemic value and that consequently some foundation for knowledge exists (Adler, 2002:95)³.

Constructivism is a three-layered understanding involving metaphysics, social theory and IR theory. It is metaphysical to the extent that it focuses on the reality that social scientists seek to know and how they use that knowledge to interpret reality. It is a social theory to the extent that it explores the relationship between knowledge and knowledge agents in the constitution of social reality. Finally it is an IR theory to the extent that it has ontological and epistemological foundations upon which research should be based (Adler, 2002:65).

4.2.2 The Four Main Strands of Constructivism

Constructivism draws from developments in the history of philosophy, sociology and social theory. Four specific currents of thought have influenced constructivism, leading subsequently to the development of four distinct strands of constructivism. These four

² Positivism is a metaphysical theory that believes in the unity of science, the distinction between facts and values and has strong beliefs in regularities (laws) in the social and natural worlds. Finally it places a tremendous reliance on the belief that empirical validation or falsification is the hallmark of real enquiry. Materialism is the view that material reality exists, regardless of perception and interpretation, and that what we know is a faithful representation of reality out there (Adler, 2002:111).

³ Idealism holds that the physical is just a collection of ideas and that the foundations of all knowledge are therefore in the mind. Postmodernism aims to uncover the discourse and power structures that control practice, they believe subjects are ontologically unimportant, reason is a chimera, no foundational points exist and that science is just power disguised as knowledge (Adler, 2002:111).

currents of thought are objective hermeneutics, subjective hermeneutics, critical theory and pragmatic realism (Adler, 2002:96-97)⁴.

It is important to briefly look at these strands in order to place the writers discussed in this chapter within the broader constructivist framework.

Modernist constructivism is the first major strand that can be identified. It combines objective hermeneutics (positivism) with a conservative cognitive interest in understanding and explaining social reality⁵. Alexander Wendt, Emanuel Adler, Peter Katzenstein, Jeffrey Checkel, John Ruggie and Volker Rittberger are all examples of modernist constructivists. Modernist constructivists are interested in how casual social mechanisms and constitutive social relations influence IR (Adler, 2002:97).

The second strand that can be identified is rules constructivism. This strand is a result of the combination of subjective hermeneutics (post-positivism) with a conservative cognitive interest in understanding and explaining social reality. Friedrich Kratochwil and Nicholas Onuf are the most famous rules constructivists. They look at uncovering the process by which social facts are constituted by language and rules (speech acts) (Adler, 2002:98). Vendulka Kubalkova is also a rules constructivist.

Radical constructivism is a result of radical subjective hermeneutics (postmodern discourse) and a dissident emancipatory or deconstructionist attitude towards knowledge in general. It often draws on postmodern (Foucault) and post-structuralist (Derrida) perspectives. Radical constructivists include Roxanne Doty, Richard Ashley, Cynthia Webber and R.B.J. Walker. This constructivist perspective is at the extreme end of

⁴ A comprehensive discussion of hermeneutics, critical theory and pragmatism is beyond the scope of this discussion but nevertheless is important to fully understand the differences between the four different strands of constructivism. Adler (2002:96-97) gives an insightful discussion of the influences of hermeneutics, critical theory and pragmatism on the different strands.

⁵ Hermeneutics subordinates explanation and description to interpretation and understanding of meaning. Objective hermeneutics refers to the perspective that the study of human meaning can aspire to objectivity in contrast to subjective hermeneutics, which believes that meaning is subjectively constructed through language. For the intents and purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to conclude that objective hermeneutics is largely positivist in outlook while subjective hermeneutics is decisively post-positivist and in some instances even postmodern (Adler, 2000:96-99).

constructivism and often falls outside the “common ground” in constructivism because of its insistence that no statement can be more valid than others and that science is accordingly just one more hegemonic discourse (Adler, 2002:98).

The last strand that can be identified is critical constructivism. Critical constructivism combines objective hermeneutics with a dissident interest in the emancipatory effects of knowledge. The most famous critical constructivists are Robert Cox and Andrew Linklater. Critical constructivism draws from the critical social theory of Jürgen Habermas and takes a pragmatic approach to science, meaning it dismisses the notion that we have to choose between objectivity and relativism, calling on us to adjust our ideas about the truth as experience unfolds (Adler, 2002:99).

Rather than focusing on the differences and debates between the four strands, it is more important for the purpose of this study to focus on the “common ground” between the different strands of constructivism. It should be noted, however, that the differences between the four strands are important and do make a difference in the way they approach social science and international relations.

4.2.3 The Common Ground Between the Four Strands

All the different strands of constructivism converge on the basic ontology that the social world can be depicted as inter-subjective and that collectively meaningful structures and processes in which ideas have causal independence and ideational factors, such as norms and beliefs, can take on structural features. Material resources and forces gain meaning only from human action, based on embedded structures of shared knowledge (Adler, 2002:100).

Unlike neo-realists and neo-liberalists, constructivists don’t believe that anarchy and the distribution of relative power drives international politics. Instead, inter-subjective norms, ideas and knowledge shape the behaviour of actors by creating the identities and interests of actors (Copeland, 2000:187). Thus, the crucial distinction (also between

instrumentalists and constructivists) that identities and interests are not given but socially constructed. Constructivists can therefore argue that anarchy is what you make of it. It boils down to a metaphysical stance that the world is not given but created through inter-subjective and collectively meaningful structures and processes.

Constructivists therefore believe that the social world is made of inter-subjective understandings, subjective knowledge, and that material objects and interests gain efficiency only because of these inter-subjective understandings (Adler, 2002:100). This can be said to be the ideational structure consisting of inter-subjectively shared ideas, norms and values held by actors and shaped by the processes of actors (their behaviour) (Copeland, 2000:189).

Except for radical constructivists, who believe it is ideas all the way down, constructivists therefore believe in a material and a social reality. Unlike realists and liberalists, however, they see a world constrained not only by material reality but also by shared social meanings, which makes for a broader, more contingent, more unexpected world, endowed with more possibilities (Adler, 2002:100).

Constructivists believe that social facts are facts only by human agreement and unlike rocks and trees they depend on human consciousness and language for their existence (Adler, 2002:100).

Constructivists also believe that although people carry meaning, knowledge and understanding in their heads, the same meaning, knowledge and understanding can be gained by inter-subjective understanding, collective knowledge, language and social rules (Adler, 2002:100). Actors are therefore shaped by ideational social structures.

Finally, constructivists, except radical constructivists, agree on the mutual constitution of agents and structures (Adler, 2002:101). This simply implies that actors get socialized by social structures but at the same time through their behaviour and actions (processes) have the ability to change social structures. The social structure therefore not only

regulates the behaviour of actors but also socializes them through the processes (behaviour of actors) of the social structure (Copeland, 2002:190).

4.2.4 Added Value of Constructivism

Constructivism can help to make substantial improvements to the understanding of some important IR concepts and problems. This can be called the added value of constructivism and is borrowed from Adler's (2002:102-103) conceptualization. First, constructivism shows how inter-subjective knowledge and ideas constitute and affect social reality and its evolution. It helps explain where interests come from by explaining why actors converge around specific norms, identities and cause-effect understandings. It also escapes the notion that you have to choose between material- or idea-based notions of interests, by showing that interests are ideas. This means that you cannot simply mechanically induce interests from anarchy and the distribution of material capabilities (Adler, 2002:102).

Secondly, constructivism clearly shows that change is possible in international relations, and also points towards the mechanism of change. Constructivists draw on historical context, structural and agent change and the evolution and transformation of new social structures to illustrate the dynamic nature of social reality (Adler, 2002:102).

Thirdly, constructivism highlights the effects of social communication on social relations. Thus, unlike rational choice theory, constructivists argue that actors do not engage in bargaining to achieve the utilities they expect but rather engage in discourse (debates and persuasion) to promote collective and shared understandings. They reject instrumental rationality (most efficient alternative) in favor of practical or communicative rationality that is based on practical reason, historical-, social- and normative context and communication and persuasion (Adler, 2002:102). Social communication and practical rationality largely depends on language, the vehicle for the diffusion and institutionalization of ideas, practices and ultimately the mechanism for the construction of social reality.

Fourthly, constructivism brings back into IR the importance of discursive power like ideology, ideas, culture, language and knowledge (Hopf, 1998:177). It chooses to focus not only on material power but also on concepts like speech acts (rules for behavior), hegemonic discourse, normative interpretations, identities and moral authority (Adler, 2002: 103).

In the process, constructivism has made important empirical contributions to the study of norms, identity, sovereignty and institutions (Adler, 2002:104). It is with this brief background in mind that we now turn to constructivist views on religion and political conflict.

4.3 Constructivist Accounts of Religion and Political Conflict

Constructivists believe that social conflicts are embedded in cognitive structures such as ideology, nationalism, ethnicity or religion. These social structures consist of shared understandings, expectations, and social knowledge that provide social actors with value-laden conceptions of the self and others and that consequently affect their strategic choices (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:647).

To understand the strategic choice of actors, it is therefore necessary to understand the underlying social structure of shared understandings, expectations and social knowledge, that shape their strategic choices.

Like the instrumentalists, the constructivists give attention to power and interest but believe that they are also embedded in cognitive structures that give meaning to them (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:648). As already mentioned, constructivists view power and interests as embedded in ideas. Constructivists also account for both material and discursive power and interest.

Secondly, like instrumentalists, they also agree on the importance of political entrepreneurs in political conflict. However, constructivists believe that religion is inter-

subjective structures of their own that cannot be manipulated at will by political entrepreneurs, as generally accepted by instrumentalists (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:648-649). This means that the “audience” can decide for themselves and can ultimately decide on the interpretation of the legitimization of political violence (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:649).

Instrumentalists, as highlighted in the previous chapter, believe that religion’s role in political conflict is at the best rhetorical. They believe that political entrepreneurs can manipulate religion almost at will as illustrated in Dalacoura’s discussion of the Iranian Revolution, Islamic nationalism and Islamic human rights. In the above instances, religion was exposed as being mere rhetoric used in the mundane traditional workings of war propaganda, nationalism and totalitarian control.

Constructivists, on the other hand, argue that religious traditions are inter-subjective structures that take on a life of their own and consist of shared meanings, social discourse and social practices. This for constructivists means that the strategic choice (actions) and self-understandings (identity) of agents are inseparable from the shared meanings, social discourse and social practices they encounter.

Religion as a social structure consisting of inter-subjectively shared meanings, discourses and practices is therefore not merely an instrument that can be manipulated without changing the underlying social nature of the structure.

More fundamentally, the constructivist approach leaves room for the understanding of how shared inter-subjective social meaning, understanding, knowledge and practices can constitute the social world in which actors find themselves and that subsequently interacts with their material reality. It opens up the possibility of seriously considering alternative worldviews, modernization programmes and the role of religion in political conflict.

The constructivists approach therefore proposes to view religion as an intervening variable between a given conflict and the choice of conflict behaviour (Hasenclever &

Rittberger, 2000:649). It seizes the middle ground to the extent that it incorporates both perspectives.

It takes the primordialist emphasis on culture, identity, religion and cosmology seriously without ascribing a fixed nature to these variables. As social structures that are embedded in shared understandings, knowledge and processes, they are all subject to change by social actors and other social and material variables. Thus, it improves on the primordialist conceptualization of culture or religious identities by ascribing them as dynamic, culturally contingent and influenced by social, cultural, political and material forces and structures.

It accepts the instrumentalist concept of political entrepreneurs but illustrates that their ability to manipulate religion at will is constrained by the fact that religion is a social structure of its own. Finally, it also emphasizes the role of material variables like socio-economic conditions, power and interests but locates them within the broader interplay between the social and material environment.

Given the discussion so far, the choice of authors decided on in the following discussion gives a fair reflection of the constructivist approach. Scott Appleby, although not identifying himself with any perspective in general, gives an easy and subtle introduction to constructivist logic without overwhelming the reader with theory. His constructivist logic can be reduced from his main arguments and complies with most of the common ground within the perspective.

Volker Rittberger, as a modernist constructivist, gives a good account of how constructivists can use positivist methodology like models to try and understand the strategic choices confronted by elites.

In contrast, Vendulka Kubalkova offers a linguistic constructivist framework for dealing with religion (International Political Theology - IPT) that consciously tries to overcome

positivist limitations. This discussion therefore tries to cover and illuminate the common ground between the three authors as well as the differences between them.

4.4 Scott Appleby

Scott Appleby (2000) provides an interesting example of constructivist thinking on religion and political conflict. Although he does not explicitly put forward a constructivist model or framework, through which to explain religion and political conflict, the inherent constructivist assumptions and thinking are clear in his work. Some of the most important constructivist thinking in his work will now be highlighted.

4.4.1 Religion and the Public Sphere – Traditional IR Assumptions

Appleby starts his discussion with the important link between religion and the separation of public and private spheres. He contends that religion is still largely viewed as part of the private sphere despite its growing role in the public sector. This again underlines the misconception of the instrumentalist approach, as already highlighted in the previous chapter.

The minimalist argument prevailing in much of the West is aimed at limiting the role of religion to the private sphere and maintaining the public-private sphere distinction. The rest of the world does not share this limiting view of religion's influence on the public sector. This limiting view according to Appleby (2000:3), makes it very difficult for secular realist IR scholars, who have internalized this distinction, to understand the complex, multiple roles and functions of religion.

This often creates the impression, in the eyes of secular realist IR scholars, that fundamentalists are opposed to change and want a return to a mythical medieval Islam. As Appleby (2002:21) points out, fundamentalists don't oppose change, they specialize in change. They are progressive in the sense that they don't envision the current world as

constituting progress and aim to transform the “Prophet into an icon of global jihad who delivers modern nation-states to Islam” (Appleby, 2002:21).

Appleby goes on to mention some of the reasons why the secularization theory to a large extent has remained unproven as well as some of the transformations taking place within religion itself (Appleby, 2000:3-6). This is important and highlights the limitations so inherent in traditional IR approaches, which have internalized the modern western secularization programme.

4.4.2 Types of Militant Religion

More important for our current discussion are the different types of militant religion that Appleby (2000:7) identifies. He believes that militant religion produces a broad spectrum of religious actors with differing attitudes towards the pursuit of political power and the use of violence. Even within religious protest groups and oppositional movements dedicated to obtaining political power and exercising it to enforce conformity to religious law or moral codes, several different strategies and patterns of violent and nonviolent activism have been identified by researchers (Appleby, 2000:7).

Appleby in the end, after examining religious nationalism, fundamentalism and liberationism, identifies two types of religious militants: the religious peacemaker and the religious extremist. “The religious peacemaker is committed primarily to the cessation of violence and the resolution of conflict: *reconciliation or peaceful coexistence with the enemy is the ultimate goal*. By contrast the extremist is committed primarily to *victory over the enemy*, whether by gradual means or by the direct and frequent use of violence” (Appleby, 2000:13).

The difference between the two is therefore not in the use of violence per se but how they view violence and their understanding of its role in the conflict. The social context together with the local and regional political culture to a large extent influences the direction religious militants take (Appleby, 2002:20).

Appleby (2002:20), for instance, illustrates how American Christian fundamentalism is generally less prone to violence as a result of the more open, plural, tolerant and lawful American society. This is in contrast to many Arab countries marked by weak nation states or dictatorial and repressive regimes. These conditions encourage violent fundamentalist variants bent on replacing the state, as in Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Where some form of democracy and free elections persists many moderate fundamentalist movements can be found, as in Malaysia, Indonesia, Jordan and Algeria (Appleby, 2002:21).

Appleby also discusses tolerance as a religious value. Crucial in his conception of tolerance, is how it relates as a measure of how religious movements view outsiders. The degree of tolerance will largely determine the type of behaviour expressed by religious groups (Appleby, 2000:14-15). Appleby therefore brings into the discussion the important constructivist conceptions of identity and understanding of “self” and “others”.

In line with the constructivist approach, however, the choice of behaviour will be influenced by the political or religious leaders’ ability to legitimize the behaviour. The rank-and-file members of religious communities can decide for themselves and their religious education and spiritual formation may enhance or impede a leader’s ability to mobilize people for violence (Appleby, 2000:15).

4.4.3 The Role of Religion

Appleby (2000:55) sees the meaning of the sacred within the believing community to be the result of an ongoing attempt to symbolize, ritualize, experience, codify, refine but never finally resolve the meaning of the sacred. These attempts lead to the development of mythical, scriptural, ethical and legal manifestations based on the foundational experiences of the community. Religious leadership guides this ongoing, organic and interpretive process, which implies that religious experience and meaning change over time (Appleby, 2000:55).

It is crucial therefore to “lay to rest” the common assumption that fundamentalists are literalists who do not interpret (even if they themselves claim to do so). Instead they are the most ideologically narrow-minded interpreters of religion (Appleby, 2002:17). This again emphasizes the constructivist argument that cognitive social structures, like religion, constantly get reinterpreted by followers and clergy alike. Religion cannot be separated from its social reality and therefore to claim that religious rhetoric is given in terms of scripture (“the bible says so”) is simply wrong.

This means to say that religion is often influenced by political, cultural and social influences which enable it to hide within culture and our daily lives. This makes it hard for religion to be identified as an independent variable. But as Appleby (2000:55) puts it: “religious behavior is nonetheless distinctive; failure to recognize motivations, purposes, and patterns that are peculiarly religious invites flawed analysis of the actors as well as the acts”.

He further concludes: “The unique dynamism of lived religion – its distinctive patterns of interaction not only with secular, nationalistic, ethnic, and other elements of political or personal identity but also with its own sacred past – means, among other things, that religious behavior cannot be confidently predicted merely on the basis of an individual’s group’s affiliation with a specific religious tradition, especially if that tradition is conceptualized in the abstract” (Appleby, 2000:56).

Appleby further makes a distinction between archaic versus modern religions. According to him the former had the ability to sacralize the tribe itself and shape its relations with other tribes. This led to cultural mimesis and competition in which violence became sacralized. “In short, cultures generated lasting forms of camaraderie and chauvinism at the expense of their designated victims; scapegoating prevented ethnic rivalry from spinning out of control and consuming the entire tribe” (Appleby, 2000:79).

Appleby (2000:78-80), however, believes that modern religion has the power to resist violence. The ability of modern religions to allow internal dialogue within communities and to practice “moralpolitik” sets it apart from its archaic counterpart. Central to this process of “moralpolitik” and internal dialogue, is the role of the religious leader.

This complex relationship requires expert on-site analysis and understanding of the religious and cultural forces shaping a society (Appleby, 2000:56). Central to this understanding is the role played by religious leadership in interpreting the community’s contemporary experiences.

4.4.4 Religious Leadership

Belief, ideology and leadership are central to directing a community towards or away from violence. The host religion of the religious movement both constrains and empowers the political entrepreneur by its historic teachings and practices. Crucial in Appleby’s (2000:118) view are the levels of religious education and spiritual formation of the followers.

The ability of political entrepreneurs to exploit the host religion, by shaping it into a narrow ideology that suits their purposes, is crucial. Certain socioeconomic circumstances, like ineffective and inaccessible political institutions and deteriorating or structurally unfair economies and discrimination, enable political entrepreneurs more easily to describe violence as morally defensive (Appleby, 2000:119).

Appleby (2002:18) believes that it is however a common misconception that fundamentalists attract the poorest. He believes that the “poorest of the poor” are too occupied with basic survival, to become disciples. Instead it is the educated unemployed, underemployed and the professionals of modernizing societies like teachers, engineers, technicians and applied scientists that are attracted.

These men are capable but desperate and subsequently set out to destroy the corrupt, repressive and ineffective regimes of the Arab world. Some are also gainfully employed but spiritually unfulfilled (Appleby, 2002:19).

Appleby (2002:19) also believes that it is no accident that many fundamentalist groups don't attract poets or cosmologists. Instead they attract professionals, applied scientists, bureaucrats and technicians who read the scripture like blueprints or as a set of instructions and specifications.

The shared socioeconomic and political circumstances and profiles of the leaders and the followers play an important role, but equally important are their respective religious backgrounds and education.

Appleby however stresses that not only religious education is necessary but also the formation of traditions, beliefs and practices that reinforce and contextualize the priority given to peace and reconciliation (Appleby, 2000:119).

4.4.5 Evaluation – Constructivist Logic

It is clear that Appleby's argument contains constructivist thinking and logic in many instances. Appleby also makes use of instrumentalist and primordialist arguments but locates them within the broader social and material context of specific societies. Appleby's account of religion and political conflict fills many of the gaps left by the two previous perspectives.

First, he locates the debate within the larger social context of modernization and, more specifically, the distinction between the private and public sphere. He points out that the inherent secular assumptions of many Western IR theorists do not hold for large parts of the globe. This constrains the attempts of traditional theories of IR to adequately understand the multiple and complex roles of religion.

This illustrates that a social structure like the modern secular society is not universally valid. It illustrates that different inter-subjectively shared social meanings, knowledge, processes and understandings are attached to religion in different parts of the world. It also implies that secular modernization might be slowly changing as religion once again becomes more apparent in the public sphere. The dynamic and diverse nature of social structures and social reality is therefore clearly highlighted by Appleby.

Secondly, by highlighting the differences between the two militant religious groups (peacemaker and extremist), he illustrates how shared understandings, knowledge and processes influences the behaviour of actors. Especially the way in which they understand tolerance influences the behaviour of actors. This seems to suggest that not all religious groups and conflict can be treated as equal and warrants the understanding of the unique social structures and social context underlying them. He also clearly illustrates how both social and material structures influence the social reality and subsequently the identities, interests and behaviour of religious groups (actors).

Thirdly, he identifies the unique role that religion plays within the social structure. He describes religion as an ongoing, organic, interpretive process that consists out of inter-subjectively shared understandings, knowledge, experiences and processes of the community and its cultural, economical and political environment. Social and material processes and structures therefore complexly and continuously shape religion. This implies that religion cannot simply be reduced to rhetoric but must be understood as a complex social structure that is influenced by the actors, social context and material structures.

Fourthly, he discusses the role of religious leadership, or political entrepreneurs. He believes that they play an important role in shaping this complex social environment or structure as discussed above. They can therefore influence the social understandings, knowledge and processes on which the religious sub-structure is based. Religion is especially prone to manipulation when there is a significant gap in the religious education of political entrepreneurs and their followers.

Appleby, however, does not limit the construction of the religious sub-structure to the agency of political entrepreneurs and the community of believers but also emphasizes the important role played by the material and social structures.

However, religion as a social structure of its own, based on the shared understandings, knowledge and processes of its actors and material environment, constrains the attempts of political entrepreneurs to manipulate it at will. The shared understandings, knowledge and processes that constitute the religious sub-structure are always open to interpretations by actors, depending on their will and ability to enforce change. The fact that modern religion compared to archaic religion enables dialogue and “moralpolitik”, illustrates this point.

It is therefore not only the agents (political entrepreneurs and followers), nor the material and social structures, nor merely the religious sub-structure itself that influences and impacts on political conflict. It is a combination of the social processes and constraints of actors and structures. It overcomes the limited primordialist emphasis on stable social structures like culture and religious cosmologies. It goes beyond the mere analysis of material conditions and agency by the instrumentalist approach.

We find that social actors, social structures, social processes and material structures all mutually constitute and influence one another in transforming religious violence into a complex social struggle.

4.5 Rittberger – Strategic Choices of Political Entrepreneurs

Volker Rittberger and Andreas Hasenclever (2000:647) propose and defend constructivism as a position located somewhere between primordialism and instrumentalism. As already mentioned, Rittberger (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:647), regards himself as a modernist constructivist and his conceptualization of religion and political conflict fits this description.

Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000) offer a conflict model for understanding the strategic choices made by political entrepreneurs. The model aims to illustrate the strategic choice confronted by political entrepreneurs and explain the variation in the way they are dealt with. The willingness of political entrepreneurs to turn to violence or peaceful resolutions is central to the model.

4.5.1 The Four Determinants of Strategic Choices

Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000:650-655) identify four determinants that decide how political entrepreneurs deal with the strategic choices they confront in political conflict. These four determinants influence the decision of political entrepreneurs to resort to political violence. They are the nature of the conflict, the willingness to make sacrifices, the relationship between parties and the legitimacy of violence.

Concerning the nature of the conflict, Hasenclever & Rittberger (2000:653) believes it is generally accepted that conflicts of values are more prone to violence than conflicts of interests.

Conflicts of interests are associated with the distribution of goods or social positions that are in short supply but unambiguously desired by competing groups (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:653).

Value conflicts are, however, associated with an inter-subjective frame of reference, that determines what is valuable, legitimate, appropriate and morally correct (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:653). Conflicts about interests for Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000:653) are therefore about scarcity and value conflicts about inter-subjective frameworks.

Conflict of values is more prone to lead to violence, for three reasons. First, individuals identify with the values of their group or community. Secondly, people are more likely to morally justify violence in conflicts of values, since it addresses their fundamental identities, norms and social conduct. Finally, conflicts of values are often more violent

because compromise is difficult, since it entails a reversal of one's fundamental beliefs. (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:652-653).

A rule of thumb is therefore that conflicts that are largely value-laden in nature are more likely to lead to violence than conflicts that are based on interests. It is therefore in the best interests of political entrepreneurs to sketch the conflict in terms of fundamental values and religious symbolism.

The willingness to make sacrifices is to a large extent a measure of the group's commitment to the cause and their willingness to pay a high price for their actions. It refers to their willingness to commit and invest lives and resources into the conflict. Pursuing violence in conflicts is a risky business (lives get lost) and political entrepreneurs must therefore be sure that their followers are willing and committed to paying such a high price (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:653-654).

The relationship of the conflicting parties refers to the respective trust between parties in the conflict. The number of self-help strategies applied will be a direct result of the amount of trust between parties in the conflict (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:653-654). Following co-operative strategies requires some basic level of trust between parties that they won't be double-crossed or deceived.

Finally, the degree of societal support depends on the public justification of the use of violence in the conflict (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:654). In this model the success of political entrepreneurs doesn't only depend on their ability to mobilize the rank and file but also on their ability to gain support from those not directly involved in the conflict. This is generally referred to as third party support in conflict studies literature.

The first three determinants affect the likelihood of political entrepreneurs being able to mobilize the rank and file. The final determinant, legitimacy of conflict, affects the amount of societal support (3rd party support) given to the group goals and objectives by

the broader society. These two variables affect the final decision taken by the political entrepreneurs (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:651).

In this model political entrepreneurs are rational in their strategic decisions as their decisions are determined by their prospects of success (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:651). Decisions for or against violence are therefore based on the prospects of success in mobilization of constituencies and the amount of third party support.

4.5.2 Political Entrepreneurs and Strategies for Conflict Escalation

Elites are however rational in a very narrow self-interested way and will do what is needed to manipulate the environment according to their own needs (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:654-655). According to Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000:654-655), there are several strategies that elites can apply to try and escalate the conflict.

By upgrading one's own claims and downgrading those of the adversary, one can manipulate the nature of the conflict. Adding a religious interpretation to the social conflict can lead to the radicalization of the conflict. This can lead to a typology of sacred versus evil interests, as the "demonization" of competing claims takes place (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:655-656).

Secondly the willingness of self-sacrifice can be increased with the aid of concepts such as faith and martyrdom. These concepts reduce the fear of followers and increase their commitment and willingness to pay high prices in the conflict. It enables political entrepreneurs to ask for the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, with the promise of reward in the afterlife as incentive.

Furthermore, portraying the adversary as a representative of "evil" – from whom no sincerity can be expected - can create a loss of trust (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:656). This loss of trust will seriously jeopardize the relationship between the parties, making it more likely that parties will resort to self-help strategies.

Finally, often the only functional institutions, except for the state (military included), are religious institutions. By evoking religious sentiments and symbols, political entrepreneurs can gain access to this very valuable societal institution (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:657). Political entrepreneurs can, by evoking religious sentiments and symbols, spread their message more effectively; especially when weak states and other weak institutions offer little or no resistance.

4.5.3 Evaluation

This little model by Hasenclever and Rittberger is very useful in explaining the interaction between political entrepreneurs, their followers and the social environment. It also clearly occupies the middle ground, as it incorporates both instrumentalist and primordial concepts within the model - with important differences.

First, it addresses the instrumentalist concern with political entrepreneurs. Political entrepreneurs, however, are not free to manipulate the conflict at their will. Their success depends on four important determinants. These four determinants are subject, however, to inter-subjectively shared understandings, knowledge and processes. The success of elites is therefore dependent on their ability to shape these inter-subjectively formed determinants according to their own agenda. They have a variety of conflict-escalating and other manipulative mechanisms at their disposal to do this. As illustrated, sketching the conflict in religious terms across the four areas is one such a strategy.

In this regard the model is not any different from similar instrumentalist models. However, the difference lies in the nature of the four determinants identified. The nature of the conflict, willingness to make sacrifices, the nature of relationship between parties and third party support all depend on the inter-subjectively shared understandings, knowledge and processes that actors have of the conflict, these concepts and the religion concerned. These unique shared understandings and processes, together with the ability of political entrepreneurs to manipulate them, determine the outcome of the conflict.

It also addresses the primordialist concern with religious identity and cultural/religious forces. As already made evident in previous chapters, primordialists attach great importance to value (identity)-laden conflicts⁶. The model, however, illustrates that these value-laden conflicts are dependent on inter-subjective frames of reference and can therefore not be isolated from the social forces of actors and cognitive structures. Therefore, whether the conflict is about interests or about values, the fundamental premise remains the same: it cannot be viewed in isolation from the social forces of shared understanding, practices and discourses.

Consistent with the constructivist argument, religion has the role of an intervening variable in this conflict model. How religion affects the shared meanings, understandings and processes of the conflict and the four determinants, determines the ability of political entrepreneurs to manipulate the conflict according to their needs. They have to influence the shared understandings of the role of religion in the conflict first, before they can manipulate the conflict and the actors.

This model clearly illustrates the flexibility and scope of constructivism, in terms of its ability to incorporate both primordialist and instrumentalist arguments, within the framework of shared inter-subjective structures and processes. More importantly this model illustrates the added value constructivism can bring to the understanding of religion and political violence.

It helps to explain where the interests and strategic choice of elite come from and illustrates that it is not a simple choice between ideas and material interests. It highlights how actors converge around certain ideas, identities and understandings based on social structures and processes. It also highlights the role played by practical or communicative rationality as opposed to instrumental rationality, by focusing on how political entrepreneurs use communication, persuasion, discourse, normative and social contexts to

⁶ Huntington (1993), Kepel (1994), Juergensmeyer (2000) and Tibi (2000) essentially all deal with conflicts of values, be they a clash of religious values, cosmologies, civilizations or religious communities.

influence shared understandings of social structures. It therefore highlights the discursive power of ideas, language, religion and culture.

4.6 Constructivist Arguments on the International Level

Rittberger and Appleby mostly discuss religion and political conflict on the domestic level. Although many of their concepts can be applied to conflict at the international level, a separate discussion of interstate conflict is warranted.

Instrumentalist accounts of interstate conflict, as highlighted in the previous chapter, rely heavily on traditional realist and liberal accounts. Constructivist accounts of interstate conflict, however, offer alternative explanations that account for identities, culture, religion and cosmology.

4.6.1 Constructivist Understandings of International Relations Puzzles

Constructivism offers competing and alternative understandings of mainstream international relations theory puzzles (Hopf, 1998:186). It gives alternative explanations and accounts of realist and liberal puzzles like the balance of threat problem, the security dilemma, neo-liberal cooperation, and democratic peace (Hopf, 1998:186-192) Each of these will be briefly discussed in order to illustrate how constructivist accounts leave more room for identity, culture, religion and cosmology.

4.6.1.1 Balance of Threat

The traditional neo-realist account of balance of threat asserts that states ally against power (Hopf, 1998:186). This was latter found to be empirically wrong, and was changed to states allying against threats. Threats are understood as power possessed by a relatively capable, geographically proximate state with offensive military capabilities, and perceived hostile intentions (Hopf, 1998:186).

Constructivists have a problem with the neo-realist emphasis on prior perceived intentions, which they believe constitutes tautology. Instead they advance a theory of threat perception based on identity (Hopf, 1998:187). State identity is of course based on the inter-subjectively shared understandings, knowledge and processes that exist between actors in the state system. A state is therefore a threat based on its perceived identity as well as how that identity relates to the identity of those who wish to react against it.

Constructivists would therefore argue that the alliance patterns that emerged after World War II can be explained by identity formation rather than by distribution of power alone. The United States viewed the Soviet Union primarily as a threat based on their communist identity. This is in contrast to realist accounts that would argue that the Soviet Union objectively became a threat based on their actions and behaviour. The United States viewed themselves as anti-communists and this to a large extent accounts for the behaviour of the United States - fighting communism across the globe. In contrast the Western European countries largely viewed the Soviet Union in terms of a Russian identity - that threatened their interests in Europe only⁷.

The constructivist account of balance of threat therefore allows room for identities to emerge and shape state interests. If identities can be constructed around ideologies, they can certainly be constructed around religions or different cosmologies. The constructivist account of balance of threat does therefore allow for a clash of civilizations. Unlike primordial identities however, these identities are subject to change as inter-subjectively shared understandings, knowledge and processes shape them.

4.6.1.2 The Security Dilemma

The security dilemma is built around the uncertainty (anarchy) of international relations in which actors can never know one another's true intentions (Hopf, 1998:188). Constructivists argue that identities, by providing meaning, reduce uncertainty in

⁷ See Hopf (1998:187) for a much lengthier and detailed discussion of the example of identity in the Cold War.

international relations between states. Constructivists don't contend that this solves the problem of security but rather assert that this helps sketch the background in which uncertainty becomes a variable to understand rather than a constant to assume (Hopf, 1998:188).

To overcome the problem of uncertainty, realists view all states as potential threats and, therefore, uncertainty becomes a constant. Constructivists, however, insist that uncertainty should be viewed within the social context that consists out of identities, understandings and interests. This implies that a nuclear weapon in the hands of Israel takes on a different meaning to US policy makers, than would a nuclear weapon in the hands of an Arab country. This allows for constructivism again to emphasize the role played by identity, shared understandings and social context.

4.6.1.3 Neo-liberal Cooperation

Constructivism shares the notion with neo-liberalism that cooperation is possible under anarchy, but offers a different account of how this is possible (Hopf, 1998:189). Constructivists choose to look at the distribution of identities and interests of the relevant states, rather than assuming that exogenous interests exists, to explain whether cooperation is possible (Hopf, 1998:189). A constructivist account would also look at inter-subjective communities that better facilitate cooperation among states.

Without going into a detailed discussion on the different accounts of cooperation, it is sufficient to note that constructivism emphasizes the role of identities and inter-subjective communities in facilitating cooperation among states. This implies that states with compatible identities and inter-subjectively shared ideas will cooperate more easily. Third World countries for instance can be said to generally agree and cooperate at big international forums based on their collective understanding of themselves as identities in a community of third world countries.

4.6.1.4 Democratic Peace

It is a well-known observation in IR literature that democracies don't engage in war with one another. This observation, however, needs an empirical testable theory that has so far not convincingly been put forth (Hopf, 1998:191). Constructivist accounts assert that social practices and norms of states construct identities and interests of states. If democracies don't fight one another, then this implies that the way they understand each other their inter-subjective accounts of each other and the socio-international practices of each other, explains democratic peace (Hopf, 1998:192). This can be applied to non-democratic peace-zones, as it requires only a mutual understanding of inter-subjectively shared identities, practices and interests.

4.6.2 Constructivism and Identity

It is clear that constructivism offers a very important account of the role of identity in international relations as well as the dynamics of conflict in general. It seeks to understand how identities are constructed, what norms and practices accompany their reproduction and how they mutually influence and reconstruct each other (Hopf, 1998:192).

The variety of identities allows for constructivists to account for civilizations, nationalism, ethnicity, race, gender, religion and other inter-subjectively understood communities in international politics. This allows for constructivists to address some issues that have often received little or no attention in traditional IR accounts.

A result of this attention to identities has been the return of differences among states (Hopf, 1998:193). States can have different identities and behave differently towards one another based on their understandings of their identities. Identities enable states to understand other states, their motives, interests, probable actions, attitudes and role in any given political context (Hopf, 1998:193).

Some constructivists like Michael Barnett, for instance, showed that Iraq misunderstood the identity of Saudi Arabia in the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Iraq saw Saudi Arabia primarily as an “Arab” identity rather than that of a “sovereign state” and therefore did not expect that Riyadh would allow the deployment of US troops (Hopf, 1998:193).

The fact that constructivism allows for these multiple identities rests on the constructivist openness to local historical context. This enables constructivists to explain many other meaningful communities of identities in world politics apart from the mainstream IR identities, like democratic vs. non-democratic, great power vs. non-great power, North vs. South and so forth (Hopf, 1998:194).

Constructivism also allows for the incorporation of culture and domestic politics in international relations. State identity at the international level is partly a result of social practices at home on the domestic level (Hopf, 1998:194-195).

It is therefore clear that constructivism allows more room for identity and culture than the instrumentalist approach. At the same time its conceptualization of culture and identity is much more complex and dynamic than that of primordialism. By emphasizing the role played by identities in international relations, constructivism allows room for a variety of identities to be studied. Religion and cosmologies can therefore be studied through the social construction of identity at the international level. Constructivists, however, also point out how international identities are also influenced by social processes on the domestic level. This enables constructivism to take religion seriously at both levels.

4.7 Kubalkova – International Political Theology (IPT)

Vendulka Kubalkova (2000) offers a framework for understanding religion in IR, by using rules constructivism. In this regard she is concerned with a different problematique than that which the authors have discussed in this chapter and this literature review. She is not concerned as such with the adequate description of the impact of religion on political conflict but rather to open or find a space for religion in mainstream IR.

Nevertheless, her framework offers an interesting basis on which future theories concerning religion and political conflict can be built. She also illustrates the utility of rules constructivism over other IR approaches in dealing with religion. Given this, she is included in this literature review and it is hoped that the reader will also understand the important contribution made by her, in this regard.

Vendulka Kubalkova (2000:675) believes that IR as a discipline can contribute to the study of the worldwide resurgence of religion. Since this resurgence is taking place in an international context, the domain of IR scholars, it is especially relevant that IR scholars seriously address the resurgence of religion.

Vendulka Kubalkova (2000:675) proposes that what is needed is that we should readdress the neglect of the role of religion, culture, ideas and ideologies in IR. This she believes can be best rectified by developing an international political theology (IPT)⁸. IPT is an attempt to bring the study of religion and IR together (Kubalkova, 2000:676)⁹. She rejects the Enlightenment notion that the pursuit of knowledge and religion are mutually exclusive.

She seeks to escape the positivist, materialist and state-centric constraints of mainstream IR theories that cannot adequately theorize about religion, by offering an alternative framework built around rules constructivism (Kubalkova, 2000:677)¹⁰. This makes this discussion especially relevant, since she illustrates not only the differences between different constructivist strands, but also between positivist and post-positivist theories of religion.

⁸ Kubalkova (2000:676) takes the sociological understanding of theology to refer to: the systematic study of discourses and relations amongst them (discourses), concerning world affairs, that search for- or claim to have found- a response, transcendental or sacred, to the human need for meaning.

⁹ The parallel to IPE (International Political Economy) is intentional. As IPE developed out of the neglect of economic forces in IR, so does IPT aim to address the neglect of religion in IR (Kubalkova, 2000:676).

¹⁰ In fact Kubalkova (2000:677) accuses the mainstream or soft constructivists (modernists) of being guilty of the same state centered, positivist and rational choice theory limitations as their realist and liberal counterparts.

This discussion will be divided into the same four sections used in Kubalkova's own article. First, we examine her thoughts on the third debate in IR and its relevance for the study of religion. Next, we look at her discussion of the basic ontological characteristics of religion. Thirdly, we look at rules constructivism and how this fits within her IPT framework of religion. Finally we conclude by looking at some of the issues, she proposes, the framework helps us address.

4.7.1 "The Third Debate in IR" and Religion

Kubalkova (2000:880-682) has some interesting observations to make about the third debate in IR. By the "third debate in IR", Kubalkova (2000:680) refers to the debate between positivists and post-positivists¹¹. She believes that although both mainstream IR theories and postmodernism deny/ignore the role played by religion, there are some interesting parallels between religion and postmodernism.

First, a parallel between romanticism, which emphasizes the irrational and non-rational and focuses on feeling rather than thought, can be drawn with the postmodern insider perspective, which emphasizes emotional identification (Kubalkova, 2000:681). Secondly, phenomenology, often used by postmodernists, also shifts attention to the consciousness, experiences of the body, intuition, perspective and empathy, which in turn relate to the religious focus on inner meaning (Kubalkova, 2000:681).

Thirdly, the hermeneutics approach used in postmodern discourse focuses on the interpreting and reflecting aspects of knowledge; trying to remove the notion of humans as the centre of the universe. This deconstructionist attitude to knowledge aims to remove

¹¹ The problems associated with the great debates in IR are numerous, especially concerning what the third debate is really about. It can refer to the inter-paradigm debate between realists, pluralists and structuralists concerning the utility of realism versus alternative approaches or to the debate amongst positivists and post-positivists (Schmidt, 2002:11). In this case we assume that Kubalkova implies the latter, as it seems clear in her discussion that she does. Brian C. Schmidt gives an interesting account of the history of IR and the problems concerning the great debates.

the notion of an always-existing external reality. The study of hermeneutics was developed in schools of theology for interpreting sacred texts (Kubalkova, 2000:881)¹².

Hermeneutics emphasizes the detailed reading or examination of text (that can be a conversation, written words or picture) to discover the meaning embedded within it. Each reader brings his own subjective reading to the text. The reader tries to get inside the perspective of the text (its viewpoint) as a whole and then develops a deeper understanding of how the parts relate to the whole. He contemplates its many meanings and messages and seeks the connection amongst its parts (Neuman, 2000:70-71).

Finally, she points to the whole aspect of incommensurability in IR. Incommensurability refers to the notion that different theoretical approaches refer to different realities and that comparison between paradigms is impossible. The point is, that postmodernism, like religion, questions the notion of reality presented by positivist IR texts.

The point that she seems to try to bring across is that these approaches, designed to research the self and its sense of cosmic connection, be they modernist or postmodernist, don't supplant and overcome the basic religious concern for the soul (Kubalkova, 2000:682). Both modernism and postmodernism fail in this regard and it's important to look at the ontology of religion to understand why.

4.7.2 The Ontology of Religion

In the philosophy of science and the philosophy of the social sciences, ontology refers to the set of things whose existence is claimed, or acknowledged, by a particular theory or system of thought. It can be said to be the science of being, embracing such issues as the nature of existence and structure of reality (Wight, 2002:42).

¹² It is interesting to note how the *Hermetica*, an ancient sacred text attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, that influenced many great renaissance thinkers and philosophers throughout history, also reflects this notion. The *Hermetica* is a truly fascinating piece of work that can be regarded as one of the most influential books in Western history.

Kubalkova (2000:882) chooses to discuss the ontology of religion for two reasons. First, to illustrate that the ontology of rules constructivism is broad enough to incorporate the seemingly mutually exclusive ontology of religion and positivism. Secondly, to illustrate the difference between “religion” and “religions”.

She believes that the deeper meaning of religion has been lost, and has been reduced to its institutional meaning. In this regard “religion” refers to an alternative way of looking at the world (an ontology on its own), while “religions” refers to the material existing institutions organized for the pursuit of “religion”. Kubalkova (2000:682-683) therefore believes that there is a confusion concerning the ontology (meaning) of religion in IR – meaning that religion is referred to and understood only in its material and institutional manifestation.

This has led to religion being classified as just another social institution by mainstream IR scholars. Like other social institutions, in the international context, it can be classified into different communities/levels (civil society, transnational, non-government, civilizations, criminal) and be subjected to rational choice theory and material capabilities (Kubalkova, 2000:682-683). Kubalkova (2000) tries to correct this fundamental positivist misunderstanding of religion, by looking at the limitations posed by their ontologies and how rules constructivism can overcome these limitations.

There is a fundamental difference between what secular IR theories (positivist) and religion count as real. According to Kubalkova (2000:683) all religions share the fundamental distinction between ordinary and transcendent reality. The ontological differences between religion and positivism or secular theories leads to differences in epistemology and methodology¹³. Kubalkova (2000:683), believes that trying to fit religious experience into a secular positivist framework can only lead to emasculating it, caricaturing it, distorting its meaning and underestimating its strength. She therefore

¹³ Epistemology, in short, can be said to be the philosophy of knowledge or of how we come to know. Methodology is also concerned with how we come to know, but more with the practical methods employed, rather than with the philosophy of how we come to know the world, as in epistemology (Wight, 2002:42).

concludes that a serious study of the role of religion has to address the ontological foundation of religious discourse.

In short, according to most religious thought, reality is not limited to material reality and the reality perceived by the human senses. Transcendental meta-reality exists and is intertwined with material reality, but surpasses complete human comprehension. This transcendent reality exists but cannot be expressed in terms of ordinary scholarly tests or social scientific tests. Yet, the reality of God can be expressed, however, imperfectly; requiring reflection, repetition, metaphor and ritualisation for its expression. This continuous process of interpretation is fundamental not only to human conceptions of reality but to human identity and the human self-definitions attached to it (Kubalkova, 2000:683-684). This resembles Appleby's (2000:56) own argument concerning religion and its constant reinterpretation.

Religion becomes a map with which the individual orientates his own identity in ontological terms (Kubalkova, 2000:684). Simply put, the ongoing process of interpreting reality (that can never be fully understood because it also consists out of sacred reality – knowing God) through religion provides the map through which individuals view their own identity and what it means. This sheds some light on the primordialist argument concerning the deep malaise of modern secular society. Removing religion or the sacred can lead to a loss of identity, if no suitable substitute can be found. This identity crisis of modernity can lead to dire consequences.

The point is that there is a large matter of incommensurability between secular views of reality and religious views of reality (Kubalkova, 2000:685). Both view their conceptualization and understanding of reality to be rational by controlling the criteria of evidence and rules of inference. Kubalkova (2000:685), however, believes that rules constructivism can overcome this problem and it is to this that we now turn our attention.

4.7.3 Rules Constructivism

Kubalkova (2000:686) believes, that modern ontologies and epistemologies (mainstream positivist IR theories) have reached the point where they are unable to reveal some of the most fundamental features of human existence and meaning. She proposes that we re-examine human meaning by exploring human action, language, reason and rationality anew. She proposes that rules constructivism is best suited to do so, since it anatomizes the social world at its most basic level.

4.7.3.1 Speech Acts and Rules

Rules constructivism sorts out statements on a different basis than positivism, which looks at their correspondence to reality, the representation they make of some set of affairs. Rules constructivists choose to look at the use to which any statement is put (Kubalkova, 2000:687). This again emphasizes the constructivist notion of the world as constructed versus the positivist notion of the world as given.

Rules constructivists sort speech acts into three different groups: assertive, directive or commissive - according to the form of reasoning which underpins them, according to the relationship between the people speaking and the activity that results from this inter-subjective exchange (Kubalkova, 2000:686). Speech acts also represent the material world, by representing it and by causing people to act within and upon it (Kubalkova, 2000:687).

Like linguistic statements, rules follow speech acts in form. All rules by nature are normative and derive their strength from the internal and external support they need. The external support refers to the amount of harnessing of other rules needed, meaning it has to “overpower” or become more important than other rules. The internal support refers to the amount of support derived for the rule by the fact that it has been acted upon in the past and has become internalized in terms of shared consciousness and culture (Kubalkova, 2000:688).

Repeated assertions produce normatively weak rules that usually harness other rules to make the likelihood of acceptance by the hearer more likely (Kubalkova, 2000:687). Instruction (assertive) rules are dependent on internal support or consciousness. They state a belief (to be telling the truth) concerning existence and its meaning. This is the most fundamental rule in human existence and religion is an assertive rule – stating belief in what constitute existence and meaning, which it hopes others will accept.

Assertive rules are essentially about beliefs that require individual internal acceptance (although it can appeal to communities) and that results in normatively weak rules (no sanctions, just faith or belief). These rules are sustained by hegemony; ideas and beliefs do the ruling. By monopolizing meaning (hegemony), assertive rules promulgate themselves over “subordinate” rules (Kubalkova, 2000:698).

Directive speech acts represent the hearer with regards to the speakers and an intention as to some act that the speaker would like to have performed, placing the regulative burden on the hearer (Kubalkova, 2000:687). These normatively strong rules, called directive rules, concern mostly material control and forces (power and wealth). They are normatively strong and depend on external sanctions (punishment). They are a statement of how the world ought to be and what constitutes that reality. They usually imply some chain of command or hierarchy needed to sustain them (Kubalkova, 2000:692-693).

Commissive speech acts convey the speaker’s attention to commit a stated course of action, which he is committed to fulfilling, if the hearer accepts it (Kubalkova, 2000:687). They depend on mutual agreement and are normatively weak. They depend on internal and external support and their main exhortation is to keep promises. They are a statement concerning how the world ought to be but based on the notion that that proposition will be accepted (Kubalkova, 2000:692-693).

4.7.3.2 Positivism and Mainstream Constructivism

At this point in her discussion, Kubalkova (2000:688-690) elaborates on the differences between constructivism and positivism as well as mainstream constructivism and rules constructivism. This has been covered to a large extent, and to avoid the risk of repetition, only some of the most important new observations made by her will be discussed.

She again emphasizes that rules constructivism is post-positivist (takes a linguistic turn) but not postmodern (reducing reality to textuality). Constructivists are interested in “what are the deeds?” and the material facts, together with the speech acts or rules that give rise to them. Rules constructivists are interested in the rules that connect agency, structure and material resources (Kubalkova, 2000:689).

Unlike positivists that test objective reality against our representation of it, rules constructivism believes that language is constitutive (part) of the world and can therefore not be compared with what it describes. The key issue for constructivists is to identify the larger inter-subjective context, in which actions appear to be reasonable and justifiable. This implies a cultural context, in which religion obviously plays a role (Kubalkova, 2000:689-690).

4.7.3.3 Religion as a Social Construction

Next, Kubalkova (2000:694) discusses religions as a social construction. We have already noted the distinction Kubalkova makes between “religion” and “religions”. She also makes the point that many positivists in IR theories view religion as just another institution. As already mentioned, religion consists primarily out of assertive rules, but the politicization of religion has brought into it alien aspects of power and wealth, associated with directive and commitment rules (Kubalkova, 2000:694).

Kubalkova (2000:694) warns us of the mistake of too closely associating religion and the state (both as institutions) but also of the opposite; of seeing them as totally separate. We cannot generalize by viewing only two types of world orders: secular nationalism (nation-state) and religion (cosmological communities).

4.7.3.4 Religion as Rules

She understands religion to be a system of rules (mainly assertive) and related practices, which act to explain the meaning of existence including identity, ideas about self, and one's position in the world, thus motivating and guiding the behaviour of those who accept the validity of these rules on faith and who internalize them fully (Kubalkova, 2000:695).

It is clear in this definition that she regards religion as consisting mainly of assertive rules. Kubalkova (2000:695) also believes that this definition doesn't exclude secular ideologies, which she believes have successfully copied these aspects of religion¹⁴. She also believes that her definition is consistent with Adda Bozeman's own view of culture and civilizations.

Bozeman (1960) views culture and civilization as encompassing those values, norms, institutions and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance (internalized)¹⁵. Religion is therefore a key part of cultures and even modernist and postmodern critics, Kubalkova (2000:695) argues, have firm roots in religion.

It is not difficult to accept that religion is made up of rules that are accepted on faith. Her argument that this acceptance of rules on faith represents a form of rational reasoning, however, is more difficult.

¹⁴ In fact this is why Kubalkova (2000:695) intentionally leaves out any reference to a divine being.

¹⁵ Kubalkova refers to Adda B. Bozeman's, *Politics and Culture in International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

4.7.3.5 Religion as Rational

As already noted, religion consists mainly of assertive speech acts and instruction rules. Rules provide guidance in themselves but do not determine human behaviour, as humans can use reason or judgment to decide if they are going to accept/reject the rules and what direction their action is going to take (Kubalkova, 2000:696). Judgment arises out of the context associated with the rules and the consequences associated with accepting or rejecting them. Kubalkova (2000:696) believes this is a form of reasoning, as it involves exercising judgment about rules in the context in which they are found.

She places all of this within the context of modernity. According to her, modernity is mostly associated with commitment rules. These rules are built around the individual and are in contract form. Commitment rules are the domain of liberalism, specifying individual rights and responsibilities. Kubalkova (2000:697) believes that liberalism, capitalism, individualism, modernity and international relations are all essentially commissive in nature. This implies that the Western notion of international order today can generally be associated with commitment rules.

This hegemony of commitment rules has not resulted in the disappearance of religion, as expected, but contributed to its resurgence. Religion and assertive rules are often regarded as premodern, impervious to change and antagonistic to Western values; something that is best left to the past. However, the rules and beliefs of any society (in whatever form) is packaged in terms of assertive statements (beliefs). The point that Kubalkova (2000:698) is trying to bring across, is that in our emphasis on secular rationality and modernism, we run the risk of downplaying the hegemonic assertive nature of these beliefs.

To further illustrate this point, Kubalkova (2000:698) relates the three speech acts (rules) to ways of reasoning. Assertive speech acts are associated with abduction, commissive speech acts with induction and directives with deduction. Abduction is a creative act with social consequences. Three kinds of normative consequences can result from abduction.

The first is conjecture (assumption, speculation), which takes on a tremendous normative force through incantation and ritualization (Kubalkova, 2000:698). This points us in the direction of religion where beliefs are tested in an alternative rational way, as explained previously, but never subjected to rational inquiry. They are strengthened and “tested” through the methods of belief, including symbolism, rituals and incantations.

The second consequence has nothing to do with religion but points to science. Conjecture can lead to theory once it is linked with the logical procedures associated with deductive and inductive reasoning - positivist methodology (Kubalkova, 2000:699). Conjecture in this sense refers to the possibility of a hypothesis, which is also a guess or assumption, becoming a theory.

The third consequence is that abduction might lead to the establishment of a secular religion. When conjectures are lifted out of context, advertised as scientific truths and disseminated through the mass media, they risk becoming a secular religion (Kubalkova, 2000:699). Kubalkova seems to suggest this is what has happened to positivism and mainstream IR theories, to the extent that conjectures (hypotheses) proven to some extent with limited rationality, have become a secular religion (beliefs).

The point that Kubalkova (2000:699) seems to be making is that rules constructivism can accommodate both abductive reasoning and the acceptance of faith alongside rational-instrumental reasoning (positivism). It can engage discourses based on faith and those based on “narrowly” defined reason (positivism) - without facing problems of incommensurability. The key seems to lie in the ability of rules constructivism to uncover and explore the assertive rules which form the basis of social reality.

7.3.4 Implications and Evaluation

What then are some of the implications of this IPT framework, put forward by Kubalkova? She herself discusses some issues that the framework enables us to address.

First, Kubalkova (2000:700) believes that linguistic constructivism has an advantage over other positivist theories, in revealing the multitude of social relations and their tremendous complexity. Linguistic constructivism conceptualizes international relations as a social construction on many interacting levels. Being able to move between these levels, linguistic constructivism is able to remove some of the parsimonious assumptions found in mainstream IR theories.

Not that parsimony is bad, but when it leads to the exclusion of important social forces and structures (culture, religion, civilization and identity) and their complex relationships, it needs to be reconsidered. It is important that the complex roles played by religion and culture are not discarded for simplicity's sake. Kubalkova in this regard has to be commended for her efforts to illustrate this complex relationship and for trying to develop a framework for understanding religion in IR.

Kubalkova (2000:701) also calls for escaping the notion of simply viewing religion as "good" or "bad". She believes that her framework can overcome these modernistic sentiments found within the American IR parish. In fact Kubalkova (2000:701-704) goes to great lengths to illustrate how this inherent belief in modernization and the subsequent rejection of religion as a serious object of study, can be overcome with linguistic constructivism. She also illustrates how secular modernization is itself a set of assertive rules, fighting for global hegemony.

She believes that this influx of new rules in the third world, under the guise of user-friendly commitment rules, is threatening to deprive people of their meaning and alienate them from their identities. This in turn forces these governments as agents of modernity to make use of directive rules (sanctions and coercion) to enforce them. This eventually

affects the legitimacy and the morality of the state and other actors who advocate these rules.

She echoes the concern with the deep malaise of modern secular society, put forward by the primordialists, in “the worldwide distrust of the Enlightenment system of hegemonically disseminated assertive rules, secular ideologies and worldviews that claim universal applicability and promise progress based on reason and man’s ability to control his own destiny” (Kubalkova, 2000:702).

Finally, she concludes by reasserting her initial call for IPT, to correct the neglect of religion in IR. This is perhaps the most important contribution made by her work. In attempting to put forth a framework that is complex enough to incorporate religion and culture in a comprehensive and holistic framework, rules constructivism, she contributes immensely to the current study of the resurgence of religion. Although her framework, as elaborated in this discussion, deals with ontological and epistemological foundations, it lays sound foundations upon which “theories” concerning religion and IR can be developed.

4.8 Conclusion

It is clear that constructivism offers a framework within which religion can be more thoroughly and sufficiently studied. It ranges from the mainstream constructivist frameworks that illustrate how social structure, agents and processes all interplay in political conflict, to the more complex rules constructivist framework of Kubalkova.

Both Rittberger and Appleby illustrate how religion, as an inter-subjective structure of its own, constrains the behavior of political entrepreneurs. They furthermore illustrate how material reality and social reality, constructed by actors and their processes, interact and mutually constitute one another. Appleby and Rittberger also offer examples of how rationality can be incorporated within the constructivist framework.

Constructivist accounts of the role of identity in international relations allows for the study of religion through constructivist understanding of identity formation. It also illustrates that domestic culture and social processes can influence the identity of actors on the international level. In illustrating the importance and utility of identities in IR, it automatically addresses the foundations of identity, namely culture and religion. It, however, illustrates that this process of identity formation is dynamic and takes place within a social context. The inter-subjective meaning, understanding and processes attached and attributed to these identities by actors, means that political conflict and religion cannot be reduced to a primordial clash of cultural identities. The situation is far more complex and involves an understanding of the complex forces and structures of material and social reality in international relations.

Finally, Kubalkova illustrates how an IPT framework, based around linguistic constructivism, can help overcome the incommensurability between positivism and religion, with a deeper understanding of the social construction of meaning. She also highlights the ability of constructivism to move between different social levels and account for the interaction and social processes between them. More importantly, she highlights the fundamental assertive rules that underly mainstream IR theory. She illustrates that constructivism takes no shortcuts and, if anything, illustrates the complex nature of religion and culture.

Constructivism illustrates the complex social reality surrounding religion and political conflict. It occupies the middle ground to the extent that it combines aspects of both primordialism (culture and identity) and instrumentalism (political entrepreneurs, power and wealth) but combines them in a more complex and dynamic social and material reality.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Goals of Study

This literature review has aimed to give an overview of the literature on religion and political conflict by integrating and summarizing the literature into an understandable framework. It has also aimed to evaluate the theoretical literature on religion and political conflict, by testing the soundness of its assumptions, logical consistency and scope of explanations. In the process it was hoped that some of the most important areas of agreement and disagreement between the theories could be pointed out, together with some unanswered questions. It was also suggested that this process might point to further areas of research. In conclusion, then, have these original goals been reached?

5.2 The Three Approaches – Similarities, Differences and Limitations

By means of the primordialist approach, the topic of religion and political conflict was introduced. Huntington was the only author that did not explicitly refer to religion and political conflict, but his conceptualization of civilizations was to a large extent determined by their religious affiliations. His “Clash of Civilizations” thesis received a lot of attention in the chapter dealing with primordialism, but also throughout the entire study.

Many of the concepts of Kepel and Jurgensmeyer can be added to those of Huntington and help to further develop his theory. Kepel to a large extent supplement Huntington, by affirming some of his assumptions and placing them within the large debate surrounding modernization. His conceptualization of the deep malaise of modern secular society and how this leads to religious movements expressing their dissatisfaction through alternative worldviews, can be regarded as his main contribution.

Jurgensmeyer is perhaps the odd one out in this chapter. It is difficult to really place him in any one of the three perspectives. His strong emphasis on cultural analysis and his belief that religion has a flirtatious relationship with conflict, have earned him a spot amongst the primordialists. His most important contribution without a doubt is his conceptualization of cosmic war. This concept shows constructivist undertones but his reluctance to discuss the role played by religion, culture and individuals within the more sophisticated framework of cognitive structures and social processes, excludes him from the constructivist perspective.

In conclusion, we can summarize that the primordialist perspective places too much emphasis on cultural, civilizational and religious differences, as causes of conflict in and between nations, without developing a sophisticated enough framework to deal with the dynamic material (power and wealth) and social forces and structures. The perspective is right in asserting that religion, culture and civilizations matter, but it fails in developing a sophisticated enough framework for understanding how these concepts influence political conflict. The large body of theoretical and empirical evidence/criticism against Huntington supports this conclusion.

The instrumentalist perspective, on the other hand, can be seen as being at the opposite extreme to that of primordialism. Religion, although a subject of study and interest, is seldom if ever attributed any special significance and then usually only under special temporary circumstances. The perspective shows a strong commitment in the modernization programme, that separates politics and religion from the public sphere.

Ted Robert Gurr and Katerina Dalacoura are classical examples of how the instrumentalist approach views religion and political conflict at a domestic level. They conclude that religion is an instrument used by political entrepreneurs to mobilize people along traditional concerns for wealth and power. Deeply divided societies with huge inequalities in terms of economic, social and political resources enable political entrepreneurs to exploit these grievances by attributing a religious significance to them.

On the international level we found, by examining the empirical studies of Huntington's critics, that instrumentalists rely heavily on traditional realist and liberal IR accounts of political conflict. They exposed the weaknesses inherent in primordialist theories which simply view conflict as embedded in cultural or religious differences, but at the same time, exposed their own simplistic assumption that religion and culture don't matter. Their over-reliance on power and wealth, for explaining political conflict was pointed out, together with the weaknesses associated with this view. They too, like the primordialist, seem to have an overtly simplistic reading of the complex relationship between religion and political conflict.

The third perspective, constructivism, was introduced in considerable detail compared to the previous two. This was done in order to illustrate the ability of this perspective to incorporate the complex relationship between religion and political conflict, within a dynamic framework that emphasizes the role played by social and material forces and structures. It occupies the middle ground between the two other perspectives and in the process takes no shortcuts; it doesn't simplify the relationship between religion and political conflict.

Appleby, although he does not proclaim to be a constructivist, clearly illustrates how religion, as a social structure, interacts with the environment, consisting out of social and material forces. He illustrates that religion is constantly being reinterpreted, thus removing the over-simplistic view of incommensurable religious differences (primordialists) and political entrepreneurial propaganda (instrumentalists) respectively.

Hasenclever and Rittberger illustrate how a cultural theory like constructivism doesn't exclude rational choice and material influences. They place this within the context of social cognitive structures and processes that influence how elites deal with the strategic choices they confront.

Finally, Vendulka Kubalkova offers a framework, based on rules constructivism, for understanding religion within IR. This is an excellent discussion and lays the foundation

for future theories to be built upon. It shows the advantage that constructivism has over other theories, with its ability to incorporate and understand the seemingly incommensurable positions of positivism and religion.

5.3 Some Unanswered Questions and Future Areas of Research

Constructivism clearly goes a long way in answering some of the questions ignored or left unanswered by the other two perspectives. It is clearly better suited to dealing with religion in a complex and holistic manner, not simplifying the relationship in either direction. This, however, doesn't mean that we should rest on our laurels and wait for constructivism to come up with all the answers.

Constructivism in IR, if anything, is marked by tremendous intra-paradigm debate concerning issues of meta-theory, ontology and epistemology. It is often so preoccupied with positivism and attacking mainstream IR theories, that it forgets to develop a research programme of its own that can deliver much-needed alternative IR theories. Constructivism as a social theory is ideally suited to exploring the complex relationship between religion and political conflict. Unfortunately, with exception of the authors evaluated, constructivism promises much in terms of theories dealing with identity, religion, norms and culture but delivers little. It is time for constructivists to get down to business and start developing theories on religion and political conflict.

If anything, the most important avenue of future research, that has become evident in this study, is simply the need to readdress the neglect of religion in IR. This literature review has dealt only with religion and political conflict but it could hardly have illustrated more vividly the curious neglect by religion in the mainstream IR parish.

This study has classified some of the most important literature on religion and political violence, with certain limitations, into an understandable and simple framework, based on the three theories identified by Hasenclever and Rittberger. It has highlighted some of the most important differences, similarities and shortcomings of the three theories and

evaluated them in terms of the soundness of their assumptions, logical consistency and the scope of their explanations. It is hoped that this humble attempt will help lay the foundation for future researchers to address the neglect of religion in political science discourse.

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