Christian Approaches to International Affairs

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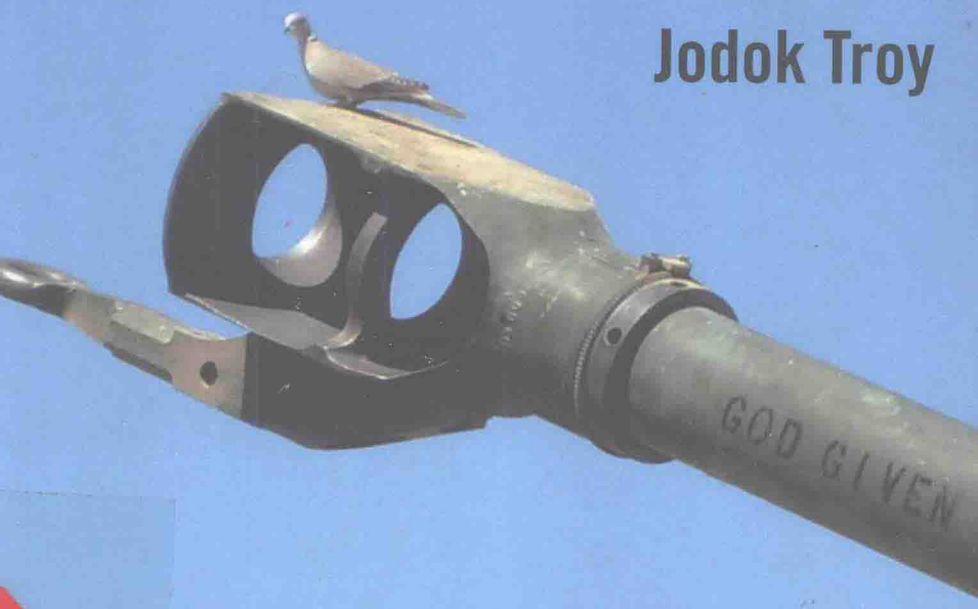

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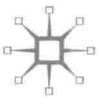

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Preface and Acknowledgements

I am convinced of the authenticity of the thesis of falsification presented by the Austrian philosopher of science Sir Karl R. Popper. It was when I searched for his tracks in Christchurch, New Zealand that I developed major ideas about the present study. At the same time I am just as convinced that monotheism, especially Christianity, is a source of being, of being free, and the way of respecting the human being and life as it is. This, however, is a thesis which can hardly be falsified. In knowing that there is one God who challenges humans in a personal way, who even became himself a human being, lies the real source of being and freedom at the same time. I am convinced that religion, at its best, is always peaceful, and thus can contribute much to peace on Earth, despite all the forces that do otherwise.

Therefore, as I argue in this study, it is necessary to have a closer look at religion in global politics, theoretically as well as practically, with a focus that does not blind or deceive us into illusion. Indeed, we must acknowledge some 'disgusting dissonances' in human conduct, such as those the Sun observes in Jura Soyfer's play *Der Weltuntergang oder Die Welt steht auf keinen Fall mehr lang*[1] (1936) about the solar system. Sometimes it seems that those 'disgusting dissonances' are caused by religion. This becomes particularly obvious when we face, once more and in an age often claimed and assumed to be 'secular', so-called religious conflicts. In his play, Soyfer warns of the doom of the upcoming Second World War. Humankind is threatened by the end of the world ahead, and all that people are doing is staggering in stupidity and blindness toward the end of the world. Soyfer illustrates the state of human conduct. But in the end the Earth is saved once more because the comet, Konrad, dispatched to destroy the Earth, falls in love with her. Soyfer's play about human incorrigibility ends with a declaration of love for the Earth in the lyric:

> Voll Hunger und Voll Brot ist diese Erde, Voll Leben und voll Tod ist diese Erde, In Armut und in Reichtum grenzenlos. Gesegnet

> und Verdammt ist diese Erde. Von Schönheit hell umflammt ist diese Erde, Und ihre Zukunft ist herrlich und groß.[2]

At its best, religion acknowledges this song's statement. There is hunger but, at the same time, enough bread for all. There is death but, at the same time, life. First of all, one has to acknowledge and come to terms with those existing 'disgusting dissonances' in human and thus political conduct. At the same time, this Earth is the best we have. Therefore, taking religion seriously in international affairs can only result in an optimistic view, despite pessimistic assumptions about human nature.

The empirical phenomenon of pluralization is slowly replacing the theoretical underpinning of secularization. Pluralism, however, asserts that people have the right of different interpretations of pluralized truths. Pluralism, as a mere normative conception, acknowledges the existence of a moral horizon, shared by all human beings of good will – that is, so to say, the will to live. The scholar Martin Wight, a point of reference in this study, argued that domestic political theory is a 'theory of the good life'. This is because of the relation, regulation and interconnectedness of the state and the citizen. International theory on the other hand, however, is merely a 'theory of survival'. Following Thomas Hobbes, one might, in any case, argue that 'survival' involves the greatest good and right: 'the goodness of life as such, of being alive and enjoying life' as Robert Jackson has outlined in his appraisal of Martin Wight. Even more: 'If there were no basis for the good life inside states, there would be no point in their survival.' It is the 'goodness of life as such' which is perhaps the most fundamental basis of what serious religious values are about. Although there are others, such as simple academic curiosity, acknowledging that very truth is the motivation of this study.

In terms of political theory, there are universal values, such as liberty and equality, that distinguish pluralism from ethical relativism. Some call for a need of a so-called 'conflictual consensus' (Chantal Mouffe): a consensus on the ethical–political values of freedom and equality of all, as well as of religious values; and a dissent over the interpretation of these values. The 'holiness of life', as Christianity holds it, is certainly not among them.

The present study has travelled a long and complicated journey. First of all it is a form of conclusion to my dissertation, which

I completed under a slightly different title in 2008. Some of the more specific chapters of the dissertation – the issues of the Roman Catholic Church in international affairs, faith-based diplomacy, and the sketch of Dag Hammarskjöld – had already been published elsewhere. What I present here is a mere theoretical framework of understanding religion in international relations. Or, to put it rather simply: to acknowledge religion in the context of global politics with a Christian lens, without claiming to be a theological study.

There is a long list of people who contributed in some or another way to this study. First of all I am especially thankful to my dissertation supervisor Franz Kernic. He encouraged me to study this subject in more depth. Moreover, he accepted and continues to accept my opinions and thoughts, and helped me to order them more systematically. The same is true for my second supervisor Wolfgang Palaver. He helped me with the study's theological elements, and clearly pointed out other opinions and helpful hints along the way, and thankfully he still does so.

Furthermore I would like to thank Thomas Banchoff, Rebecca Glazier, Lucian Leustean, Daniel Philpott, Christoph Rohde, Alexander Stummvoll and Scott Thomas. They all read major parts of the manuscript and commented critically and in a very helpful manner at various points during the writing of this book. I am particularly indebted to Scott Thomas with whom I began an encouraging conversation about the topic of religion and international relations some time ago, which has never stopped since.

I also would like to thank Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and its centres for Peace and Security Studies, and the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and International Affairs. In 2007 I was in Georgetown for a research visit and was deeply influenced by its intellectual, but also human spirit. I gained much, if not most, of my inspiration from there. I found a wellspring of 'soft' intellectual, personal, and human inspiration, as well as 'hard' material facts, during my research and conservations there.

In a similar way, although in a more 'Protestant environment', compared to the 'Catholic' one in Georgetown, I gained many intellectual insights during my stay at Boston University's Institute of Culture, Religion and World Affairs (CURA) in 2010. I am particularly indebted to Peter Berger of Boston University, a sociologist of religion and fellow-countryman. My time and conversations at Boston

University made me even more strongly aware that there is no such thing as 'the' particular religion.

The English School scholar Martin Wight once wrote that international relations are about interpersonal exchange. This is true for the scholar behind his office desk as well as for actual international politics. Nothing made me more aware of this than the many conversations I had with scholars of religion, theology, sociology, international relations as well as devoted followers of religion and clergy around the world and from different traditions. Speaking with Muslim members of the Iraqi Ba'ath party gives you a different image of Islam than speaking with a Malaysian Imam. And speaking with a member of the clergy of the Southern Baptist Convention gives you a different image of Christianity than speaking with a Lutheran Pastor from New York City. Even more, this book has been written literally all over the world and in widely differing places, geographically as well as intellectually. It is perhaps the case, therefore, that in the text I take a rather conservative stance, searching for constants, even if they are changing.

For close reading and editing the study, while also giving helpful comments about the content, I am especially thankful to Melissa Parish, Brigitte Dorner, as well as Alec McAulay, Julia Willan and Harriet Barker from Palgrave. Finally, I am thankful to Chaplain John W. Conroe from the US Navy who kindly provided the cover image. This peace and paradox vividly illustrates the world we are living in.[3]

Most of all, I am deeply thankful to my family, my wife and my parents, who have enabled me to keep on studying, and who have always supported me in every manner.

Innsbruck, April 2012

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Part III Conclusion

Part I

Religion in the International Realm

1
The power of the 'legions not always visible on parade'

'The Pope! How many divisions does *he* have?' was the famous response of Joseph Stalin to a question from the French secretary of state Pierre Laval concerning the situation of Catholics in Russia in 1935. This well known anecdote, documented by Winston Churchill, exemplifies the mainstream opinion regarding religion in politics – at that time and sometimes to this day. Recall, for example, the CIA's lapidary answer to a question about the study of religion and culture in the overthrowing of the Shah of Iran: 'sociology'.[1] However, less well-known is Churchill's own annex to Stalin's remark: 'Laval's answer was not reported to me but he might certainly have mentioned a number of legions not always visible on parade.'[2] The British statesman and Realist, Churchill, was well aware of the *power* of those invisible legions, better known as faithful believers of any religion.

Probably it was a coincidence that Churchill used the word 'legions' which literally means many. Although speaking from the 'dark' side, it may be also no coincidence that the (invisible) demon in the New Testament (Mark 5: 9) names itself Legion: 'And he [Jesus] asked him, What [is] thy name? And he answered, saying, My name [is] Legion: for we are many.' However 'invisible' religion as a sociological and metaphysical category may be, its believers are here and they are a part of this world and its politics, and therefore of the study of international relations.[3] Even more, as various examples vividly illustrate, they are here to stay. The general modernization thesis – the assumption that continuing modernization will eventually lead to secularization, meaning that religion will either decline

or, at least, be privatized, has proved to be a poor guide to historical developments in politics on the global scale. The portion of people adhering to the branches of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism on a world-wide scale continually increased in the last century. Put more bluntly, most people on earth – almost 80 percent – believe in God.[4]

However, Stalin's comment used to be, and sometimes still is, influential in shaping the understanding of religion in the context of politics, as opposed to acknowledging the 'invisible legions'. Nevertheless, taking a closer look at this episode, it turns out that even people like Churchill, who are not that 'religiously musical', as Max Weber coined it, have a different view. Some other, rather academic, examples from roughly the same time, which, among others, I now briefly outline, illustrate similar findings and lead to the last example embedded in current world politics. Let us consider Hans Morgenthau on Abraham Lincoln's faith and the pacifistic approach of the Quakers, E. H. Carr's acknowledgement of the religious insights of the author Dostoyevsky, the United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld's emphasis of sacrifice and mystics, John Lennon's song *Imagine* and, finally, former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's view on religion and foreign policy.

Hans J. Morgenthau, one of the 'fathers' of 20th-century Realism, well known for his – wrongly – assumed *Realpolitik*, was indeed sensitive towards religion and its power. On Abraham Lincoln he pointed out that 'While Lincoln was indifferent to religion as dogma and organization, he was profoundly and consistently aware of the existential human condition from which the religious impulse in dogma and visible in organization springs: the finiteness of man in knowledge and action.'[5] It is this last aspect which probably gives religion the most power: man's insight of the finiteness of knowledge and action. This does not mean that religious people are fanatics. Rather, it means that this insight opens a new dimension and vision in politics which is hidden in the daily routine of secular politics.

Moreover, and this is the third story, in acknowledging this insight, at least in Christian terms, this implies the holiness of life as Christians would call it. E. H. Carr, another prominent 'father' of 20th-century Realism, is well known for his inter-war study *Twenty Years' Crisis*. What is not so well known, however, is Carr's work on the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky, to which we find in *Twenty Years' Crisis* only one small but impressive reference pointing towards

the condensed insight of the artist: 'Dostoevsky, who had none of the prejudices of an Englishman or an economist, made Ivan Karamazov declare that the price of admission to the "eternal harmony" was too high if it included the sufferings of the innocent.'[6] A 'basic respect for human life'[7] is thus not only the case for Hans Morgenthau, but for all Realists.

Taking such a stand would not be possible from a genuinely atheist point of view. Only a religious view, a faith-based lens, in this case Christianity, can provide the basis for such an opinion. With this small reference Carr points towards one, if not the, fundamental issue of Christianity: the question of violence and sacrifice. This issue will turn up throughout the whole study: whether it is possible – in this world, without any conditions – to live up to the demand of the ethos of non-violence – that is not to say pacifism or having to deal with the 'lesser evil'. Morgenthau was well aware of the purity of the former when he praised the approach of the Quakers: 'The Quaker approach to foreign policy is not so much a doctrine as a disposition of the soul translated into action. It is truly political in its adaptability to circumstances; it approaches Christian moral excellence in being consistently informed by the pure demands of Christian ethics.'[8]

Another prominent figure in 20th-century politics, although today often forgotten, offers us the same insights: the second United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. In his attempt to unite the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* (to use the terms popularized by Hannah Arendt) he asked himself in his mystical writings: 'You asked for burdens to carry – And howled when they were placed on your shoulders. Had you fancied another sort of burden? Did you believe in the anonymity of sacrifice? The sacrificial act and the sacrificial victim are opposites, and to be judged as such.'[9]

What do these randomly chosen examples tell us about the topic of religion in international relations? They tell us, first of all, that religion does have an influence on politics and thus also international politics – at least on a normative basis and in terms of theoretically capturing its foundations. It is as simple as that. Furthermore, they tell us that the tradition of Realism had an eye open for the issue of religion in politics, or, in other words, is 'religiously musical' as becomes evident from a closer look at individual scholars. Certainly, this is the case because Realism itself is more of a philosophical tradition than a coherent social-scientific theory.

Finally, let us illuminate the topic with another story, reflecting on a world without religion and the subsequent argument of a politician that this is not possible, nor, as this study argues, desirable. 'Imagine there's no countries,/ It isn't hard to do,/ Nothing to kill or die for,/ And no religion too,/ Imagine all the people,/ Living life in peace...' pleads the mellow voice of John Lennon in his famous song 'Imagine'. A more realistic and real-world-related focus, however, reminds us that Lennon's concept, while beautiful as a song, is a utopia, especially regarding religion. United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (1997–2001), who also quotes Lennon's lyric, emphatically writes that it is impossible to keep religion out of politics; especially out of international affairs: 'As I travel around the world, I am often asked, "Why can't we just keep religion out of foreign policy?" My answer is that we can't and shouldn't. Religion is a large part of what motivates people and shapes their views of justice and right behavior. It must be taken into account.'[10]

One aim of this study is to avoid neglecting the impact – for better or for worse – of religion in international relations. Taking religion seriously offers new analytical as well as normative grounds for the study of international relations. It is doing so in taking a distinct *Christian* approach. This means that the book primarily focuses, in terms of theory, on issues where Christianity, – or, in the case of Realism, Judeo-Christian values and ideas – are at stake. In mere practical terms and related to real-world issues this means that this book primarily focuses on the Christian religion, while also looking at the other members of the monotheistic family of religions in international politics.

This study is guided by the normative approach that at its best, religion – just like democracy – respects the equality and value of every human being, and therefore offers unexplored opportunities for conflict resolution and peace building. But this assumption inherits one of the greatest challenges of our time in international relations – religious fundamentalism – and, even more, religious extremism.[11]

Although a major claim of this book is that religion at its best is always inclusive and peaceful, it is worth thinking about new ways of understanding religion in international relations and illustrating religious potential for peace. But, as Albright additionally notes, religion, or more precisely, faith, always requires belief in an

absolute truth. It is thus always on the edge of becoming exclusive and therefore extremist. The study argues, just as Albright observes, that it is important to acknowledge that people are imperfect human beings, and that it is therefore quite another thing 'to assert that imperfect human beings can be in full possession of this truth'. But, as it turns out, it is just this claim for absolute truth which can be a promoter for religious engagement in politics for the better, not for the worse as often assumed.

The study of international relations has to come to terms with religion as one, probably the most durable, form of identity. Just like ethno-national identities, religious identities are strongly persistent. Consider, for example, the case of Albania. Albania was the first country to officially declare itself an atheistic state during Communist rule in the 20th century, and banned all religion, religious activities and religious institutions from the official sphere for over two decades. And still, after the end of the Cold War a revival of religion in Albania took place.[12]

1.1 Realism, the English School, and religion

So what about Realism, the English School, and religion in international relations? It is about acknowledging and, above all, approaching an *understanding* of religion in international relations within the two theoretical contexts. It is not primarily about *explaining* certain political outcomes due to the 'religious factor'. What is characteristic about current literature on the topic is the (academic) desire to transform religion and, even more, faith into a variable to explain political outcomes. This study tackles the 'so what' question by illustrating that, at the outset of academic endeavour, it is necessary to understand the comprehensiveness of problems before approaching to explain them.

Realism, as it is referred to in this study, and associated with figures such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Edward H. Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr, George F. Kennan and others, developed as a distinct philosophical approach in social science in the mid-20th century. It is a rather American discipline, enriched by scholars of European heritage. Traditional, 20th-century Realism is, just as were its ancient ancestors from Thucydides to Hobbes, a diverse and plural tradition: rather a 'philosophy' than a coherent school of thought. However, there are at

least three common themes in all variations of Realism: international politics is conflictual, and dominated by groups; and one is obliged to take a rather pessimistic view of man.

Roughly at the same time on the other side of the Atlantic, in Great Britain, a similar theoretical approach towards international relations took its shape: the so-called English School. Conventional wisdom has it that Realism is portrayed under the lens of power politics and the struggle for power. This focus is most often and prominently attributed to Hans Morgenthau. The English School (with scholars from around the globe), on the other hand, is not that well known although there are many similarities which both traditions share. Even though many are aware of its most prominent non-English scholar, Hedley Bull, the theoretical foundations seemed to have been lost in the archives of international relations scholarship by the 1980s.

It is the emphasis on (international and world) *society* which makes the English School prone to understand religion. Martin Wight, perhaps the single most important scholar of this tradition, is, next to Hans Morgenthau in the USA, a major source for criticising rather behavioural approaches towards international politics. International politics are, in the view of Wight, a predicament and therefore require, just as Morgenthau points out, tragic choices. However, as the English School stresses, there are certain institutions like diplomacy or sovereignty which shape international politics and their conduct. This is possible due to an international society consisting of states which, most of the time, restricts itself to certain rules that the states have agreed upon.

Later Realists preferred to focus on the structural and systemic aspects of international relations. In his famous distinction of the three 'images' of international relations – man, the state, and war (the international system) – Kenneth Waltz and his successors reduced international relations to the third 'image'. Even more, the most distinctive feature of modern Realism in terms of such prominent figures as Waltz or John Mearsheimer is to do away with Waltz's so-called 'first image' – man in international relations.[13] Even prominent so-called neoclassical Realists such as Fareed Zakaria focus more on the second (the state) 'image' and structural factors of the international system rather than on men.