RELIGION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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ABSTRACT

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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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Religion was regarded as a marginal factor by scholars of International Relations for a long time. The main reason for this ignorance is that the discipline of International Relations has followed the major paradigm - secularization thesis - in social sciences until recently. This resulted in ignorance of religion as an explanatory factor in International Relations. However, this situation has recently started to change. Beginning from 1990s, the role of religion in international relations has started to be reexamined; and secularization theory has started to be criticized. On the other hand, religion has started to be regarded as a tool for peacebuilding, at the same time. In addition to its contribution to conflicts and wars, religion is increasingly seen as a potential tool for peaceful cooperation; and inter-religious dialogue is becoming a part of diplomacy and conflict resolution policies. Within this context, interfaith dialogue is a case which shows the extent of the change in the discipline of IR regarding the role of religion.

This thesis aims to make a comprehensive discussion on the historical and contemporary relation between religion and international relations by focusing on the role of interfaith dialogue, specifically dialogue initiatives within the EU and the UN. The dialogue projects of these institutions and their relation with security-driven policies are examined. Thus, the main concern of this study is to raise a

question about the role of interfaith dialogue, especially the one proposed by the institutions above, in transforming the role of religion in international relations.

Key words: Interfaith dialogue, religion, international relations

ÖZ

ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLERDE DİN
VE
DİNLER ARASI DİYALOG

Olcay Sezenler
Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Zana Çitak Aytürk
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Din kavramına, bugüne dek, uluslararası ilişkiler disiplininde fazla yer verilmemiştir. Bunun en önemli nedeni, sosyal bilimlerde önemli bir etkisi olan ve modernleşmeyle birlikte dinin öneminin azaldığını öne süren sekülerleşme teorisidir. Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplini uzun sure bu teorinin etkisi altında kalmış ve din konusuna önem vermemiştir. Ancak, 1990'lı yıllardan itibaren, dinin uluslararası ilişkilerdeki yeri sorgulanmaya başlamıştır. Ayrıca, son yıllarda dinin barışa katkısı konusundaki tartışmalar hız kazanmış ve dinler arası diyalog önemli bir barış aracı olarak görülmeye başlamıştır. Bu çerçevede, dinler arası diyalog, uluslararası ilişkilerde dinin değişen rolünü gösteren önemli bir örnektir.

Bu tez, dinler arası diyalog üzerinden, din ve uluslararası ilişkiler arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Dinler arası diyalog, Avrupa Birliği ve Birleşmiş Milletler kurumlarının diyalog projeleri özelinde incelenmektedir. Bu projelerin güvenlik politikalarıyla nasıl bir ilişki içinde olduğu sorgulanmakta ve dinler arası diyalog projesinin, din kavramının uluslararası ilişkilerdeki yerini nasıl ve ne derece değiştirdiği araştırılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeleler: Dinlerarası diyalog, din, uluslararası ilişkiler

To my dear parents İbrahim & Nejla Sezenler,
For everything they have done for me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since 1979 Iranian Revolution and particularly after the end of the Cold War, and most recently with September 11, there has been a growing interest in religion in social sciences. International Relations discipline has also witnessed an increasing interest in the role of religion in world politics. Before, religion was not regarded as an important factor by scholars of International Relations. In the discipline of International Relations, the roots of this ignorance go back to Westphalian settlement in 1648. With this settlement, sovereign states were defined as the dominant actors of the secular international system, replacing the authority of the Church. This understanding of international relations was strengthened with the emergence of the Enlightenment, which led to the hope that secular ideologies, science and rationalism would provide a basis for a better life. In other words, secularization was accepted as an inherent part of modernization and religion was supposed to decline with the rise of modernization. Finally, this resulted in neglect of religion as an explanatory factor; and religion and religious actors became politically marginalized over time in International Relations.[1]

However, this situation has recently started to change. Beginning from 1980s, the role of religion in social sciences has started to be reexamined; and secularization theory has started to be criticized by an increasing number of scholars including the ones who previously supported this theory. This attitude change also started to take place in International Relations with early 1990s. Today there is an increasing consensus on the idea that religion is an important factor in international relations.

[1] Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, "The Overlooked Dimension," in Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion Into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 9-33.

Some scholars go even further to argue that religion is in a revival, and is more important than in the past. Accordingly, based on a series of events it has been argued that religion still makes impact on international relations; and it is not possible to explain international relations without any reference to religion. In other words, the discipline of International Relations has followed the shift in the social sciences regarding the role of religion. It is possible to say that the newly emerging literature on religion and international relations has followed this change in an unquestioning way and this led to an over incorporation of religion beginning from 1990s. Especially after 9/11, the interest in religion has intensified and religion has started to be regarded as a tool for peacebuilding at the same time. In addition to its contribution to conflicts and wars, religion is increasingly seen as a potential tool for peaceful cooperation; and inter-religious dialogue is becoming part of diplomacy and conflict resolution policies. On the other hand, in the post 9/11 period, security issues have become very important and in the name of religious peacebuilding, religion has been instrumentalized for security driven policies. In short, the role of religion in international relations has been changing both in theory and practice; and this brings the necessity of rethinking on the role of religion in international relations.

This thesis aims to discuss the historical and contemporary relation between religion and international relations by focusing on interfaith dialogue. Thus, it examines the role of religion in international relations from the beginning of the discipline until now. The ignorance of religion and religious actors in the discipline of International Relations, especially in the mainstream theories of the discipline, is analyzed in terms of its reasons and implications. This study also aims to examine the incorporation of religion to international relations both in theory and practice, with a particular reference to interfaith dialogue within two inter-governmental organizations: European Union and the United Nations.

Interfaith dialogue is a relatively new phenomenon. It is defined as an encounter between people who live by different faith traditions, in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and trust.[2] It involves faith-based actors, groups in conflict by developing lines of communications between hostile parties, and by establishing common ethical principles.[3] Since the end of the Cold War, many scholars have argued that most conflicts are based on race, ethnicity and/or religion. However, in recent years, there has been a rising interest in how religion plays a role both in conflict resolution and peace building.[4] Today, many scholars accept that there is an unprecedented level of interaction between people of different faiths around the world, due to patterns of rapid mobility, mass communication, and the spread of market capitalism.[5] In such an era, religion is increasingly regarded as a factor which plays a central role in public life and as a potential tool for peacebuilding. This way of thinking has been common among not only scholars, but also government institutions, international organizations, NGOs and individuals. Faith-based actors are also increasingly becoming interested in peacebuilding worldwide, and taking part in international relations as educators, advocates, policy-makers and mediators.

Although it is a relatively new concept, interfaith dialogue has already started to gain an important place in international relations. This is the main reason why this study has a specific focus on interfaith dialogue. The place of religion in international relations is under a new scholarly scrutiny and whether interfaith dialogue is a part of this transformation in international politics is the main

[2] Akbar S. Ahmed, "Islam and the West: Clash or Dialogue of Civilizations?," in Roger Boase (ed.), *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 103-118.

[3] Jacob Bercovitch and S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution," *International Negotiation*, Vol. 14, 2009, p. 199.

[4] Ahmed, pp. 103-118.

[5] Marc Gopin, "Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution," *Peace&Change*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1997, pp. 1-31.

question of this study. In other words, in this study, interfaith dialogue is used as a case to understand the extent of this transformation.

This thesis mostly uses secondary resources with the aim of covering this newly emerging literature. There is a wide literature on the role of religion in international relations, secularization theory and its critiques. However, the literature on interfaith dialogue is a relatively limited one. Nevertheless, this study tries to cover the existing literature and to introduce the prominent figures and approaches in interfaith dialogue. In the fourth chapter, while examining the institutions of interfaith dialogue, primary resources are used, as well. The information on relevant institutions and organizations is mostly obtained from their web-sites which display their charters and declarations.

This study consists of five chapters including introduction and conclusion. Chapter two is about the role of religion in the discipline of International Relations. This chapter has two main parts: The first part examines the definition and the role of religion in international relations. A single and comprehensive definition of religion is not possible; and there is a wide disagreement on the definition of religion.[6] Therefore, in this study, religion is not based on a specific definition but rather regarded as an important factor which makes impact on international relations in several ways. Religion makes influence on international relations in diverse ways. It can influence world views of policy makers and thus shape foreign policies. Furthermore, it can make influence on public opinion and legitimate policies that have purely non-religious motivations. Besides, local religious issues and conflicts might turn into international issues and conflicts. Finally, religion is increasingly used in peacebuilding efforts in international relations. However, this does not mean that one should exaggerate the role of religion as the primary force in international relations. In this thesis, one of the key

[6] Martin E. Marty and Jonathan Moore, *Politics, Religion and the Common Good: Advancing a Distinctly American Conversation about Religion's Role in Our Shared Life* (San Fransisco: Josey-Bass Publishers, 2000), pp. 10-26.

concerns is to avoid such an exaggeration. Actually, very few events are purely originated in religious roots. Many events are much more complex. Religion, like other elements, is an important aspect of international relations. In other words, while religion is not the primary factor in international relations, it is one among the various important variables.[7]

The second part of the second chapter is about the ignorance of religion in International Relations. The argument of this chapter is that since Westphalia, international system has been conceived of as a secular order, and although religion is an important variable in international relations, it has been overlooked in the IR discipline due to several reasons, which are examined in this chapter. Secularization theory is one of the main reasons for the ignorance of religion in International Relations theories. It proposes that secularization goes in parallel with modernization. This theory affected the discipline to a great extent especially in 1950s and 1960s. However, after 1970s and especially 1980s, secularization thesis began to be questioned in social sciences. Beginning from 1990s, the discipline of International Relations started to follow this change. This chapter examines how the secularization thesis is criticized. This chapter also examines the mainstream International Relations theories and their attitude towards religion. Finally, this chapter analyzes the theoretical and practical implications of the ignorance of religion.

The third chapter is about the incorporation of religion into international relations. The first part of this chapter is about the global resurgence of religion in international relations. In fact, religion has always been an element in international relations. However, a series of events beginning from 1970s has made the impact of religion more visible. Since 1970s, fundamentalist or religion-oriented movements and religious conflicts all over the world have increased. This has led many scholars to rethink the place of religion in international relations. In this

[7] Fox and Sandler, pp. 163-179.

chapter, the global resurgence of religion is analyzed. Accordingly, the key questions are the following: What do scholars mean by 'global resurgence of religion' and, what are the causes and processes of the revival of religion?

The third chapter not only examines the global resurgence of religion but also incorporation of religion into IR theory because the resurgence of religion has the potential to transform the IR theory by creating some space for religion. Therefore, the second part of this chapter is about a critical perspective on the role of religion. It examines post-positivist IR theories and place of religion in these theories. The mainstream IR theories, which are introduced in the second chapter, are positivist theories. Positivism assumes that there is a general and universal truth which can be discovered objectively. In other words, according to positivism, facts and values are separable in social sciences, same as the natural sciences. Therefore positivist theories do not account for values. This approach was dominant in all mainstream IR theories until 1980s. However, after 1980s, an alternative way of thinking to positivist theory in International Relations developed with the emergence of post-positivist IR theories. According to post-positivism, objectivity in social sciences is not possible. This means that no one can pose a theory independent from his identity, background, beliefs and values. Therefore, according to post-positivism, a theory is a human product, not a mirror which reflects a single truth. Emergence of post-positivist theories such as Constructivism, Critical Theory and Post-modernism has brought a new perspective to International Relations theory with respect to the role of religion. These theories do not aim to reach an objective truth; and they accept the importance of values, including religious values, in international relations. This chapter examines these theories and their attitude towards religion.

The fourth chapter is on interfaith dialogue with a particular focus on European Union and the United Nations. This chapter examines what interfaith dialogue is and how it developed. This chapter also examines the limits of interfaith dialogue.

Interfaith dialogue is not an easy task. There are many risks and challenges to it. This chapter questions to what extent these challenges prevent interfaith initiatives from being successful. Finally, this chapter examines two secular international organizations which have recently started implementing interfaith policies. They are European Union and the United Nations. Interfaith dialogue within the European Union was formalized with the Barcelona Process and Euro Mediterranean Partnership which started in 1995. After the events of September 11, the discourse of dialogue within the Union has changed with an increasing focus on security. Within the United Nations, dialogue initiatives were formalized with the emergence of the initiative Alliance of Civilizations in 2005. Similar to the EU, especially after September 11, security became an important dimension of dialogue projects in the UN. This chapter examines these institutions' interfaith dialogue initiatives. The main questions are: What kind of dialogue is offered by these institutions? What are the weaknesses of these dialogue projects? How does their discourse of dialogue relate to the issue of security, and what is the relation between these dialogue discourses and clash-based arguments?

Finally, the conclusion chapter relates interfaith dialogue to IR theories, and discusses the relation between the development of interfaith dialogue, specifically within the EU and the UN, and the transforming role of religion in International Relations. In other words, this chapter questions whether and to what extent contemporary interfaith dialogue initiatives have a role in incorporation of religion into International Relations.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1. How Does Religion Affect International Relations?

> *The religious perspective is a particular way of looking at life, a particular manner of construing the world.*[8]

> *For the sake of religion men have earnestly affirmed and contradicted almost every idea and form of conduct.*[9]

Religion –the English word- has been used since 13th century and originated from Anglo-French *religiun* (11th century), and ultimately from the Latin *religio*, "reverence for the God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things, piety, the *res divinae*." The origins of Latin *religio* are usually accepted to derive from *ligare* "bind, connect", probably from *re-ligare* "reconnect." This interpretation was made prominent by St. Augustine, following the interpretation Lactantius. A historical interpretation due to Cicero on the other hand connects lego "read", in the sense of "choose", or "consider carefully."[10]

Scholars usually agree that a single and comprehensive definition that is compatible with all religions is difficult and even impossible. Talal Asad argues

[8] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 110.

[9] Paul E. Johnson, *Psychology of Religion* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 47.

[10] Charlton T. Lewis & Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, access 2 January 2010; available from http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dreligio

that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion because the definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes".[11] Similar to Asad, Thomas Tweed asserts that "it would be foolish to set up an abstract definition of religion's essence, and then proceed to defend that definition from all corners."[12]

There are various definitions for religion. Friederich Schleiermacher defined religion in the 18th century as "a feeling of absolute dependence".[13] According to George Lindbeck, religion is "a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought… it is similar to and idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiment."[14] Another definition puts religion as "a system of human thought which usually includes a set of narratives, symbols, beliefs and practices that give meaning to the practitioner's experiences of life through reference to a higher power, deity or deities, or ultimate truth."[15]

Throughout history, religion has had diverse influences on people. On one hand, figures and organizations of faith have contributed to social change and world peace. On the other hand, religion has contributed to wars all over the world. In short, religion has always been important in shaping the world. Considering all these historical and current important positive and negative effects of religion over the world, the neglect of study of religion in academia might be regarded as

[11] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 29.

[12] Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.35.

[13] Hueston A. Finlay, "'Feeling of Absolute Dependence' or 'Absolute Feeling of Dependence'? A Question Revisited," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 41, Issue 1, 2005, pp.81-94.

[14] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), p. 33.

[15] Geertz, pp. 87-125.

surprising.[16] The extent, causes and effects of this neglect of religion in academic study will be examined in the following parts.

Actually, different scholars focus on different aspects of religion's intersection with politics and society. The role of religion in society and politics can vary among different states within the same region who belong to the same religious tradition, or who have similar regimes.[17] Clifford Geertz claims that not only do religions include a belief system, but most people also find religion necessary to interpret the world, especially when bad things happen.[18] Durkheim defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[19] Marx also describes religion as the "opiate of the masses" and he makes emphasis on the influence of religion on beliefs and behavior. [20]

Religion is a social phenomenon which makes impact on international relations in four ways: First of all, foreign policies might be influenced by the religious views and beliefs of policy-makers. Religious belief systems can influence foreign policies in two ways. The first is that the belief systems can influence the cognitive framework of policy-makers. Religiously inspired views held by policy-makers and the policies based on them may result in intractable policies including war. Arab-Israeli conflict may be an example of such an influence in some way. During the past century, both sides have made exclusive claims on the same territory, and

[16] Ibid.

[17] Jonathan Fox, A *World Survey of Religion and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 13.

[18] Geertz, pp. 87-125.

[19] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by Joseph Ward Swain, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), p.47.

[20] Jonathan Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations," *International Studies Review*, 3/3, 2001, pp. 53-73.

this dispute has led to several wars. The problem has not been resolved yet and it still continues to have international repercussions. This does not mean that this conflict was a religious conflict. However, religion was one dimension of it. The second way is that religion can directly influence decisions of policy-makers through constraints placed on policy-makers by widely held beliefs within the population they represent. That is, even in autocratic governments, policy-makers can take into account beliefs, morality, or values that are widely held by their constituents.[21]

The second way that religion makes impact on politics is that religion might be used as a source of political legitimacy. Legitimacy can be described as "the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed."[22] Until the Enlightenment, religion was the sole basis for legitimacy in Europe. The right to rule emanated from God and people had no right to question who ruled and how they ruled. However, in the modern era, this situation has changed and religion is no longer the primary basis for legitimacy. Currently, most states claim legitimacy through representing the will of their people. Yet, even in these modern times, religion may constitute in some cases a source of legitimacy, because it can support status quo or challenge it. In foreign policy, it can be used to support war and peace. For instance, calls for war can be justified as holy war. In addition to this, humanitarian intervention can be justified as morally the right thing to do. Even those who believe that religion is becoming irrelevant in modern times accept that in those times and places where religion is relevant, it can legitimize a wide range of activities. For instance, Marx argues that religion is a false consciousness but nevertheless a force that can legitimize an economic system.[23]

[21] Ibid., p. 63.

[22] Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organizations*, 53(2), 1999, pp. 379-408.

[23] Fox and Sandler, pp. 35-61.

The third way in which religion makes impact on international relations is that religion can be used in dialogue and peacebuilding. Especially in recent decades, religious actors are increasingly playing role in peace-building as mediators, advocates, trainers and so on. Until recently, religion was seen only as a threat for international order, however today there is an increasing number of scholars who argue that religion can be used as a tool for peace as well. How religion can make impact as a peace tool will be examined in the fourth chapter in a detailed way.

Finally, religion is important for international relations because religious conflicts and religious issues, like many other issues, might cross borders and have international implications. For instance, fundamentalist movements have spread after 1970s cross borders and thus, become international concerns. Al Qaeda and September 11 has been an illustration on how a religiously rooted radical group may challenge the international order.[24] Conflicts can become international issues for diverse reasons. First of all, they may cross borders and destabilize a whole region. This often occurs when groups with ethnic affinities reside in states bordering the one in which a conflict is taking place. These groups, whether they are minorities or majorities within the state in which they live are often influenced by the conflict supporting the rebelling minority. Second, the success of a group on one side can inspire similar groups on another side. This is the process where a rebellion in one place can inspire similar groups living elsewhere to do the same. Third, the media may publicize these conflicts throughout the world and it fastens the emergence of international implications. Fourth, local conflicts may result in international intervention, and this intervention may also be made on religious and moral grounds. Fifth, people involved in domestic conflicts may try to use international forums and organizations to obtain what they want. This occurs when advocates for one or both groups involved in a local conflict use international forums such as the United Nations, other international organizations, or international political conferences to further their goals. Sixth, conflicts sometimes

[24] Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations," pp. 53-73.

result in international refugee flows. Seventh, the groups involved in a conflict may have religious or ethnic ties with groups living in other states, and this can enable the conflict to become an international issue.[25]

In short, religious conflicts like other conflicts may well have international repercussions. However, this is not to say that these conflicts are purely religious. While religion has an important role in international conflicts, it is usually just one of the complex factors. In this study, my purpose is to examine religious aspects of international relations, but not to claim that all is about religion. While making emphasis on the role of religion in various international conflicts, religion should be seen as one of the factors.[26]

2.2. Religion as an Ignored Element in International Relations

Although religion influences international relations in several ways which were mentioned above, International Relations discipline has long ignored the role of religion and religious actors in international relations. In fact, religion is not the only element which was ignored in the discipline of IR. Most social and cultural factors as well as non-state actors were regarded as irrelevant to IR, and religion is one among them. Even if it has been sometimes addressed, it has tended to be placed within the context of some other category such as civilizations, or in its association with terrorism.[27] However, relating religion necessarily with fundamentalism or terrorism would be misleading. Actually, as Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos argue, religion was exiled from the modern constitution of international relations for a long time. Therefore, the fact that today it is seen as a

[25] Fox and Sandler, pp. 63-82.

[26] Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations," pp. 53-73.

[27] Ibid., p. 53.

threat to the existence of international relations is surprising.[28] On the other hand, while sociologists and political scientists usually explain why religion is of declining significance, there is no such explanation in international relations. Rather, the discipline of International Relations has for a long time ignored religion and there has been until recently, a striking absence of a debate over its role. It has been simply assumed that religion is not relevant to international relations.[29]

Jonathan Rynhold is one of the scholars who accept that "In the international relations literature, religion tends to be dismissed as an epiphenomenon."[30] Similarly, Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito argue that "Religion was the object that needed to vanish for modern international politics to come into being. Religion has been, and largely remains, what the discipline of International Relations can speak about only as a threat to its own existence."[31]

Some recent events in the world politics have clearly showed the extent of this ignorance. For instance, the Islamic Revolution in Iran is one of the most important examples of how the impact of culture and religion was ignored in the study of international relations. According to the modernization theory, which will be introduced in detail in following parts, secularization was considered to be an inevitable part of modernization. Accordingly, the role of religion was supposed to decline with economic progress and modernization. However, in 1979, in Iran, the Islamic revolution overthrew the monarchy under Shah and replaced it with an Islamic republic under Khomeini, the leader of revolution. Most political scientists

[28] Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (Eds.), "The Return from Exile: An Introduction," in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 1-2.

[29] Fox and Sandler, p. 15.

[30] Jonathan Rynhold, "Religion, Postmodernization and Israeli Approaches to the Conflict with the Palestinians," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 17(3), 2005, pp. 371-389.

[31] Petito and Hatzopoulos, p.1.

and experts did not predict the Islamic Revolution in Iran because it was not supposed to happen within such a context. There were observers who were expecting for an upheaval but not an Islamic revolution. It was not supposed to happen in a developing country participating in modernization and Westernization. Therefore, it was unique for the surprise it created all over the world. The Iranian Revolution constitutes an important turning point for the discussion of religion in international relations. Before this dramatic event, the study of culture and religion was thought to be irrelevant to political analysis.[32] However, after the Revolution, views on religion were begun to be reexamined and the secularization thesis has started to be questioned.

2.2.1. Why has Religion been Ignored in International Relations?

The most influential explanation of why religion is an overlooked element of international politics is the rejection of religion. According to Hatzopoulos and Petito, "the rejection of religion seems to be inscribed in the genetic code of the discipline of IR."[33] There are mainly six reasons why IR discipline has for a long time ignored religion.

The first reason goes back to the Westphalian settlement. Medieval ages in Europe were under the dominance of religion. There were no absolute loyal powers; but instead there was a local and fragmented political organization type which is known as feudalism. In this politically fragmented environment, the most absolute power for the Christian world was the Church.[34] However, when the concepts of

[32] Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-2.

[33] Petito and Hatzopoulos, p. 1.

[34] Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 173-202.

sovereignty and territory began to domain, the struggle began.[35] The exhaustion of Thirty Years War in Europe and the necessity of coexistence led the old continent to 1648 Westphalian settlement. With this settlement, state began to become the sole authority in terms of holding executive, legislative and judicial power.[36] The Westphalian state system defined the state as the dominant actor replacing the authority of the Church. The new system was based on the sovereignty of independent states and their right to control their internal affairs. Consequently, the power of the church began to diminish while the power of state increased. Westphalian system also established political realism and the secular principle of *raison d'état* by replacing religion as the basis of foreign policy. States were accepted as sovereign units which act on behalf of their rational interests; and intervention on religious grounds was prohibited. In other words, Westphalian settlement established a political theology for international relations. The Westphalian system, the emphasis on state, nonintervention and military security was accepted in the early modern Europe as part of the political mythology of liberalism. Within this context, religion was considered to be the ultimate threat to international order and security.[37]

Secondly, the ignorance of religion in International Relations is due to the modernization and secularization theories, which go back to Enlightenment. The majority of the most important eighteenth and nineteenth century thinkers such as Comte, Durkheim, Marx, Weber and Nietzsche believed that an age of enlightenment would replace religion as the basis for understanding the world. For instance, Nietzsche's "God is dead" thesis refers to the loss of the credibility of Christian belief and the loss of commitment to its values. Similarly, Weber argued

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[35] Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 34-57.

[36] Daniel Philpott, "The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 52, January 2000, pp. 206-245.

[37] Thomas, pp. 54-55.

that secular ideologies were replacing religion as the basis of legitimacy and social control. All these thinkers believed that in the modern industrial age more rational and scientific means were needed to explain the world.[38] An important element of the Enlightenment was the promotion of rationalism, reason, and science as a basis for guiding society and human behavior. Religion was seen as a threat to the society which these thinkers aspired to create. Accordingly, they all found ways to marginalize it in their theories. Government was to be guided by scientific and rational principles. Moreover, individual behavior was to be understood through science and reason. This tendency included replacing religious criteria with rational and scientific criteria as well as using psychology for understanding human behavior. In other words, many of these thinkers recognized that religion had a significant social role, but they expected it to decline with modernity.[39]

In political science, this paradigm was called modernization theory. The first assumption of modernization theory is that a modern society can be clearly distinguished from a traditional one. Within this context, religion is part of a traditional society but not of a modern society. Another assumption of the modernization theory is that modernization is a linear, progressive conception of social change.[40] Modernization theory does not focus on the clash between reason and religion, but rather it posits that a set of processes inherent in economic modernization will inevitably lead to the decline of religion. Urbanization was expected to undermine the traditional community. According to this theory, small and homogenous communities where religion is a central element of politics and life simplify socialization and enforce religious norms. When people move to big cities, they can choose between diverse networks many of which are not based on religion. Therefore, it is accepted that being religious becomes a matter of

[38] Fox and Sandler, pp. 9-33.

[39] Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and the State*, p. 14.

[40] Thomas, pp. 50-51.

individual choice. Moreover, increased literacy rates give access to information that was once available only to elites. This availability allows people to read and interpret religious texts for themselves. Besides, mass education and communication technology, including the internet, has increased this empowerment and the free flow of ideas. On the other hand, within the modernist perspective, science undermines religion's role in explaining the world. For instance, in the Judeo-Christian world the concept of the seven days of creation now competes with the big bang and evolution. Moreover, science is regarded as an institution replacing religion as a source of solutions to problems. In the past, social and spiritual problems were the purview of the clergy. However, today, most people see a mental health professional when they have psychological problems. On the other hand, nationalism and other types of identity are believed to be replacing religion as the source of identity. In short, it is believed that political ideologies are replacing religion as the guides for a better society; and modern secular political and social institutions are replacing religious ones.[41]

The final assumption of the modernization theory is the secularization theory. Secularization thesis asserts that modernization brings out the diminution of the social significance of religion. According to Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, it means that social services such as education, welfare, health which were once in the domain of religious institutions are now other specialized institutions which are dealing with these issues. Moreover, according to secularization theory, the notion of society is replacing the community, and so religion has been shorn of its functions. According to modernists, religion becomes more privatized and pushed to the margins of the social order. In other words, it is no longer a necessity but a preference or a leisure activity.[42] As societies become more modern, they become

[41] Fox, A *World Survey of Religion and the State*, pp. 12-31.

[42] Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, "Secularization: The Orthodox Model," in Steve Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 8-30.

more secular. Religion is no longer needed to legitimize the state because the state is legitimized through the "will of people" and democratic institutions.[43]

Actually, there are different versions of the secularization thesis but they have some common points. For instance, there is a universal agreement that modernization is the main engine for the disappearance of religion. This means that secularization doctrine has developed within the broader framework of modernization theories. It was assumed that religiosity would and must diminish with industrialization, rationalization and so on. Another common point is that, it is usually claimed that the most important aspect of modernization which leads religion to disappearance is science. August Comte argued that science would free people from superstition. Finally, secularization is seen as irreversible and universal although most discussions focus on Christianity only.[44]

Most enlightenment thinkers have thought that secularization is a positive movement and they have regarded religious phenomena as a backward movement. On the contrary, some religious people have regarded modernity as the enemy which has damaged religious values. However, both have accepted that modernity necessarily leads to the decline of religion.[45]

Secularization theory was among the most prominent theories in social sciences on the role of religion in politics and society for much of the twentieth century. However, by the late twentieth century, among social scientists, the level of acceptance of this body of theory has begun to decrease and there has been an increasing focus on the study of religion. Since around 1980, the modernization-secularization paradigm has been called into question. World events since the late

[43] Fox and Sandler, pp. 9-33.

[44] Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.", *Sociology of Religion*, 1999, 60:3, pp. 249-273.

[45] Peter L. Berger, "Secularism in Retreat," in Azzam Tamimi and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), p. 39.

1970s have called attention to religion's impact on society and politics. These events include the Iranian revolution and subsequent Islamic opposition movements throughout the Islamic world such as Bosnia, Chechnya, India, Nigeria and Sudan. Finally, the attacks of September 11, 2001 have made it clear that modernization and secularization paradigm should be questioned.[46] Especially in the recent years, a rising number of scholars argue that secularization theory is problematic. They argue that secularization is not an inherent feature of modernization. On the contrary, some scholars argue that modernization can both reinforce secularization and religious movements. For instance, Peter Berger argues that the relation between modernity and religion is complicated. He argues that it is true that modernization has led to secularizing effects; however, it has also had some counter-secularizing effects which are at least as important as secularization in the contemporary world.[47] Berger was one of the proponents of secularism in 1960s, but now he writes:

> The assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, with some exceptions to which I will come presently, is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled "secularization theory" is essentially mistaken. In my early work I contributed to this literature. I was in good company-most sociologists of religion had similar views, and we had good reasons for holding them. Some of the writings we produced still stand up.[48]

Similar to Berger, Harvey Cox once argued that religion would decline and we would live in a "secular city." He was an influential secularization theorist in 1960s. However he reversed his argument in *Religion in the Secular City* (1984) in that the future of religion now lay in religious grassroots movements including

[46] Fox, A *World Survey of Religion and the State*, p. 12.

[47] Berger, "Secularism in Retreat," p. 42.

[48] Ibid, pp. 38-39.

religious fundamentalism.[49] Rodney Stark argues that secularization thesis was the 'product of a wishful thinking'. He argues that "from the beginning, social scientists have celebrated the secularization thesis despite the fact that it never was consistent with empirical reality". However, it was David Martin, who first expressed his doubt about secularization theory. He rejected this thesis by arguing that it was ideological rather then theoretical and there was no evidence showing a shift from a religious period to a secular one.[50] Similarly, according to religious market approach of Rodney Stark, Laurence Iannaccome and Anthony Gill, people's religious demands do not decline with the secularization process. Instead, religious participation changes by the quality of the supply of churches.[51] Finally, Jeffrey Hadden argues that, secularization is a "doctrine more than a theory" based on "presuppositions that. . . represent a taken-for-granted ideology" of social scientists "rather than a systematic set of interrelated propositions."[52] According to Hadden, the ideology of secularization relies on beliefs about the past more than a statement about the present. Moreover, he argues that secularization theory is internally weak in its logical structure and scientific data over more than 20 years does not support this thesis. Rather, new religious movements have appeared in secularized societies.[53]

However, secularization theory is still a powerful theory which is supported by many scholars. For instance, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart claim that in fact secularization is still occurring. Their argument is that religion is losing its social and political significance as a result of modernization, except where there is lack

[49] Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984)

[50] Stark, pp. 249-273.

[51] Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 2.

[52] Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory", *Social Forces*, Vol. 65, No. 3, 1987, pp.587-611

[53] Ibid.

of "existential security." This means that, if people feel relatively secure, free from various risks and dangers and comfortable in their material surroundings, they will neglect religion, as happened in rich and developed countries.[54] Jose Casanova is another scholar who supports the secularization thesis. In fact, he criticizes the theory to some extent, but he gives credit to the core part of the theory. He argues that the secularization theory has failed in its predictions of the decline of religious beliefs and practices and in terms of the privatization and individualization of religion. However, he confirms the core assumption that "conceptualization of the process of societal modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres-primarily the state, the economy and science-from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly found religious sphere."[55] In short, in addition to its proponents, secularization theory is still supported by a group of scholars, and the debate is continuing. However, it is possible to say that the number of critics is much more than it was a few decades ago. In other words, recently, social scientists have become less bound by the secularization theory and more interested in the role of religion.[56]

The third reason of the ignorance of religion is relevant to the Western centric structure of the social sciences and particularly the discipline of International Relations. As we mentioned before, the founders of social sciences ignored religion as an explanation for the social world and they believed that religion had no part in rational explanations for the way how the world works. They focused most of their studies on the West, where religion's influence was least apparent. Jonathan Fox argues that this is valid for all Western social sciences, but

[54] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

[55] Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

[56] Kuru, pp. 1-5.

International Relations is in many ways the most Western of the social sciences. Those who dominate the field are Westerners and its origins are rooted in the experiences of the West.[57] Moreover, the historical experiences of the West and the church-state conflict have caused a strong secular bias in Western political theory. Therefore, these scholars may have biases against religion and not regard it as an important factor in the international relations.[58] Finally, the Western centric structure of the discipline might have led the discipline to go parallel with the concerns of Western policy-makers at times. Stanley Hoffman argues that rather than being a real science, International Relations is an American social science because most of the founders of the discipline were rooted in the US universities. Moreover, he adds that during the foundation of the discipline, the US was the world power, therefore studying world politics was regarded as studying US foreign policy. Hoffmann pointed out a chronological convergence between US policy-makers' concerns and scholars' studies. He argued that this focus on the US foreign policy led to ignore many interesting phenomena.[59]

In light of the approach of Hoffman, religion can be regarded as among these phenomena. As we mentioned before, until 1990s religion was regarded as a marginal factor by many IR scholars. However, after the end of the Cold War, religious conflicts and movements intensified in the world and they became foreign policy concerns not only for the US but many states. At the same time, religion started to be incorporated into the discipline of IR. In 1993, Samuel Huntington published his famous article of 'Clash of Civilizations,' in which he argued that future conflicts would originate from cultural differences between civilizations. In the post 9/11 period, security concerns have become more visible for foreign policies for many states especially for the United States. In this period,

[57] Fox and Sandler, pp. 9-33.

[58] Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations," pp. 57-58.

[59] Stanley Hoffman, "An American Social Science: International Relations," *Daedalus*, Vol. 106, No. 3, 1977, pp. 41-60.

conflict resolution studies started to regard religion as an important variable. Interfaith dialogue has become popular especially after 9/11. However, at the same time, religion has been instrumentalized for security interests. In other words, although dialogue has been showed as an apolitical project, in fact it has been political like the discipline itself. This issue will be examined in detail in the following chapters.

The fourth reason why culture and religion have not been a part of the study of international relations is because of positivism and materialism which have influenced the main paradigms of international relations. These assumptions are part of what is called 'the second great debate' in International Relations. This debate is often seen as a triumph of positivism and behavioralism over the traditional methods of diplomatic history and political philosophy. Positivism is used to mean the application of the scientific method used to study the natural-physical world to the study of social science. According to positivism, the world is made up of unconscious particles in mechanistic interaction. What theory is supposed to do is to explain the events that are observed through the senses from the outside. This means that the events are external to theories we produce. This approach assumes that human beings can be removed from the physical and social world under study.[60]

Positivism is actually based on naturalism, which assumes that there is a unity of science and a single logic. That means, there is only one reality in physical or social worlds, and so the methodology of scientific investigation is the same for both of them. The second assumption is that facts can be separated from values because there is an observable reality out there. Observable phenomena are external to the interpretations we develop for them. The third assumption is that there are general laws and patterns for the social world as well as the natural world and these laws can be discovered and tested with appropriate methods. Therefore,

[60] Thomas, pp. 60-62.

positivist explanatory theories seek to discover these laws and patterns. These assumptions have limited the idea of what good theories are. They also limited the role of ideas, ideals, passions aspirations, ideologies, beliefs and identities. The positivist conception of rationality is independent of social and historical context and independent of any understanding of human nature. They ignore the impact of values including religious values.[61]

Fifth, the discipline of International Relations, in its predominant form, originated from the theories of national security developed after the Second World War. The Cold War paradigm that dominated International Relations theory focused on East-West competition. This competition was between two secular ideologies: liberalism and Communism. Thus, the study of international relations dealt with the entire world from a secular Western perspective.[62] In fact, religion was an important variable in international relations during the Cold War, as well. For instance, the United States supported religious movements against the Soviet Russia in the Middle East and Central Asia. Therefore, it is possible to say that, during the Cold War, like other periods, the ignorance of religion was not due to the international context but the characteristics of the discipline. In other words, religion was always an important variable in international relations, but the discipline of International Relations did not regard it as an important element.

Finally, religion is a very difficult variable to measure and therefore, it is not always an eligible issue for quantitative studies. A major branch of International Relations focuses on quantitative methodology. Quantitative methodology entails the usage of statistical techniques; however, this methodology has been criticized for ignoring variables that are hard to measure. Since this methodology cannot deal

[61] Ibid., pp. 60-96.

[62] Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations," p. 58.

with factors that cannot be distilled into numerical variables, phenomenon such as religion tends to be ignored.[63]

2.2.2. Religion in Mainstream International Relations Theories

Not only culture and religion but most social forces were ignored in the main paradigms and traditions of International Relations.[64] In addition to the reasons above, this is also due to the general structure of the mainstream IR theories. These theories share some assumptions. For instance, they all defined state as the key actor of international relations. By doing so, they did not ignore only religious actors but all non-state actors. For a better understanding of the role of religion in IR theories, in this part, we will examine mainstream IR theories and their attitude towards religion.

International Relations has most been dominated by the perspective called realism. Realism is based on four main assumptions: First, state is the main actor and the distinct political entity.[65] Therefore, realism does not pay attention to non-state actors including religious actors. Second, the internal workings of a state can be ignored because all states have similar motivations and behave similarly. In other words, realists place all domestic factors into a black box and they also cover up the importance of religion. However, religion's greatest influence on international relations is through its influence on domestic politics. It is a motivating force for many policy-makers. It can influence public opinion and provide justification for policies. These impacts of religion on domestic politics make implications on international relations.[66] Third, realists argue that the international system is a

[63] Fox and Sandler, pp. 9-33.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[66] Ibid., 163-179.

chaotic, self-help system, which do not have place for norms and values, including religious values. Realism's understanding of international system also assumed its independence from Christendom. Early scholars of realism, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes, all described the political changes of their era as a departure from the medieval Christendom. Finally, realists claim that the only motivation for foreign policy of states is to gain power and material wealth. This means that, foreign policies do not include normative considerations including religious ones. According to the realist theory, ethical considerations must give way to the raison d'état. Hans Morgenthau argued that "realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states"[67] In other words, according to realists, power is primary and it is legitimate to deviate from the Christian morality if the interests of the state require so.[68]

Realism's attitude which does not give a significant place to religion is also found in the tradition's contemporary scholar and the leader of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz. Waltz argues that the structure of the international system is anarchic, which means there is no central authority over states. Thus, states exist in an environment of anarchy, motivated by power and nothing else.[69] In short, the key actor for realists is state. This means that the impact of non-state actors, including the role of religious actors, is ignored in these theories. In other words, these actors are accepted to become illegitimate actors after Westphalia. Even if the role of religion is regarded in the realist tradition, it is regarded as a type of ideology that state can use to gain legitimacy and so maintain its power.[70] Realism overlooks morality and proposes that any way for states to survive is legitimate. Therefore,

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[67] Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th Edition, (New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1985), p. 166.

[68] Thomas, pp. 47-69.

[69] Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 2002, pp. 66-95.

[70] Thomas, pp. 47-69.

religion can be used as a source to gain legitimacy. As we mentioned before, legitimacy is a way in which religion makes impact on international relations. However, the relation between religion and international relations is much more complex. As mentioned before, religion has also the power to influence international relations in other ways such as affecting foreign policies and perspectives of policy makers.

The main competitor of realism has been liberalism for two centuries. Liberals argue that it is possible for states to avoid competition for power and cooperate for peace and prosperity. For cooperation, there are certain conditions such as democratic regimes, economic interdependence and effective international institutions. However, liberals rarely regard religion as a factor shaping the ends of states. Instead, most describe international relations as completely secular and they actually share the rationalist assumptions of realism.[71] Like in realism, liberalism also assumes that state is the key actor in politics, and that there is a sharp distinction between domestic and international arena. In fact, liberalism is more open than realism to the possibility of religious non-state actors in international relations because it recognizes these actors as helpful for providing cooperation among states.[72]

Religion is also incompatible with Marxist theory and its international relations versions. This is primarily because Marxism recognizes economy as the only force in politics. This means that they ignore other factors, including religion. Marxists consider that religion is a false consciousness and opiate of the masses. Actually, in a way, they at least acknowledge its influence but predict that this influence will disappear.[73]

[71] Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," p. 80-81.

[72] Thomas, p. 58.

[73] Ibid., p. 170.

2.2.3. Implications of the Ignorance of Religion in the Discipline of International Relations

We have seen how religion has been ignored in the discipline of International Relations. This inattention has had mainly three implications. First, whenever an explanation including religion is needed, scholars have had difficulty and sought for alternative explanations, excluding religion. For instance, due to the ignorance of religion in the study of international relations, scholars have had a great difficulty in explaining September 11 attacks. According to Scott Thomas, even after the September 11, there are still many people who do not want to believe that culture and religion are important for understanding international relations. These people claim that these events such as September 11 occurred because of the incomplete modernization in the Middle East. In terms of practice, alternative solutions have been brought out and it was believed that such radical events and groups would be eliminated with more foreign aid, nation-building, or military force to contribute to complete modernization. Thomas argues that this is a very common way of thinking for many Westerners, especially those in the United States. However, this way of thinking does not take into consideration whether these non-Western people want such a solution. What if they want to gain the advantages of material prosperity without leaving their culture and religion?[74]

Similarly, when the revolution began in Iran, the idea that there was an important cultural and religious dimension to the events was dismissed. Rather, the real causes of the Revolution were considered to be political, economic or social opposition to Shah's authoritarianism, which was contradicted by the leaders of the Islamic Revolution.[75] It is no doubt that modernization also has destabilizing implications for such fundamental movements. Urbanization problems, education

[74] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[75] Ibid, pp. 1-17.

problems, lacking infrastructure and inequality in Muslim countries are important for the rise of fundamentalist movements in these societies, in which people are surrounded by poverty, disease and premature death. A lot of factors lead to radicalism. For instance, per capita GNP, rates of AIDS, access to clean water or the number of doctors etc. However, since social phenomena are rooted in complex factors, a perspective which ignores the impact of culture and religion may not be sufficient to explain them. Rather, there is still need to include culture and religion for a better understanding of international relations.[76]

The absence of such explanations show that a more global perspective on religious extremism is needed because the religious resurgence in world politics, which will be examined in the following chapter in detail, does not fit into existing categories of thought in International Relations.[77] The underlying reasons behind religious movements cannot be reduced to insufficient modernization. Actually, such a perspective reflects a deep belief in modernism. That means such fundamental movements occur because of incomplete modernization. It therefore assumes that if the modernization is completed, then these events can be prevented. Thomas argues that it is dramatic that, even after the horrific events of September 11, there is still a refusal to take culture and religion seriously in international relations.[78] He adds that religious extremism is at least partially about religion. Therefore, not only the lack of modernization but the failure of modernization should also be discussed. More modernism may not be a solution. Rather, it can cause more anger and reaction because behind the fundamentalist movements there is opposition to Westernism and modernism. Most of the radical Islamist groups criticize their governments since they adapt Western methods and damage their Islamic culture.

[76] Ibid., pp. 1-4.

[77] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University, Press, 2008) p. 1.

[78] Ibid., pp. 7-9.

Therefore, a perspective which ignores the role of religion in this issue cannot deal with extremism but on the contrary it can reinforce it.

Secondly, the secular bias within the political science has sometimes brought out repressive state policies towards religion.[79] Due to the reasons mentioned above, secularization has been accepted as an inevitable part of modernity. Religion was regarded as a phenomenon belonging to the past, and the modernizer elite desired a new, secular and modern future without a place for religion. Therefore, especially in some developing countries which try to adapt Western values, secularism has been the primary principle of the state and any movement linked to religion has been regarded threatening. States could not tolerate religious political movements and sometimes applied non-democratic and even violent methods to prevent such movements. This over-repression caused political movements to be excluded from the legal platform and brought out extremist movements. Actually, one of the underlying reasons behind rising fundamental and radical religious movements is such kind of repression applied by secular fundamentalist states. For instance, in Algeria, following the success of the Islamist party (FIS) in the elections in 1991, the Islamist party was banned and elections were cancelled by the military. Then, the Islamic rebellion occurred. Similarly, in Egypt, fundamentalist movements became stronger with the reversal of intensification of repression.[80] Similarly, the Islamist movements in Turkey can be analyzed among others, in terms of secularist state policies. This does not mean that secularist state policies are the fundamental roots for religious or fundamental movements; however these policies might have contributed to such movements.

Finally, the marginalization of religion has brought out some results relevant to faith-based peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue is based on

[79] Kuru, p. 10.

[80] Ian O. Lesser, "Turkey: "Recessed" Islamic Politics and Convergence with the West", in Angel Rabasa, et. al., *The Muslim World After 9/11* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2004), pp. 175-203.

religion; therefore recognition of religion as an important factor in international relations is a basic condition for interfaith dialogue. In an environment where scholars and policy makers regard religion as irrelevant to politics, religion cannot be a tool of peace building and interfaith dialogue cannot be achieved.

CHAPTER 3

INCORPORATION OF RELIGION INTO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

3.1. Global Resurgence of Religion

Some scholars argue that the resurgence of religious politics is one of the most interesting features of the post-Cold war era. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been religious disputes in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. Moreover, religious parties are increasingly a common phenomenon in the Third World and the goals of these parties are as political as they are religious. It means that they are political actors striving for new national orders based on religious values. Actually, both religious and secular nationalist ideologies are "ideologies of order," as Mark Juergensmeyer has called, and thus they function similarly to determine the dominant form of social order. Centuries ago, secular nationalist ideology was accepted as replacing the role of religion in the West but today religion is again regarded as a rival and a challenge for the secular nationalist ideology.[81]

However, the resurgence of religion should not be understood as the emergence of religion as a new factor. In fact, religion has always been a factor in international relations. After the Westphalian settlement, international system was considered as a completely secular system by many scholars. However, although the power of the church diminished, religion remained as an influential factor not only in the political realm but also in social and private realms. Religion has been a dimension of many conflicts and wars. How religion makes influence international relations

[81] Thomas, pp. 21-45.

were examined in the previous chapter. What is argued in this chapter is that religion has always been important but in the last half of the twentieth century an intensified series of events made the existence of religion more visible. This section will examine how the global resurgence of religion has affected the study of International Relations.

According to Scott Thomas, the global resurgence of religion can be defined in the following way:

> The global resurgence of religion is the growing saliency and persuasiveness of religion, i.e. the increasing importance of religious beliefs, practices, and discourses in personal and public life, and the growing role of religious or religiously-related individuals, non-state groups, political parties, and communities, and organizations in domestic politics, and this is occurring in ways that have significant implications for international politics. [82]

This resurgence is called global because it is not limited to any particular region. Although it is mostly associated with the Middle East, it is happening in many countries with different political systems and religions. According to Thomas, in 1950s and 60s, religion was a less important part of politics but now it is a more observable part of private and public lives.[83]

When this global resurgence of religion began to occur, it has made a great influence on scholars who did not take religion into account before. Some scholars such as Peter Berger shifted from their previous ideas.

> I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. With more modernization comes more secularization. It

[82] Ibid., p. 26.

[83] Ibid., p. 27.

> wasn't a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious.[84]

The resurgence of religion is not a sudden event. Jeffrey Haynes argues that the Second World War was a turning point in this regard, and there can be defined four phases since 1945. The first phase is the two decades after the end of the war. In these years, religion was used in anti-colonial struggles and in the service of indigenous nationalisms in some countries such as Algeria and Indonesia.[85] Moreover, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the process of decolonization created a large number of new states which were culturally fragmented and struggling with many problems. People of these states found themselves in an atmosphere where governments were trying to modernize their societies along Western lines.[86] Actually, since the colonial period, developing countries have faced a dilemma: to emulate the West and spurn their culture to gain power or affirm their own cultural and religious traditions but remain materially weak.[87] The modernizing efforts of these states most times failed to produce democracy or economic development.[88] As a result, in many of these developing states, religious institutions became indigenous and politics became a local affair.[89] Mark Juergensmeyer argues that the resurgence of religion is due to the failure of modern secular ideologies like liberalism, socialism and fascism. In other words, in the third world, after independence, regimes were based on these

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[84] Peter Berger, "Epistemological modesty: An interview with Peter Berger," *Christian Century*, 1997, 114, p. 974.

[85] Jeffrey Haynes, "Religion and International Relations After 9/11," *Democratization*, Vol. 12, No. 3, June 2005, pp. 398-413.

[86] James P. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 22-39.

[87] Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason, and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-40.

[88] Thomas, pp. 40-41.

[89] James F. Rinehart, "Religion in World Politics: Why the Resurgence," *International Studies Review*, 2004, 6, pp. 271-274.

ideologies but they failed. Furthermore, the governments have been accused of being puppets of West. This situation caused a crisis of legitimacy for these secular ideologies and gave way for revitalization of religion.[90]

In addition to the failure of modernization, some scholars argue that modernization itself contributes to a "resurgence" of religion. That means the forces described by the modernization-secularization literature exist but religious groups are defending themselves and evolving. Urbanization, science, literacy, the increasing importance of legal and bureaucratic standards are having the influences that modernization-secularization theories had predicted. However, rather than causing the eventual decline of religion, these processes have caused religious groups and institutions to evolve. In other words, religion is undergoing a process of revitalization. Religious groups use modern technologies and resources and modern strategies to resist against negative effects of modernization. This includes lobbying, use of courts, links with political parties and use modern communication technologies and media and Internet.[91]

The second phase is late 1960s and 1970s. This phase includes the conflict between Israel and Palestine and Iranian Revolution.[92] The defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967 war with Israel shattered the morale not only of Arabs but also of most Muslims.[93] Arab-Israeli conflict has not been a purely religious conflict like many other wars and conflicts. However, religion has always been a part of it. Beginning in the 1970s, government legitimacy declined in the wake of corruption, economic failure and political repression. People turned to other leaders and institutions to gain their interests. Therefore, ethnicity and religion became more

[90] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[91] Ibid.

[92] Haynes, "Religion and International Relations After 9/11," pp. 398-413.

[93] Piscatori, pp. 22-39.

important.[94] At that point, Islam has been the answer to the problems of Muslims' society according to many Muslims. It has been seen as an alternative solution for social and economic problems which have occurred due to the failure of modernization. Islamic fundamentalists gained prestige and in 1979 Khomeini led an Islamic revolution in Iran.[95] As mentioned before, Iranian Revolution is a very important catalytic event in the process of the rise of religion and specifically political Islam. The Iranian Revolution showed that religious fundamentalists could overthrow a strong government and establish a new state with a religious identity.[96] Moreover, the first and second phases overlapped with the Cold War. During the cold war, religion continued to be a part of foreign policies and international relations. For instance, the US supported religious movements in the Middle East and Central Asia against the Soviet Union. However, as we mentioned before, the discipline of International Relations at most remained silent about the role of religion until 1990s.

The third phase coincided with the ending of the Cold War in late 1980s. It started a new post-Cold War order including religious conflicts all over the world. Within this period, there was also the 1990-91 Gulf War.[97] Beginning from late 1980, globalization has also accelerated. Many scholars consider the global resurgence of religion to be a part of globalization. Globalization affects the world economy, telecommunications, information technology, travel and it is altering our sense of time and space. It is creating the possibility that the world become a single social place. In other words, globalization is creating a more unified and a more fragmented world at the same time. Therefore, the global resurgence of culture and

[94] Rinehart, pp. 271-274.

[95] Philip Marguiles, Introduction, in Phillip Marguiles (ed.), *The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism*, (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2006), pp. 8-20.

[96] Angel M. Rabasa, Overview, in Angel Rabasa, et. al., *The Muslim World After 9/11* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2004), pp. pp. 35-51.

[97] Haynes, "Religion and International Relations after 9/11," pp. 401-402.

religion can be regarded as a response to the paradoxical interdependence of these social forces.[98] This phase is important because the IR discipline started to recognize religion as an important variable in 1990s. Not only post Cold-War conflicts, but also the critics of secularization thesis in social sciences enabled IR discipline to start to incorporate religion. However, as we mentioned before, the discipline mostly followed this change in an unquestioned way, therefore this phase includes an over-incorporation of religion within the IR discipline. Beginning from 1990s, prominent international institutions such as the EU and the UN, started to promote interfaith policies. They will be examined in the following chapter.

Finally, the fourth phase in the period of the resurgence of religion as a key political actor started with September 11 events and the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.[99] September 11 attacks, the most recent and probably the most dramatic one of the events above, has brought the notion of religion, to which scholars had not paid much attention before, to the agenda of international relations.[100] Since the September 11 attacks, public interest in cultural and religious differences has grown and the debate about the secularization thesis and its critiques seemed to have become increasingly relevant to contemporary concerns.[101] Moreover, in this period, security concerns have been at top of the agenda all over the world. Therefore, religion was incorporated to international relations, also through security policies. How religion has been instrumentalized for security policies will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

[98] Thomas, pp. 21-45.

[99] Haynes, "Religion and International Relations after 9/11," pp. 401-402.

[100] Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," pp. 66-67.

[101] Norris and Inglehart, pp. 215-241.

While examining the incorporation of religion into international relations, one should pay attention to four important points. First, incorporation of religion should not be understood as the emergence of religion in international relations. In fact, religion has always been an important variable in international relations. However, the discipline of IR did not recognize it as an influential factor for a long time. In the second half of the twentieth century, which was examined in this part, a series of events made the role of religion more visible. Beginning from 1990s, the IR discipline started to recognize religion as an important variable.

Second, the turning points of the resurgence of religion are usually associated with Islamist movements, such as the Iranian Revolution and September 11. However, one should be aware of that Islam is not the only issue in terms of the resurgence of religion. Rather, religious revivalism is taking place globally, in Judaism and Christianity, and in Hindu and Buddhist societies**.** The rediscovery of the divine is seen even in Western scientific and intellectual circles.[102] It is not only Islamists who seek for political goals related to religion. In officially secular India, there have been many examples of militant Hinduism. In addition, Jewish religious parties currently serve in the government in Israel, while the Catholic Church has, in recent years, been a leading player in the turn to democracy in Spain, Poland and in Latin America. In sum, there are several examples of religion's involvement in politics in various parts of the globe.[103] Islamist movements are therefore not the only, but probably the most visible of such movements.

Thirdly, the resurgence of religion does not necessarily mean the resurgence of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is only a part of the resurgence of religion. It is clear that rising religious and fundamental movements all over the world has helped to bring the concept of religion to the agenda of international relations; and it once more showed the necessity to rethink on religion and review international

[102] Ahmed, pp. 103-118.

[103] Jeffrey Haynes, Foreword, Jeffrey Haynes, ed., *The Politics of Religion: A Survey* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

relations theories in terms of their attitude towards religion. However, the incorporation of religion into international relations is also related to a very different subject: increasing recognition of the religion's potential to be used as a peace tool. Religion is no longer regarded only as a source of conflict but also a tool which can be used for peacebuilding. Especially after September 11, the interest in religion as a potential source for peace efforts has intensified both among scholars and policy-makers. This issue will be examined in detail in the following parts.

Finally, the resurgence of religion should not be regarded as an independent process from our perspectives. This means that not only the intensification of religious movements increased but also the way in which religion is perceived has been changing. According to Thomas, an empirical approach to the global resurgence of religion cannot be separated from a theoretical approach. He argues that religion has always been a part of politics because the concerns of religion are an inevitable part of what it means to be human. However**,** it is more obvious today because social scientists have taken off the kind of ideological blinders. Thomas argues that, they are looking at the same phenomenon but with a different perspective.[104] Therefore, it is also necessary to look at how perspectives of social scientists have changed recently and how religion is incorporated into International Relations theory.

3.2. Incorporation of Religion into International Relations Theory

As we mentioned before, mainstream International Relations theories have long ignored the role of religion. Robert Keohane admits that "the attacks of September 11 reveal that all mainstream theories of world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that

[104] Thomas, pp. 27-28.

world-shaking political movements have so often been fuelled by religious fervor."[105] However, the global resurgence of religion taking place throughout the world challenges the mainstream interpretations of world politics and of how culture and religion influence international relations. It shows that International Relations needs to consider the wider debates in social theory over modernity, postmodernity and secularization.[106]

The global resurgence of religion is far more than extremism, or fundamentalism and terrorism. Rather, it may be a part of the larger crisis of modernity. It reflects a deep disillusionment with a modernity that reduces the world to what can be perceived and controlled through reason, science and technology and leaves out religion. It is also one of the results of the failure of the secular, modernizing, state to produce democracy and development. Within this context, post-positivist thought especially postmodernism opens up this possibility. These perspectives challenge the idea that in our era there is still a grand narrative of modernity as a single character. [107]

In the literature, modernization theory, civilizational approach, and rational-choice theory have been three important theories that scholars refer to while analyzing religion and politics. Modernization theory, as mentioned before, predicts the decline of religion's political role through economic development. Civilizational approach, which is most known by Huntington, is generally called "essentialist" by its critics. It argues that there exist inherent distinctions between certain religions and religious communities and that there are direct impacts of these differences on politics.[108] For instance, Bernard Lewis argues that Islam and Judaism are similar

[105] Robert O. Keohane, "The Globalization of Informal Violence, Theories of World Politics, and the 'Liberalism of Fear,'" *International Organization*, IO-Dialog, Spring 2002, pp. 29-43.

[106] Thomas, pp. 10-11.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Kuru, pp. 6-37.

to each other and different from Christianity in the sense that these theories do not have clear conceptions of clergy versus laity or sacred law versus secular law.[109] Civilizational approach focuses on the importance of religion in post-Cold War politics. It focuses on theological differences, which have impacts on people's political references. This theory mostly overemphasizes the similarities within the West and the differences between Western and Muslim countries.[110] The third one is the rational choice theory. It examines contextual human interpretations of religion and attaches importance to individual preferences. This theory takes individual preferences as given. Accordingly, a ruler and a farmer have distinct preferences shaped by their socioeconomic status regardless of their ideology.[111]

As we mentioned before, all these approaches are based on positivist assumptions. Positivism limits the role of values such as religion. However, since the end of the Cold War, ideas, culture and values have come back into international relations theory. Now, it is more commonly accepted that there is no rationality, independent of human consciousness. This framework leads to a fundamental reinterpretation of the nature of religion.[112] According to Alasdair MacIntyre, religion is neither a belief system, nor is it what Weber would call a "social ethic."[113] Nor is religion what Geertz calls a "cultural system."[114] Each of these definitions, MacIntyre argues, is part of the "invention of religion" by Western modernity. Rather, religion should be interpreted as a type of social tradition.

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[109] Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.

[110] Kuru, pp. 6-37.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Thomas, pp. 71-96.

[113] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in H.H. Girth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 267-301

[114] Thomas, p. 9-33.

MacIntyre, contrary to positivism, argues that rationality, interest, and identity cannot be separated.[115]

To accept the conventional approach to the way religion is often examined in International Relations is to accept that social theory is itself what postmodernists call a hegemonic discourse. However, many of the approaches to international relations with an interpretivist orientation, such as critical theory, post modernism, social constructivism and English School would accept that social theory no longer provides a neutral, rational or universal account of social reality. Positivist theorists, who tried to ignore religion in the past, are insufficiently self-critical. In fact, secular reason or social theory does not provide a kind of objective space, a "view from nowhere."[116]

It is for this reason that as Robert Bellah argues, the theory of secularization is not so much a theory as it is a powerful myth. Rather, it is a powerful story we tell ourselves.[117] Similarly, Derrida argues that the claim to separate religion from politics is itself a theological political claim.[118] Such critics of secularization thesis and the resurgence of faith which we face today is indeed a cultural critique of modernity. It marks the increasing loss of modern faith in the idea of progress, and of optimism about science and technology to solve the problems of the modern world. It indicates the end to a belief in secular reason. The roots of this challenge

[115] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), pp. 354-355.

[116] Thomas, p. 77.

[117] Richard Devetak, "The Project of Modernity and International Relations Theory," *Millennium,* 24, I, 1995, pp. 27-51.

[118] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (eds.), *Religion* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

go back to 1970s when faith in science and technology, modernity and progress in developing countries started to lose its power.[119]

All these thoughts claim that the process of using positivist social science to acquire objective knowledge is deeply ideological; and this question leads us to a second category of theory, constitutive international theory. Everyone comes to the study of international relations with a specific language, cultural beliefs and life experiences which affect their understanding of the subject. Language, culture, religion and ethnicity are some of the factors which shape our world views. Therefore, it is possible to understand and interpret the world only within these frameworks, the perspectives we perceive the world.[120]

We will examine three post-positivist theories including their attitude towards the issue of religion. These theories are Critical Theory, Constructivism and Postmodernism.

3.2.1. Critical Theory

The critical period in the discipline of International Relations after 1980s defines the IR theory as a modern society discourse. From this critical perspective, international relations is not regarded only as an inter-state relations but also state-society relations. On the other hand, it illustrates the relation between knowledge and power and in these terms regards IR as a discourse which legitimizes certain interests. Contrary to positivist approach, knowledge is not recognized as abstract

[119] Thomas, p. 43.

[120] Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smith, and Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 17.

or objective but rather subjective and political, serving to world hegemony.[121] In other words, critical theory recognizes the political nature of knowledge claims. However, traditional conceptions of theory picture the theorist as removed from the object. They claim that subject and object must be strictly separated in order to theorize accurately. They assume that there is an external world and it must be studied by leaving behind any ideological and religious beliefs, values and opinions. However, Critical Theory challenges this traditional form of theorizing. It seeks emancipation from these forms that constrain human freedom. It is not concerned only with understanding and explaining the realities of world politics but also criticizes and transforms them.[122] Therefore, critical theory has two aims: to show how theory is related with power and interest, and can also be seen as a guide for an alternative world order. It problematizes modernity and aims to bring a new democratic vision to IR. According to Andrew Linklater, the aim is to question the conventional model of state and to integrate non-state actors to the international system and to create an ethical universalism. This perspective proposes the coexistence of different identities and a network including the organizations and identities which have been excluded till now.[123] Religion is perhaps one of the most excluded identities in International Relations until now. Therefore, the critical period of IR is important since it gives the opportunity to examine religion in a non-positivist way.

Moreover, critical theory also recognizes the role of religion in public sphere. Habermas argues that "indispensable potentials for meaning are preserved in

[121] Atilla Eralp (ed.), *Devlet, Sistem ve Kimlik: Uluslararası İlişkilerde Temel Yaklaşımlar*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996).

[122] Richard Devetak, "Critical Theory," in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 137-160.

[123] Eralp, pp. 227-260.

religious language."[124] Moreover, he mentions how much Western philosophy owes to its Christian heritage, which philosophers assimilated by developing ideas of "responsibility, autonomy and justification; history and remembering; new beginning, innovation, and return; alienation, internalization, and incarnation; individuality and community."[125] He argues that religious communities are still potentials of meaning from which philosophy can learn.[126] Therefore, he calls for a dialogue in which secular and religious forms of thought mutually inform and learn from each other. In his "Religion in the Public Sphere," he argues that at the center of contention are the duties of believing citizens to translate their religiously based claims into secular, publicly accessible reasons. At the same time, he adds that non-believers must approach religion as a potential source of meaning, as harboring truths about human existence that are relevant for all.[127]

3.2.2. Constructivism

Some change in the role of religion in the study of International Relations has occurred with the emergence of constructivism. Constructivism, a critical theory of realism, rejected any role for structure of power in international order and viewed cooperation as growing out of a reformed process of international relations. This theory focuses on the process of identity and interest formation.[128] Constructivists argue that identities, interests and international institutions are mutually constituted and they are shaped through social interaction with other states and

[124] Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, E. Medieta (ed.). (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002)

[125] Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, B. McNeil (trans.), (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006)

[126] Ibid, p. 43.

[127] Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14:1, 2006, pp. 1-25.

[128] Fox and Sandler, p. 29.

non-state actors. This means, states define their interests not only because of external threats but also with international norms and values. Therefore if want to understand what states want, we must understand the social structure.[129] Alexander Wendt claims that anarchy has no inherent logic and it is what states make of it.[130] Constructivists show that simply assuming state interests to be power is not enough for understanding a whole variety of international phenomena. Instead, a variability of identity including religious identity helps to understand events.[131] According to constructivists, we live in a social world of values, beliefs and perceptions as well as a hard world of observable facts. Constructivism recognizes that knowledge in the social world of international relations must include these aspects as well. Constructivism is characterized by an emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structure. It focuses on the role of identity in shaping political action.[132] This perspective is no doubt helpful for the study of culture and religion in international relations.[133]

3.2.3. Post-Modernism

Similar to critical theory, rather than treating the production of knowledge as a cognitive matter, postmodernism treats knowledge as a political matter. According to post-modern theory, power and knowledge are mutually supportive and they directly imply one another. In other words, knowledge is never unconditioned.

[129] Thomas, p. 80.

[130] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics" in *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, pp. 391-425.

[131] Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," p. 92.

[132] Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism," in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 188-212.

[133] Thomas, p. 84.

Then, the task is to see how this relation operates.[134] Postmodern perspective begins with the recognition of modernity's disadvantages, which showed us that Enlightenment's promise of freedom has brought out a disappointment. The postmodern world is turning out to be a post secular one as well. It shows that there may be multiple paths and multiple ways of being modern appropriate with different cultures and religions. This is one of the promises of postmodern world.[135] For postmodernists there are no absolute truths but only relative values. In a postmodern understanding, there are not universal religious laws. Rather everything is shaped by the context of a particular time and place. That means religion is not a universal and objective reality but an entirely human-made phenomenon. Religion is created by human beings. There is no one right religion.[136] That means, postmodernism does not reject religion as did modernism. Although it does not accept religion as Islam or Christianity does, it proposes freedom for any type of religious belief.

Genealogy is a style of historical thought in postmodernism which exposes the significance of power-knowledge relations. According to a genealogical perspective, history does not evidence a gradual disclosure of truth and meaning. Rather, it proceeds as a series of dominations in knowledge and power. The task of the genealogist is to reexamine the history to reveal these. According to postmodernism, there is not one single, grand history but many histories varying in their power-knowledge effects. There is no truth but only competing perspectives. Genealogy focuses on what is forgotten. Therefore, it provides an opportunity to rethink on narratives which we take as granted. For instance, September 11 is mostly regarded as an act of terrorism, a criminal act or an act of revenge. However, there is no one truth on when it started exactly. Did it begin on

[134] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

[135] Thomas, pp. 44-45.

[136] Postmodernism, BBC Web Site, access 15 October 2009; available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/atheism/types/postmodernism.shtml,

September 11 or earlier, as a reaction to US Middle East Policy? This question shows that this event is constituted only in a narrative. Governments imply that September 11 caused the war on terrorism. It is as if September 11 were an uncaused cause or there is no relevant prehistory. In other words, according to the post-modern approach, we need to forget the dominant narratives before we can understand September 11.[137]

In short, post-positivist theories are an opportunity to review the concept of religion in international relations. They are different from explanatory theories since their approach to state, society, theory, history, knowledge and values are much different. They are much more self-critical and sensitive to norms and values including religious values. Moreover, they are more open to actors other than state, and this openness enable the inclusion of religious non-state actors in their perspective.

[137] Richard Devetak, "Postmodernism," in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). pp. 161-187.

CHAPTER 4

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: CASES OF THE EU AND THE UN

As mentioned in the previous chapters, religion was long seen as irrelevant to international relations. Even if it was addressed, it was seen as a threat for the secular international order. Especially since the end of the Cold War, many scholars have argued that most conflicts are based on ethnicity or on religion. However, in recent years, there has been a rising interest in how religion can be used as a tool for peacebuilding. For instance, Jose Casanova argues that in addition to its contribution to conflicts, religion also at times positively contributes to the public life.[138] Similarly, Elise Boulding recognizes that "most religions… have two distinctly contrasting cultures: the 'holy war' and the 'peaceable kingdom.'[139] This means that there is an increasing consensus on the idea that while religion can contribute to violent conflict, it can also be a powerful factor for peace and reconciliation. Howard Mellor and Timothy Yates describe this duality as the following:

> All the great religious traditions view themselves as religions of peace. They can point to certain elements in their traditions that make peace an essential part of experience of the transcendent and a key component in human well-being. At the same time, there are identifiable parts of each of their histories, and sometimes in their sacred texts, that appear to condone or even justify violence.[140]

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[138] Casanova, pp. 228-229.

[139] Elise Boulding, "Two Cultures of Religion as Obstacles to Peace", *Zygon*, vol. 21, 1986, pp. 501-518.

[140] Howard Mellor and Timothy Yates (eds.), *Mission Violence and Reconciliation* (Sheffield: Cliff College Publishing, 2004).

In light of the perspectives above, especially after September 11, the interest in faith-based peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue has intensified. With the rise of this interest, faith-based actors are taking more important roles in peacebuilding worldwide. Not only faith-based actors but also Inter-Governmental organizations, Non-Governmental organizations and even institutions like the World Bank are seeking 'interfaith advice' on how to deal with global issues like ecological crisis, AIDS pandemic etc.[141] Moreover, religious actors are increasingly widening their agenda and becoming involved in the resolution of various problems like AIDS and ecological problems. For instance, in the last few decades a field known as "religion and ecology" emerged focusing on the resources which the world's mainstream religions may have available for promoting environmentally beneficent behaviors. Kenya Green Belt Movement is one of such movements.[142] The movement is based on Kenya but now operating at an international level, as well. The mission of this movement is cited as empowering communities worldwide to protect the environment and to promote good governance and cultures of peace**.** The movement is supported by many dominant Christian churches.[143]

The actors of faith-based peacebuilding have a wide range, and they differ in their field of operation, the way they express themselves, and scope.[144] In terms of their field of operation, these actors may operate in one or more of the fields below:

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[141] S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Religious Diversity and Interfaith Relations in a Global Age," a Paper delivered to the International Conference on Religion and Globalization, Payap University, Chiang Mai, July 2003, access 5 December 2009; available from http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis/chaplains/geoff_papers/ariarajah.pdf

[142] Bron Taylor, "A Green Future for Religion?," *Futures*, 36, 2004, pp. 991-1008.

[143] The Green Belt Movement web site, access 18 February 2010, available from http://greenbeltmovement.org/w.php?id=21

[144] Bercovitch, and Kadayifci-Orellana, pp. 185-186.

Advocacy: Religiously motivated advocacy is concerned with empowering the weaker parties in a conflict situation, restructuring relationships, and transforming unjust social structures. Advocacy aims at strengthening the representativeness and in particular the inclusiveness of governance.

Intermediary/Mediation: Mediation relates to the task of peacemaking, and focus on bringing the parties together to resolve their differences and reach a settlement. Mediation activities played by faith-based actors have focused on good offices, facilitation, conciliation, and mediation, usually in some combination.

Observation: In a conflict situation, religious observers provide a physical presence that is intended to discourage violence, human rights violations, corruption and other types of behavior that is threatening and undesirable. Observers can be engaged in passive activities such as fact-finding, enquiry, investigation, or research. Or observers can be more actively involved by monitoring and verifying the legitimacy of elections, or forming "peace teams" or "living walls" between sides that are active in conflict situations.

Education: Education and training activities aim to sensitize a society to inequities in the system to foster and understanding of and build the advocacy skills, conflict resolution, pluralism and democracy. Education is an activity many faith-based actors include in their agenda.

Transitional Justice: Especially in post-conflict situations, activities have been undertaken to pursue accountability for war atrocities and human rights violations. While faith-based actors may have been less involved in prosecuting individual perpetrators or providing reparations to conflict survivors, they have been active in truth-seeking initiatives to address past abuse. For example, Archbishop Desmond Tutu chaired the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa

after the apartheid period. This commission contributed to the transition to democracy after apartheid in South Africa.[145]

Interfaith Dialogue: Its primary purpose is to prevent conflicts between different religious communities by establishing dialogue between these communities at different levels. It is usually a long-term effort which tries to create a mutual understanding, eliminate stereotypes, lack of knowledge and misunderstandings in order to create peace and harmony.

Among the activities above, this study focuses on interfaith dialogue. According to the way they express themselves, it is possible to mention two types of actors which engage in interfaith dialogue. The first group consists of faith-based actors, such as the Roman Catholic Church, which may explicitly identify themselves as religious. Faith-based actors are organizations, institutions and individuals who are motivated and inspired by their spiritual and religious traditions, principles, and values to undertake peace work. Scott Appleby identifies these kinds of actors: religious militants, religious NGOs, national and transnational religious hierarchies, ecumenical and interreligious bodies and local religious communities.[146] In fact, involvement of faith-based actors in conflict resolution processes is not new. Faith-based actors have always played a role in peacebuilding. Interfaith dialogue among faith-based actors, at the formal level, began with the *Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions* in 1893 in Chicago.[147] However, over the last two decades, these actors have become more visible and more organized in their attempts to solve regional and international

[145] Tsjeard Bouta, S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors," Clingendael - Netherlands Institute of International Relations, The Hague, 2005, access 11 January 2010; available from http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2005/20051100_cru_paper_faith-based%20peace-building.pdf

[146] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Boston: Rowan and Littlefield, 1999), p. 211.

[147] Information about international interfaith actors is available in the appendix.

conflicts. For instance, the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio[148] participated in resolving the civil war in Mozambique between 1989 and 1992. It brought the government together to talk peace with the rebels of the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) insurgents. Eventually, peace negotiations were successfully completed in 1992. The United Nations assumed responsibility for the implementation of the peace agreement, and the civil war ended.[149] Similarly, in Sierra Leone, religious actors such as the Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL)[150] have taken active roles in promoting reconciliation and mediation efforts and were instrumental in signing of the Lome Peace Agreement in 1999 between the warring parties of the civil war.[151] It is possible to extend this kind of examples.[152]

The second type of actors, such as the United Nations and the European Union, also has started to participate in interfaith dialogue recently. These actors are secular organizations which use faith as a policy tool to a certain extent. They take the role of religion as given and not emphasize their religious basis. [153] This study focuses on the second type of actors, namely the United Nations and European

[148] Sant'Egidio is an international Catholic non-governmental organization founded in 1968. It is formally recognized by the Catholic Church but with an autonomous status. During the early 1980s, it engaged in various international peacebuilding efforts. It played an active peacebuilding role in several African countries including Algeria, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. Jeffrey Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 180-183.

[149]Jeffrey Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 180-183.

[150] Founded in April 1997, IRCSL leaders used their religious credibility and influence to resolve conflict peacefully by pursuing dialogue with the coup leaders, condemning the coup and human rights abuses committed by the junta. (Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana)

[151] Bercovitch, and Kadayifci-Orellana, pp. 183-184.

[152] Various case studies (Philippines, East Germany, South Africa, and Zimbabwe) are introduced in Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion: The Missiong Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

[153] Appleby, p. 211.

Union. Dialogue projects offered by these institutions are examined in detail in the following parts.

Finally, actors of interfaith dialogue are distinguished from each other also in terms of their respective scope. Some may have an international scope, where they operate in various parts of the world such as the Catholic Church; others are operating at a regional level only, or at local level. Moreover, they may operate only among their own religious communities, or they may be operating among communities regardless of their religious affiliation.[154] This study examines the actors which operate at international level because religious peacemakers are most likely to be successful when they have an international or transnational reach.[155]

4.1. What is Interfaith Dialogue?

As mentioned above, especially after September 11, the focus on interfaith dialogue has increased. Many scholars regard it as a crucial step for international peace. Hans Kung expresses this belief as the following:

> Our generation has arrived at the threshold of a new era in human history: the birth of a global community. Modern communications, trade, and international relations as well as the security and environmental dilemmas we all face make us increasingly interdependent. No one can live in isolation. Thus, whether we like it or not, our vast and diverse human family must finally learn to live together. Individually and collectively we must assume as greater sense of Universal Responsibility. No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.[156]

[154] Ibid.

[155] Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion*, p. 178.

[156] Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 138.

Interfaith dialogue is a type of dialogue at both individual and institutional level, based on the aim to reach a mutual understanding between different faiths. According to Wesley Ariarajah, it is a new religious reality and a new level of relationship between religions.[157] Its primary purpose is to prevent conflicts between different religious communities, and to create peace and harmony. It includes a wide range of actors such as faith-based organizations, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, and individuals.

The etymology of the world dialogue is *dia* in Greek, referring to the act of seeing through.[158] Sulayman Nyang defines dialogue as follows:[159]

> … a process by which members of the two religious communities try to build bridges between their respective groups as they jointly and separately grapple with the basic issues of life, individually and collectively… and seek to bring about greater understanding between the two communities not only in terms of their different definitions of self and community, but also in terms of their attitudes toward each other's beliefs, rituals and festivals, and behavioral patterns.

Accordingly, there are some specific features which differentiate interfaith dialogue from other types of dialogue: First of all, spirituality is at the center of the interfaith dialogue. In the change that occurs through spiritual framework, dialoguers receive new information and have a positive emotional experience. This deeper spiritual connection then becomes the main source for the individual's commitment to social change and peace. This sense of motivation distinguishes interfaith dialogue from secular encounter. A second feature which sets interfaith

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[157] S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Religious Diversity and Interfaith Relations in a Global Age," a Paper delivered to the International Conference on Religion and Globalization, Payap University, Chiang Mai, July 2003, access 5 December 2009; available from http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis/chaplains/geoff_papers/ariarajah.pdf

[158] Johnson, p. 57.

[159] Sulayman Nyang, "Challenges Facing Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the United States" in Yvonne Haddad and Wadi Haddad (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1995), p. 328.

dialogue apart from other types of dialogue is the use of and emphasis on rituals and symbols. Rituals are powerful means of communication among members of the same religion. In interfaith dialogue, rituals create a mode of dialogue between groups belonging to different religions. Understanding another religion's rituals opens a window to the meaning system of the other. This allows members of the interfaith dialogue to experience the other's worldview. Thirdly, scripture and sacred texts are other specific features of interfaith dialogue. They can enrich interfaith dialogue. Participants can default or turn to studying or interpreting their sacred books when they feel that other avenues of dialogue are not getting them anywhere or that the dialogue process is too risky. In other words, scripture and sacred texts provide a level of certainty and truth to interfaith dialoguers.[160]

These features differentiate interfaith dialogue from secular dialogue. However, this does not mean that interfaith dialogue always operates in a different way from secular dialogue. In fact, faith-based actors sometimes act same as the secular actors. In such cases, what make them "faith-based" is only their identities but not their behaviors. Actually, this situation is not specific to interfaith dialogue. It may well be generalized to faith-based peacebuilding. Faith-based peacebuilding and/or conflict resolution is not always different from secular peacebuilding. In other words, religion is not always at the heart of the faith-based peacebuilding. For instance, some faith-based actors provide humanitarian intervention in post-conflict situations, or they seek solutions for non religious problems such as AIDS and environmental concerns. Therefore, while examining the specific features of interfaith dialogue or faith-based peacebuilding, in addition to differences, one should not avoid the similarities between secular and faith-based peacebuilding.

Interfaith dialogue is mostly based on the common acceptance that religion can contribute to peacebuilding for several reasons. First of all, religious values and

[160] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "The Miracles of Transformation Through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?," in David Smock (ed.), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Washington DC: USIP, 2002), pp. 15-32.

norms are central aspects of cultural identity of many people. Therefore, religious values, like other cultural values, can motivate people to fight or reconcile. Similarly, religious rituals, like other cultural rituals, can be important tools in transforming animosity to cooperation. Secondly, religion can bring social, moral, and spiritual resources to the peace building process. The spiritual dimension in religious peace building can create a sense of commitment to peace.[161] Mohammed Abu-Nimer claims that, "If participants change their attitude in Interfaith Dialogue such change will be deeper than if the change occurred in a non-religious context." This is because interfaith dialogue provides with spiritual motivation which is not available in a secular context.[162] In other words, "Interfaith dialogue carries with it, the benefits of secular dialogue but also the potential for deeper and more meaningful engagement because of the possibility for spiritual encounter." [163] Finally, almost all three of the Abrahamic faiths include statements supporting dialogue and peaceful relationships. Despite all their differences, the common spirituality - the recognition of a shared concern to develop "honest, loving and holistic relationships with God and neighbor"- can form the basis for constructive relationships.[164]

In short, today, it is a common recognition that in an increasingly interdependent world that includes cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversities, and especially after September 11, it is imperative to find ways to resolve conflicts originating from such diversities. The fields of intercultural communication and interfaith dialogue can provide important tools to deal with all these diversities and increase

[161] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 6, 2001, pp. 685-704.

[162] Abu-Nimer, "The Miracles of Transformation Through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?," p. 17.

[163] David Smock, Conclusion, in David Smock (Ed.), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Washington DC: USIP, 2002), p. 127

[164] Richard H. Solomon, Foreword, in David Smock (ed.), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Washington DC: USIP, 2002).

understanding between people. Interfaith dialogue is believed to enable that people realize that cultures are different socially learned maps of reality, but they are not the ultimate reality. That means all cultures have something important to contribute to the world but no culture has all the answers.[165]

4.2. Limitations of Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue has some advantages as mentioned above, however, at the same time it is a difficult task to achieve with various challenges. These challenges can be examined in nine categories. The first category is linked to theological issues. Within the theological approaches, there are two main perspectives contrasting to pluralism. They are exclusivism and inclusivism.[166] The exclusivists have a very strict attitude towards other religions. They argue that only one religion is true and others are false. On the other hand, the inclusivists maintain that only one religion represents the absolute truth and others have only some measure of it. Actually these approaches pose serious challenges for interfaith dialogue because they insist on the accuracy of one single religion and they are not open to other religions. On the other hand, another theological trend, pluralism claims that all religions are revelations from God. However, pluralism is not homogenous, as well. There are two very different models of pluralism with very different implications for interfaith dialogue. On the one hand, different religions are seen as different expressions of some universal essence. Interfaith dialogue is regarded as a tool for enabling all religions to better express this common essence. This approach is called universalism. According to universalists, since all religions reflect the same ultimate reality, the aim of interfaith dialogue is to learn from each other to obtain the best possible response to reality. The other approach is called particularism,

[165] Linda Groff, "Intercultural Communication, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace", *Futures*, 34, 2002, pp. 701-716.

[166] Yong Huang, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 37:3, 1995, pp. 127-144.

which regards religions as different in their fundamentals. According to particularism, interfaith dialogue is necessary for different religions to realize these differences so that they can tolerate each other. In other words, since different religions have different realities, the purpose of dialogue is to make open these fundamental differences with the hope of increasing tolerance.[167]

Exclusivism and inclusivism, even universalism may make interfaith dialogue difficult since they do not respect for the differences between religions. Religious differences are usually perceived as a threat to the harmony of the dialogue groups. Therefore, many dialogue projects have a homogenizing attitude. Such emphasis on similarities is necessary for building trust; however, if this approach becomes the main theme of the interfaith dialogue and differences are avoided, then the dialogue creates an artificial harmony. Rather, interfaith dialogue should work to offset core differences and deal with values that may justify exclusion of and prejudice against other people. Appreciating interreligious differences can lead the members to identify their different interpretations and understand their religious belief system.[168] Liyakali Takim argues that the purpose of engaging in interfaith dialogue is not to reach doctrinal agreement but rather to increase sensitivity to others.[169]

The second challenge is the lack of accurate knowledge, and the existing prejudices about the traditions of others. John Azumah argues that "to have accurate knowledge of the other, there is the need for partners to define themselves and do so with integrity." He adds that believers of the various faith traditions, rather than our traditions, are the ones best qualified to describe what

[167] Ibid.

[168] Abu-Nimer, "The Miracles of Transformation Through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?," pp. 15-32.

[169] Liyakali Takim, "From Conversation to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 94, July 2004, pp. 343-355.

they believe and/or do not believe. This is where dialogue is crucial. In other words, it is not good enough to base our knowledge of people of other faiths and their beliefs on what we have been taught from within our own traditions and scriptures.[170]

The third challenge is about inherited traditions. Some of the traditions include the teaching that by virtue of their religious affiliation some believers have a God given right to discriminate, dominate and exclude others.[171] Excluding and marginalizing others can occur in different ways. These range from assimilation, abandonment, indifference, and domination of the other.[172] Bernard Lewis argues that unless some rethinking of the traditions takes place, hostility and violence continue and dialogue seems not possible.[173] Similarly, Leonard Swindler argues that "Persons entering into interreligious, interideological dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious or ideological traditions. Such an integrity and conviction must include, not exclude, health self-criticism. Without self-criticism there can be no dialogue-and, indeed, no integrity."[174]

The fourth challenge for interfaith dialogue is the "burden of the past." That is, memories of certain historical events continue to evoke distrust, fear and anger towards others in many communities. Therefore, the call to take history seriously is crucial to deal better with inter-religious difficulties. This means, the

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[170] John Azumah, "The Integrity of Interfaith Dialogue," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2002, pp. 269-280.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace, A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), p. 75.

[173] Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the Wes*t (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 130.

[174] Leonard Swindler, 'Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue: The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today', in: idem (Ed.), *Towards a Universal Theology of Religion* (New York, Orbis, 1998), pp. 15-16.

documentation and interpretation of history is a duty. The preparedness to be honest and critical of the past is a task for establishing good relations between communities. In other words, for a dialogue, there is need to accept responsibility for past atrocities committed in the name of our religious traditions. Attempts to make history a propaganda tool and refusals to accept responsibility for missteps of past generations undermine dialogue.[175] As Bernard Lewis argues, "Those who are unwilling to confront the past will be unable to understand the present and unfit to face the future."[176]

Fifth, the diversity within a community may pose challenge for interfaith dialogue. Therefore, it is crucial that those who enter into dialogue explain what they represent within their religious communities. It is important to know to whom one is speaking. Inter faith dialogue should make it possible for each side to better understand the differences that are present in other traditions.[177] Moreover, the heterogeneity within a community should be recognized and respected for a reliable dialogue. Otherwise, a homogenizing dialogue project can make the situation worse.

The lack of a clearly defined purpose and a collaborative task may be the sixth challenge which prevents an interfaith process from being successful. Mohammed Abu-Nimer mentions the inclusion of a collaborative task as essential for interfaith dialogue. Collaboration such as a concrete development project allows members to interact safely. Moreover, the successful outcome of any project can contribute to the development of interfaith dialogue.[178] Takim also argues that the dialogue is

[175] Azumah, pp. 269-280.

[176] Lewis, *Islam and the West*, p. 130.

[177] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 209.

[178] Abu-Nimer, "The Miracles of Transformation Through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?," pp. 15-32.

supposed to be more efficient if it becomes action-oriented. When people engage in dialogue, they soon realize that they hold a great number of values in common and face similar difficulties. Recognition of this allows a group to work with others.[179]

Seventh, an efficient dialogue should not be confined to closed circles or groups of people. However, it may not possible to extend the scope of dialogue at times because non-believers and fundamentalists may limit the extent of interfaith dialogue. Universal commitments, such as human rights, may play a crucial role in achieving international consensus on basic civic values, especially among moderate believers. However, this may not be a sufficient motivation for people who define their religiosity in opposition to universal values.[180]

Eighth, the difficulty to determine the place of religion in conflicts may pose a challenge for interfaith dialogue. Regarding the relation between religion and conflict, there are two contrasting views proposed by Luc Reychler and Marc Gopin. Yet both regard the relationship between religion and conflict as problematic for interfaith dialogue. According to Reychler, the weakness of religious peacemaking is that religions are still perpetrators of violence. He argues that "in many of today's conflicts they remain primary or secondary actors or behave as passive bystanders."[181] This argument brings out such a question: To what extent inter-religious peacebuilding might be successful if religion is the real source of the problem? On the other hand, according to Marc Gopin, it is often the case that motives other than religion, such as the desperation of economically disenfranchised people, are central to conflict. However, religious language and symbolism are critical ways in which human beings interpret reality. Therefore,

[179] Takim, pp. 343-355.

[180] Gopin, pp 1-31.

[181] Luc Reychler, "Religion and Conflict," *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 1997, vol. 2, no. 1, 19-38.

even if the roots of the conflict are economic discontent, the revolt against the status quo may express itself in religious terms. Gopin argues that this requires an intervention strategy that can utilize the role of religion. However, there are serious dangers to exaggerate the role of religion in such a peacebuilding effort. Analysts may overemphasize the role of religion and not see it as part of a complex combination of factors that generate struggle. Gopin asserts that it would be a serious fault, for example, to attribute a conflict exclusively to religious differences if, in fact, the society in question is facing structural problems. In other words, if a society is in trouble with gross economic inequalities or a brutal regime, it would be misguided to think that interfaith dialogue is all that is necessary to resolve the conflict. Moreover, such analysis could worsen the problem by masking the underlying problems.[182]

Finally, dialogue can be instrumentalized for some other policies, in our context namely for security policies. Helle Malvmig evaluates how dialogue is transformed into a security strategy by focusing on three main indicators: Habermas' theory of communicative action, the publication of alternatives to Huntington's conflict theory, the continual emphasis on the urgency and importance of dialogue and the propagation of the idea that the absence of dialogue constitutes a threat to the future.[183] According to Habermas, a real dialogue should be independent from power exercises and a predefined consequence. However, Malvmig argues that many dialogue projects suffer from the lack of these properties and so they are transformed into security strategies. Moreover, he adds that, most dialogue initiatives have an exaggerated emphasis on the importance of dialogue. They usually imply that the absence of dialogue inevitably leads to conflict. According to Malvmig, this serves to security targets.

[182] Gopin, pp. 1-31.

[183] Helle Malmvig, "Security through Intercultural Dialogue? Implications of the Securitization of Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue between Cultures," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 20 (3), 2005, p. 351.

Finally, although they seem offering counter arguments against clash-based arguments, in fact they reproduce same arguments. These challenges will be examined in detail in the following part with reference to the cases of the EU and the UN.

4.3 Cases of the EU and the UN

This chapter examines interfaith dialogue initiatives by two secular institutions: more specifically European Union and the United Nations. These institutions are examined due to two major reasons. First, this thesis aims to understand the transforming role of religion in international relations. As we mentioned before, the discipline of International Relations has regarded religion as an irrelevant element since its foundation. However, beginning from 1990s, this understanding started to be questioned. In addition to the intensification of religious movements all over the world and theoretical shifts within the discipline, religion has also started to be regarded as a tool of peace-making. We try to understand this incorporation of religion into the secular structure of international relations. Therefore, integration of religion into the agenda of international secular institutions, namely the UN and the EU, is important. Faith-based actors are already religious institutions. Religion has always been in their top agenda. However, the EU and the UN has recently changed their attitude towards religion. Therefore, it is more meaningful to examine these institutions in terms of the aim of this study.

The second reason why we focus on these institutions is that in the previous chapter, we examined the limitations of interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue is not an easy task and has its own limitations. However, in addition to this, many faith-based actors which engage in interfaith dialogue have some further limitations. These actors are limited in their capacity to make major contributions

to global peace. This does not mean that their efforts are valueless. However, except some of them such as the Roman Catholic Church, they are usually small and marginal groups. Moreover, dialogue among religious leaders may have limited direct impact in the political domain.[184] However, the European Union and the United Nations are international organizations with large institutional capacities. These institutions can reach wider communities and make wider implications worldwide. However, this does not mean that the EU and the UN manages interfaith dialogue without any limitation. These institutions share some of the limitations mentioned before. These limitations are examined in this chapter.

4.3.1. European Union: Euro Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)

The issue of interfaith dialogue within the European Union goes back to 1990s. In the mid 1990s, the Forward Studies Unit of the European Commission (FSU) promoted several conferences to study the impact of religion in Europe and to develop an alternative approach to the 'Clash of Civilization' theory of Huntington. The first two, *The Mediterranean Society: A Challenge of Islam, Judaism and Christianity* and the *Carrefour Européen des sciences et de la culture (European meeting point of sciences and culture)* took place in Spain in 1995 and in Portugal in 1996. European Christian authorities as an 'ecumenical working group' played a major role in the Portugal conference.[185]

The strategy to which the EU resorted –interfaith dialogue- was formalized with the approach that is central to the third basket of the Euro Mediterranean

[184] Talha Köse, "The Alliance of Civilizations: Possibilities of Conflict Resolution at the Civilizational Level," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, pp. 77-94.

[185] Sara Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3, November 2005, pp. 385-405.

Partnership (EMP). The EMP is a scheme of "multilateral relations" or a "regional cooperation" mechanism that the EU installed, during the Spanish Presidency of 1995, with 12 southern Mediterranean countries.[186] The EMP, also called as the Barcelona Process, was the first attempt in the history of the EU to create strong bonds based on peace and political and economic stability between the two shores of the Mediterranean.[187] Before, Europe's policies towards these countries were based on financial assistance and economic cooperation. However, with the Barcelona Process, the relations were given a new framework with the integration of social and cultural dialogue into the agenda.[188]

The objectives of the EMP were spelt out in the Barcelona Declaration as: 1) to enhance prosperity and economic exchanges with a view to gradually establishing a free trade zone in the Mediterranean region; 2) to define a common area of peace and political stability, also through political contacts and cooperation in security matters; and 3) to encourage understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies, from which a more cohesive and democratic society would emerge.[189] Dialogue is a key term of the Barcelona Declaration. In its third chapter, the Declaration provides a structure of how intercultural and interfaith dialogue should be conducted:

> Greater understanding among the major religions present in the Euro-Mediterranean region will facilitate greater mutual tolerance and cooperation. Support will be given to periodic meetings of representatives of religions and religious institutions as well

[186] These countries are Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

[187] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

[188] Tobias Schumacher, "Introduction: The Study of Euro-Mediterranean Cultural and Social Co-operation in Perspective," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3, November 2005, pp. 281-290.

[189] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

> as theologians, academics and others concerned, with the aim of breaking down prejudice, ignorance and fanaticism and fostering cooperation at grass-roots level.[190]

From the beginning, the EMP suggests that the whole Euro-Med process is about improving contacts between Europe and the Muslim context because the Islamic tradition is a major part of the cultural expressions of the North African and Middle Eastern countries that are involved in the Barcelona Process. However, the focus on Islam became more urgent and crucial with September 11, 2001 attacks. After the attacks, the perception of Islam as a threat to European identity became more visible within the EU. Accordingly, Islam has become the core object of the dialogue initiatives, and EU started to give a special attention to engage in dialogue especially with Muslim traditions.[191] In other words, after September 11, a new security dimension was added to dialogue projects.[192] Intercultural and interfaith dialogue has become an important political strategy of the EU to express its willingness to respond to violence in a peaceful way contrary to the methods adopted by the US.[193]

Between 2002 and 2003, President Prodi and the FSU successor, the Group of Policy Advisers (GOPA), promoted three High Level Advisory Groups to reflect on the values and cultural and religious heritage of Europe. The role of these groups was to identify and rethink the core principles that form a basis for societal life in a society which is shared by all the inhabitants of the EU and with attention to its neighbors. Again, the advisory group has focused on the future of relations between Europe and Islam.[194] As a matter of the fact the High Level Report

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[190] Barcelona Declaration, access 31 December 2009; available from http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2005/july/tradoc_124236.pdf

[191] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

[192] Sara Silvestri, "Islam and the EU: the Merits and Risks of Inter-Cultural Dialogue, European Policy Centre Policy Brief, June 2007.

[193] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

[194] Ibid.

presented by the Head of the EU Commission, Romano Prodi, in 2002 about the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue states the conditions of a reliable dialogue. The report includes the following statement:

> For the dialogue to be called an achievement and for it to be considered credible/reliable, the participating actors have to share certain principles. These principles are; respect, equality, and openness as well as the absence of authority and enforcement. Equality means that the participants are contributing to dialogue equally and that they are in an equal status. In other words, no actor has a privilege or a representative. The thoughts and recommendations are not evaluated according to military or other power parameters, but according to their own ethics and value.[195]

This statement emphasizes the importance of equality for a reliable dialogue. However, the report also underlines that the asymmetric relationship between the two sides of the Mediterranean poses the biggest challenge to the success of this type of dialogue:[196]

> It is deemed necessary to overcome the inequality between the North (EU) and the South (the Mediterranean side) in order to develop a real dialogue. Structurally there is no equality between the North and the South in the terms of economic, social and political power. In this sense, EU is an area where unification is possible despite the inequalities, unlike the South, where there is regional discrepancy and conflict. It is natural that due to the present inequalities the dialogue in the South does not have successful results like the dialogue in the North.[197]

A significant EU initiative aimed to support interfaith and intercultural dialogue came in 2003 with the official decision to set up a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation

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[195] Mediterranean Dialogue Work Programme 2002, access 11 January 2010; available from http://www.nato.int/med-dial/2002/mdwp-2002.pdf

[196] Arzu Yılmaz, "A Peace and Security Strategy in International Relations: The Dialogue between the West and Islam," *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, No. 39, pp. 73-98.

[197] "Mediterranean Dialogue Work Programme 2002," access 11 January 2010; available from http://www.nato.int/med-dial/2002/mdwp-2002.pdf

to promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations. The establishment of this institution was formalized in 2004 as the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures.[198] This foundation leads regional initiatives in the Euromed space and support local activities carried out by organizations based across civil society which advocate for a better understanding among people, religions and beliefs. It also coordinates a Euro-Mediterranean Network gathering hundreds of social and institutional bodies which share the values of the Foundation.[199]

Social cohesion through interfaith dialogue was also the subject of a meeting of EU ministers of the interior in Rome, in October 2003. It was the first time that government ministers and officials of the member states met in an official way to discuss the subject of religion together with representatives of the three religions. The conference title was 'Interfaith Dialogue.' It was called as an interfaith event but the real focus was again on Islam. Similarly, the adoption, in June 2004, of an *EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East* reinforced the idea that the EU is determined to engage in a multi-level dialogue with the Islamic world.[200]

The European initiatives for dialogue between religious traditions became more urgent with the enlargement of the EU in 2004. EU officials and politicians became aware that the relatively new geo-political entity of the EU would face with a growing multiplicity of states, cultures and traditions. These differences needed not only to be acknowledged but also to be placed in harmonious relationship with each other.[201] In light of this recognition, in 2004, the EU

[198] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

[199] Anna Lindh Foundation web site, access 30 November 2009; available from http://www.euromedalex.org/profile

[200] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

[201] Ibid., p. 393.

developed the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbors in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. The aim was cited as building a mutual commitment to common values and going beyond existing relationships through a deeper political economic and cultural cooperation. The ENP was first outlined in a Commission Communication on Wider Europe in March 2003, and followed by a more developed Strategy Paper on the European Neighbourhood Policy published in May 2004. This paper sets out how the EU proposes to join a dialogue with these countries.[202]

> People-to-people projects will be encouraged, aiming at promoting civil society initiatives in support of human rights and democratization, supporting youth organizations, and promoting intercultural dialogue through educational and youth exchanges, as well as human resource mobility and transparency of qualifications.[203]

With the emergence of the ENP, the Barcelona Process was renamed as the policy of the Euro-Mediterranean Neighbourhood Space, and it was told to be strengthened by its absorption into the ENP.[204] In other words, this new policy would not override the existing framework of the Barcelona Process. Instead, it was designed to supplement and build on it. The European Neighbourhood Policy was proposed as an attempt to add new dynamics into the existing framework of relations with neighboring countries by emphasizing bilateral relations. Moreover,

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[202] European Neighborhood Policy, European Commission web site, access 24 December 2009; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

[203] European Neighbourhood Strategy Paper, European Commission web site, access 28 January 2010; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf

[204] Lior Zemer and Sharon Pardo, "Towards a new Euro-Mediterranean Neighbourhood Space," *European Foreign Affairs Review,* Vol. 10, No.1, 2005, pp. 39-78.

the new initiative was aimed to address the shortcomings of the Barcelona Process.[205] Prodi stated this as follows:

> There is nothing to stop us setting up new permanent institutional structures of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation if they can help to strengthen the whole process… We need a new project to act as a catalyst and spur us on to map out together the course for a common future. For this reason we need to develop a type of political and institutional integration that goes far beyond association agreements.[206]

Since it is based on the existing structure of the Barcelona Process, the ENP keeps the dialogue in its agenda, as well. It includes the statement of: "An effective means to achieve the ENP's main objectives is to connect the peoples of the Union and its neighbors, to enhance mutual understanding of each others' cultures, history, attitudes and values, and to eliminate distorted perceptions."[207] In the "Non-Paper: Expanding on the Proposals Contained in the Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on Strengthening the ENP," it is mentioned that:

> Dialogue between writers, thinkers, painters, artists as well as cultural organizations is an essential part of the ENP. So is the dialogue between civilizations and faiths. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is a key forum for inter-cultural and interfaith dialogue.[208]

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[205] Barbara Lippert, Iris Kepme, Petr Kratochvil, Fulvio Atina, Cemal Karakaş, "The Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union," *Intereconomics*, July/August 2007, Vol. 42, No.4, pp. 180-204.

[206] Romano Prodi, "Europe and the Mediterranean: Time for Action," speech by Romano Prodi at UCL Université de Louvain-la-Neuve, 26 November 2002, in 52 EuroMed Report 6-7, 28 November 2002.

[207] European Neighbourhood Policy, Strategy Paper, Access 15 January 2010; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf

[208] Non-Paper: Expanding on the Proposals Contained in the Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on Strengthening the ENP, access 15 January 2010; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/non-paper_civil-society-dimension_en.pdf

Another common point between the EMP and the ENP is that both initiatives have a security dimension in their understanding of dialogue. However, due to the changing borders of the EU and the implications of September 11, the ENP has a deeper focus on security. It pursues the primary goal of creating stability, security and welfare on the EU's eastern and southern borders. The fight against common threats, such as international terrorism, organized crime and illegal immigration are at the top of the agenda.[209] This security dimension is mentioned clearly in the European Security Strategy paper.

> It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbours who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organized crime flourishes dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe."[210]

Moreover, in the Security Paper, it is indicated that the new circumstances due to the changing external borders of the Union have created both opportunities and challenges. "The European Neighbourhood Policy is a response to this new situation," and "it will also support efforts to realize the objectives of the European Security Strategy."[211]

Notwithstanding the similarities, the ENP also differs from the previous initiatives, namely the EMP. ENP is a novelty in EU-neighborhood relations since the EU for the first time has created a single framework for engaging in dialogue and cooperation with a set of different neighboring third countries. The ENP is a new framework initiative for a selected group of countries of the enlarged EU's new neighbourhood. It contemplates an advanced integration of selected third

[209] Dov Lynch, "The Security Dimension of the European Neighbourhood*," The International Spectator*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2005, pp. 33-43.

[210] European Council: A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12.12.2003, p. 7.

[211] European Neighbourhood Strategy Paper, European Commission web site, access 28 January 2010; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf

countries; however it also states that these countries will not have full access to EU. Romani Prodi argued that these countries[212] will "share everything but institutions." By this way, EU opens up its policies to non-members and puts emphasis on the need for step by step political, economic and institutional reforms among its neighbours. This model serves to two foreign-policy priorities of EU: to avoid further enlargements and to manage the new external borders for the abovementioned "zone of security" around Europe.[213]

Moreover, this new EU policy is more concrete in terms of its instruments. At the outset of the process, the Commission prepared Country Reports assessing the political and economic situation as well as institutional and sectoral aspects, to assess when and how it is possible to deepen relations with that country. Country Reports are submitted to the Council which decides whether to proceed to the next stage of relations. The next stage was the development of Action Plans with each country.[214] Action plans are developed and agreed upon between the two parties (the EU and the respective ENP country). They are also based on the principle of differentiation and are thus oriented toward the specific interests and capacities of ENP countries. Despite their specificity, the Action Plans follow a general scheme and cover the following areas: Political dialogue and reform, economic and social reform and development, cooperation in questions of justice, freedom and security, cooperation and reforms in areas such as transport, energy and environment, and people-to-people contacts and cooperation in the areas of education, public health and culture. Commitments are based on common values which primarily reflect goals of the EU's foreign and security policy, especially, strengthening democracy and rule of law, respect of human rights, support for the civil society, the fight

[212] They are Russia, newly independent countries and southern Mediterranean countries.

[213] Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués, "Profiles: A Ring of Friends'? The Implications of the European Neighbourhood Policy for the Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Politics*, 2004, 9:2, pp. 240-247.

[214] European Neighbourhood Policy, European Commission web site, "The Policy: How does the European Neighbourhood Policy Work," access February 14, 2010; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/howitworks_en.htm

against terrorism and cooperation in conflict resolution and strengthening international law and organizations.[215] Today 12 such ENP Action Plans are being implemented.[216] The implementation of the mutual commitments and objectives contained in the Action Plans is regularly monitored through sub-committees with each country, dealing with those sectors or issues.[217]

In short, today many EU policy-makers see interfaith and/or intercultural dialogue as a formula to engage with other communities, specifically Muslim ones, within and beyond Europe. In the light of this approach, EU first developed its intercultural and interfaith dialogue approach with the Barcelona Declaration in 1995. This initiative was to establish economic and political contacts with the southern part of the Mediterranean, and to create an area of peace and stability. With September 11, the place given by the EU to interfaith dialogue has raised and the focus on Islam intensified. Within this context, and with the enlargement of the EU in 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy was initiated. This new project has been built on the Barcelona Process in terms of the relations with Mediterranean countries, and the security dimension of dialogue has been strengthened in the ENP. Dialogue was considered the best way to stimulate social cohesion and to eliminate radical and extremist threats.[218]

In fact, the EU has a wide capacity in engaging in dialogue not only due to its institutional capacity but also because it is respected by its partners as an

[215] Barbara Lippert, Iris Kepme, Petr Kratochvil, Fulvio Atina, Cemal Karakaş, "The Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union," *Intereconomics*, July/August 2007, Vol. 42, No.4, pp. 180-204.

[216] The Action Plans are being implemented – with Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Tunisia and Ukraine since 2005 and with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lebanon and Egypt since end 2006/beginning 2007.

[217] European Neighbourhood Policy, European Commission web site, "The Policy: How does the European Neighbourhood Policy Work," Access February 14, 2010; available from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/howitworks_en.htm

[218] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," pp. 385-405.

influential international actor. However, it faces four main challenges regarding dialogue. First, the dialogue projects of the EU primarily focus on Islam, especially after 9/11. However, concentrating only on Muslims could pose three risks. First, Muslims may become more isolated if they are singled out for exclusive projects. Second, social fabric could be damaged if other minority and non-Muslim communities are not involved. Therefore, interfaith dialogue should not be focused on Islam but rather multifaith dialogue should be developed. Third, the EU aims to support moderate Muslim groups and mainstream representations of Islam in the European public sphere through creation of advisory representative Islamic institutions. However, this risks forcing individuals into categories at times arbitrary or artificial and creating rivalries between Islamic traditions. These initiatives would deepen existing divisions between different versions of Islam.[219]

The second challenge which EU faces is that it has a very modernist perspective. In the second chapter, while examining the implications of the exclusion of religion, we mentioned that marginalization of religion may lead policy-makers to difficulties while explaining some events. After September 11, many scholars sought for the seeds of the rise of Islam in the lack of modernization. In practical terms, alternative solutions have been suggested to complete modernization. In fact, lack of modernization may constitute one of the reasons for the rise of religious movements; however this modernization itself can contribute to the rise of religious movements, as we mentioned before. The attitude of the EU towards religion in these terms is quite modernist. While the EU tries to develop its relations with Muslim countries, it regards Islamism as the primary product of sick social, political and economic systems that need a long-term healing. This is the reason why fostering democratization and civil society participation has been regarded by the EU to constitute the most effective way to oppose Islamism.[220]

[219] Silvestri, "Islam and the EU: The Merits and Risks of Intercultural Dialogue"

[220] Silvestri, "EU Relations with Islam in the Context of EMP's Cultural Dialogue," p. 390.

Third, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, a real dialogue should be conducted on basis of the equality of the partners. However, the EU dialogue projects do not include such equality at most times. Sharon Pardo argues that it may be claimed that European Neighbourhood is based on the idea that EU is the cosmos and the rest of the Europe and the Mediterranean is chaos. Based on this approach, European Neighbourhood Policy is an attempt to organize the chaos and make it a part of the cosmos. Neither does the ENP offer membership nor close the possibility of a membership at all. By this way, the chaos is kept not too close and not too far, to provide the security. Rather, it is kept separate in a friendly way.[221]

Fourth, the dialogue projects of EU, especially the ENP, have a very strong security focus. As we mentioned before, this is originating from 9/11 international context. According to Sara Silvestri, the assumption behind this strategy is that giving Muslims the possibility to channel their claims through a legitimate body would diminish extremist groups. She argues that, the idea of creating a public space for Islam in a European context is legitimate. However, combining this strategy with the notion of dialogue may prove misleading.[222]

4.3.2. United Nations: Alliance of Civilizations

Similar to the EU, the roots of dialogue in the United Nations go back to 1990s. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored three conferences on religion and peace: in 1993 in Barcelona, Spain; in 1994 in Barcelona; and in 1998 in Granada, Spain. The conference in 1994 issued the "Declaration on Contributions of Religions to a Culture of Peace" and 1998 conference created a draft paper on "Religious Education in a Context of Pluralism

[221] Sharon Pardo, "Europe of Many Circles: European Neighbourhood Policy," *Geopolitics*, 9:3, 2004, pp. 731-737.

[222] Silvestri, Islam and the EU: The Merits and Risks of Intercultural Dialogue"

and Tolerance."[223] At first, the main theme of the activities was defined as "peace in the minds of men." However, in time, this evolved to be common values and understanding in between "people and cultures," and "civilizations." A UNESCO report dated 17 March 2005 reveals this shift in the emphasis of the organization's mission. In the report, the main theme was defined as the constitution of common values and understanding in between civilizations.[224]

Behind this shift, there is the international context which has given a great place to clash-based theories especially after September 11. Similar to the EU, September 11 became a turning point in the revision of UN's attitude towards dialogue. With the impact of the attacks, 2001 was declared to be the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" by the UN General Assembly. The president of Iran, Mohammed Khatami, was the initiator of this idea. At the time, the idea was very well received. UN Resolution, which was accepted on November 21 2001 proposed a comprehensive frame for a "Dialogue among Civilizations." The main objective was cited as to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meaning and core values and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue. The initiative was an important opportunity for Iran as well. Khatami wanted to make a shift in the image of Iran in the international community and within the Muslim world. The project aimed to create a common language for a mutual understanding. However Khatami's efforts could not prevent Iran's inclusion in the list of "axis of the evil."[225] In fact, the project was not promoted globally by all governments as a joint action program.[226] Moreover, the September 11 attacks and the Madrid, Istanbul, Bali and London bombings shifted the discourse in international relations from democratization, protection of human rights and

[223] Groff, p. 711.

[224] Yılmaz, pp. 83-84.

[225] Köse, p. 86.

[226] Naim Kapucu, Vener Garayev and Tolga Arslan, "Global Response to Terrorism: Alliance of Civilizations," *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2009, pp. 3-15.

conflict prevention to the global war against terrorism and security issues. The occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Danish cartoon crisis,[227] Pope Benedict XVI's comments on Islam[228] and similar events increased the tension. Thus, Dialogue of Civilizations project suffered from the context above. In other words, transformation in global politics in the aftermath of the September 11 led to the failure of the project.[229]

After 2001, the main aim of dialogue within UN turned to refer to the dialogue between Islam and the West. UNESCO reports stated that the impact of September 11 is the central factor behind its renewed support to dialogue between civilizations. In other words, since 2001, the agenda of the dialogue activities conducted by the UN has been largely determined by the question of "terrorism." While emphasizing the importance of dialogue in responding to the temporary threats and challenges of globalization, the main objective of efforts at dialogue is defined as the discovery of shared universal values, and the basic approach is one of attempting to counteract the lack of knowledge and understanding which exists between human communities belonging to different civilizations. This approach is criticized based upon the argument that the biggest challenge to world peace and security is perceived to be terrorism and the source of terrorism is understood to be cultural and the lack of information and respect among cultures.[230]

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[227] On September 30, 2005, the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published twelve editorial cartoons, most of which depicted the prophet Muhammed in a humiliating way. These cartoons created public discontent and unrest in Muslim world, recalling the legacy of Eurocentric discrimination. Talha Köse, "The Alliance of Civilizations: Possibilities of Conflict Resolution at the Civilizational Level," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, pp. 77-94.

[228] In his lecture delivered on 12 September 2006 at the University of Regensburg in Germany, Pope Benedict XVI quoted the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II, saying "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." This speech disturbed Muslims all over the world. Talha Köse, "The Alliance of Civilizations: Possibilities of Conflict Resolution at the Civilizational Level," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, pp. 77-94.

[229] Köse, p. 87

[230] Yılmaz, pp. 83-84.

The UN institutionalized the framework of dialogue activities in United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was established in 2005, at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey.[231] Alliance of Civilizations was designed as a "response to the need for a committed effort by international community at institutional and civil society levels."[232] The origins of the initiative go back to March 2004 general elections in Spain which were held three days after Madrid bombings. The victor of the elections, the Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero changed the national policy of fight with terrorism and adopted a softer stand characterized by dialogue.[233] Upon advice of Kofi Annan to continue the project with a Muslim country, in July 2005, Zapatero offered to Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan to co-chair the initiative. The UN officially declared the start of the initiative on July 14, 2005. On September 2, 2005 a high-level group composed of 18 persons from political, academic, religious and media sphere was created with the aim to guide the initiative and to submit a report with an analysis of the level of polarization between the cultures and suggestions to eliminate them. The first meeting of the high-level group was held in November 2005, in Spain, to discuss the future program of the Alliance. The second one took place in February 2006 in Qatar and ended up in the Report of Education emphasizing the importance of education for practical fulfillment of the project. The third one was held in May 2006 in Senegal, where the main topics were education, youth, media and integration. Then, in September 2006, the Group met in New York to review the draft report. The final report presented in November made a focus on Muslim-Western relations and was composed of two parts. The first part analyzes relations between Western and Muslim societies and presents recommendations. The

[231] United Nations Alliance of Civilizations web site, access 18 December 2009; available from http://www.unaoc.org

[232] Alliance of Civilizations, Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, access 27 January 2010; available from http://www.tripartiteinterfaithforum.org/initiatives/alliance.htm

[233] Ali Balcı, Medeniyetler İttifiakı ve AKP, access 27 January 2010; available from http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=6425

second part states that cross-cultural tensions have gone beyond politics and settled in the minds of people.[234]

The report was important since it stated that "it was politics, not religion, at the heart of growing Muslim-West divide."[235] In the fourth High Level Group Meeting in 2006, Secretary-General Kofi Annan asserted that:

> "We need to get away from stereotypes, generalizations and preconceptions, and take care not to let crimes committed by individuals or small groups dictate our image of an entire people, an entire region, or an entire religion… We should start by reaffirming – and demonstrating – that the problem is not the Koran, nor the Torah or the Bible. Indeed, I have often said the problem is never the faith – it is the faithful, and how they behave towards each other."[236]

This statement makes emphasis on that the reason of the division between Muslim and Western communities is politics, not religion. However, the parties of the alliance are defined as "West" and "Muslim," not "Christian and Muslim," or "West and East." In other words, the definition refers to the religious aspect of the latter while referring to the geographic aspect of the former. If the division is not about religion, why one of the parties is identified through its religious identity? In fact, the answer of this question is rooted in the post-September 11 political atmosphere and the type of the relation between Islam and the West. The idea of "Alliance of Civilizations" was put forward in the post-September 11 period. After September 11, security issues led to deterioration in relations between Islamic and Western cultures. Increasing levels of Islamophobia in Western societies created a reaction among the Muslims who had been living in these Western states. The

[234] Kapucu, Garayev and Arslan, "Global Response to Terrorism: Alliance of Civilizations," pp. 3-15.

[235] UN Report Press Release 2006, access 16 January 2010; available from http://www.unaoc.org/repository/report_press_release.pdf

[236] High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations release report, access 27 January 2010; available from http://www.un-ngls.org/article.php3?id_article=170

Alliance of Civilizations project was initiated as a response to this prejudice, misunderstanding and hatred.[237]

Compared to the project of Dialogue of Civilizations, Alliance of Civilizations is a more comprehensive and long-life initiative. First, contrary to the elite level dialogue model, the Alliance of Civilizations project offers a comprehensive agenda that tries to deal with the issues of immigration, media and youth. Second, the Alliance of Civilizations project has an action-oriented agenda. Besides the dialogues and meetings of the high level groups, the practical projects have been initiated under the umbrella of the project. Thousands of documents have been published and many activities have become involved in the project. Former Iranian president Khatami even criticized this project because of its action-oriented structure, claiming, "An alliance of civilizations will be meaningless without dialogue among civilizations." Finally, the idea of Dialogue among Civilizations was associated with the former Iranian president Khatami. In the post-September 11 period, this representation influenced the success of the project in a negative way. However, the new project was proposed by two new authorities, the Spanish and Turkish prime ministers. Both Spain and Turkey suffered from bombings in Madrid and Istanbul and this project is important for these states. On the one hand, Zapatero wanted to make Spain the central actor within the dialogue camp and keep his country out of the coalition that occupied Iraq. On the other hand, for Turkey, the project was expected to positively contribute to the EU negotiations and Turkey's role as an influential actor in the region.[238]

In short, compared to its predecessor, the initiative of Alliance of Civilizations is a more successful project. However, it has five major weaknesses. First of all, similar to the ENP, the Alliance of Civilizations embraces mostly the West and the Muslim world while paying little attention to other civilizations such as Judaism,

[237] Köse, p. 87.

[238] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

Buddhism and Confucianism. The initiative, if not exclusively, but primarily is focused on Islam and the West and left other religions or civilizations out. The role of the co-presidents in the initiative is the main sign of this situation. Turkey has assumed the position of the spokesperson of the Islamic world while Spain has represented the Western world. Clash is mostly perceived to be taking place between these two civilizations. The initiative takes Islamic and Western civilizations as separate bodies and accepts that the Islamic civilization is the other of the West and vice versa.[239]

Secondly, while focusing on dialogue between Islam and the West, the initiative includes a Western-centric perspective which treats Islam as problematic. In other words, similar to the EU, the Alliance of Civilizations is far from regarding Islam and the West as equal parties. It can be said that the migrant Muslim populations of the West and political Islam are viewed as problems that need to be solved in order to ensure the peace and security both in the West and in the world. In other words, this approach, from a Western perspective, sees the solution in the transformation of Muslim societies.[240]

Third, the term 'civilization' is quite problematic due to several reasons. First, what is the definition of civilization? And, who determines the divisions between civilizations? Second, there are no institutional or legal representatives of civilizations. Individuals, groups and institutions claiming to represent civilizations and their ideas can clash and come to agreement but civilizations themselves can hardly be considered units that get into fights or make agreements. Some groups of people will also be excluded from the process and this is a critical point when the scale of dialogue is wide such as the "civilizations."[241] Third, the

[239] Ali Balcı, "The Alliance of Civilizations: The Poverty of the Clash/Alliance Dichotomy?," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, pp. 95-108.

[240] Yılmaz, p. 84.

[241] Köse, pp. 77-94.

usage of civilization in dialogue initiatives refers to Huntington's thesis. Acceptance of the existence of separate civilizations and their potential to conflict means to accept the basic assumption of the Clash of Civilizations theory. Fourth, powerful parties may prefer to state their views monologically or to define the limits of a language of communication rather than to establish dialogue.[242] Kevin Avruch argues that the main challenge to dialogue is to confront the established power relations because the power asymmetry is inherent to the structure of the international system.[243] He adds that:

> Dialogue is about talk and exchange of ideas, mutual learning and the sharing of understanding. This is no small thing, but it seems some distance from conceptions of conflict resolution or transformation that imply changing existing structures of disparities and inequities, resource extraction or distribution, capital and human flows.[244]

Within the context of existing power structures, dialogue has the risk of failing to become genuine. Presentation of the "civilizational other" may help legitimize discriminatory practices against immigrant communities.[245]

The fourth challenge of the initiative, similar to EU projects, is that security is an important component of the Alliance of Civilizations. This is seen in Zapatero's motivation for the initiative after the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004. That attack was the reason why he strongly advocated an alliance between the Western and Muslim civilizations. In other words, Madrid train bombings were the immediate motivation behind the establishment of the Alliance of Civilizations.

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[242] Ibid., p. 81

[243] Kevin Avruch, "Culture theory, culture clash, and the practice of conflict resolution." Ed. By Dennis J.D. Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, Jessica Senehi, *The Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), p. 241.

[244] Avruch, p. 241-253.

[245] Köse, p. 81.

Zapatero proposed the Alliance of Civilizations as a new way to combat terrorism.[246] This clarifies why it has a security dimension.[247]

Finally, the term alliance implicitly accepts the existence of the clash as a starting point.[248] For instance, at the opening of the high level group meeting in November 2005, Turkish Prime Minister and one of the co-presidents of the initiative, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, claimed that "an effective and strong answer could be given to apocalyptic scenarios based on the inevitability of a "Clash of Civilizations" and a common basis that will enable us to act in alliance could be formed in response to theories that foresee the partition of humanity according to new demarcation lines."[249] Later, Spanish Prime Minister Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the other co-president, argued that the "objective was to avoid the fulfillment of a predicted clash of civilizations."[250] These statements show that the Alliance of Civilizations is a reactionary initiative against the discourse of "clash of civilizations." However, the survival of the Alliance of Civilizations depends on the continuation of the clash of civilizations because the notion of alliance is reproduced in the notion of clash.[251]

[246] Balcı, "The Alliance of Civilizations: The Poverty of the Clash/Alliance Dichotomy?," p. 103.

[247] Maximo Cajal, "The Alliance of Civilizations: A Spanish View," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No:3, 2009, pp. 45-55.

[248] Balcı, "The Alliance of Civilizations: The Poverty of the Clash/Alliance Dichotomy?," pp. 102-103.

[249] Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Address by H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey at the Opening of the High Level Group Meeting of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, Palma de Mallorca, 27 November 2005, (2005), access 23 January 2010, available from http://www.unaoc.org

[250] Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, "Speech by the President of the Government at the inauguration of the First Alliance of Civilizations Forum," 2008, access 23 January 2010; available from http://www.unaoc.org/repository/zapatero.pdf

[251] Balcı, "The Alliance of Civilizations: The Poverty of the Clash/Alliance Dichotomy?," p. 103.

4.3.3. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we examined two secular organizations which have implemented interfaith policies in recent decades. There are several common points between these initiatives. First of all, they both regard religion as the defining aspect of culture and civilization. The Alliance of Civilization project, for example, defines the two parties of the dialogue as the West and Islam and implies that it approaches Islam as the core of the West's counter civilization.[252] Secondly, Islam is at heart of these initiatives. Especially after September 11, these interfaith initiatives have mostly focused on Islam and West. By doing so, these initiatives leave out other potential dialogues. Thirdly, while managing the dialogue between Islam and the West, these initiatives do not have an equal attitude towards West and Islam. These efforts are based on the idea that Islam constitutes a threat to the universal values which the West represents. We examined before how such an attitude is a serious challenge for a reliable dialogue. Finally, both dialogue projects have been established within a framework determined by a security-driven political agenda.[253]

Before, we mentioned how dialogue can be instrumentalized for security policies. Malvmig points out three indicators to show how dialogue is transformed into a security strategy: Habermas' theory of communicative action, the publication of alternatives to Huntington's conflict theory, the continual emphasis on the urgency and importance of dialogue and the propagation of the idea that the absence of dialogue constitutes a threat to the future.[254] The dialogue projects which were examined in this chapter are compatible with Malvmig's indicators. First of all, these projects do not comply with Habermas' principles relevant to dialogue.

[252] Yılmaz, pp. 73-98.

[253] Ibid., pp. 75-88.

[254] Malmvig, p. 351.

According to the dialogue type defined as the "ideal speech situation" by Habermas, the major principle is the free expression of ideas. A dialogue based on this principle will increase mutual understanding among people. Moreover, a dialogue must remain independent from the exercise of power, inequalities and discriminations. At the same time, the consequences of this dialogue must not be predefined. The participants must be present simply as an empathic audience. It is only in this way that a reliable dialogue can be established.[255] However, these projects aim at a predefined consequence: the existing system will be consolidated. Moreover, the parties are not defined as equal parties, and the dialogue is not implemented independent from power exercise and discrimination.

Second, these projects claim to be alternatives to Huntington's clash of civilizations theory. However, in fact, they do not reject the basic assumptions of Huntington. Rather, they reproduce the same discourse. According to Huntington, culture and cultural identities are shaping patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post Cold-War era. Therefore, the twenty-first century will witness more conflicts based on cultural and civilizational identities. Huntington argues that "some inter-civilizational relations are more conflict-prone than others. At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its Orthodox, Hindu, African and Western Christians neighbors. At the macro level, the dominant division is 'the West and the rest,' with the most intense conflicts occurring between Muslim and Asian societies on the one hand, and the West on the other."[256] In short, Huntington argues that the future conflicts will primarily result from civilizational differences of religious background, and mainly between Islam and the West. Both of these dialogue projects accept the division among civilizations, especially the West and Islam, and the possibility of conflict along lines of civilizational or cultural division. In most of the documents of these

[255] Jürgen Habermas, *A Theory of Communicative Action* (Cambridge Polity Press, 1984)

[256] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Free Press, 1996)

projects the claims of Huntington are rejected but referring to this theory analyzes the current security and conflict situation.[257]

Third, both of these initiatives refer to the urgency of dialogue in their documents. Moreover, they explicitly accept that conflict is inevitable in the absence of dialogue. However, according to Malvmig, referring to the urgency of dialogue brings out the idea that the absence of dialogue inevitably leads to conflict.[258]

In short, the dialogue among civilizations, both within the EU and the UN, was invented as a counter-reaction against the clash-based arguments.[259] However, a closer examination reveals that these projects do not reject the basic assumptions of the clash-based arguments. Rather, they reproduce the same discourse by sharing its basic assumptions. This does not mean that these dialogue projects cannot make any contribution to peacebuilding. In fact, as mentioned before, they are important initiatives because they have large institutional capacities and they can reach more people compared to the faith-based actors. However, they have some limitations and challenges. Thus, while examining the potential of these institutions relevant to interfaith dialogue, one should pay attention to their limitations as well as their advantages.

[257] Yılmaz, pp. 73-98.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Balcı, "The Alliance of Civilizations: The Poverty of the Clash/Allliance Dichotomy?," pp. 95-108.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis raises a number of arguments on the role of religion both in international relations and the discipline of IR, and the impact of interfaith dialogue on these relations. First of all, this study is based on the recognition that religion influences several aspects of international relations in diverse ways. First, religion is a source of legitimacy that can be used by many actors in the world system both foreign and domestic. Second, foreign policies can be motivated by religious concerns through the religious worldviews of policy-makers. Moreover, foreign policies can also be influenced through the religious worldviews of a population within a state that constrain the options of policy makers. Third, religion influences international relations when domestic religious issues and conflicts cross borders and become international issues. Religious conflicts, like most types of conflict, can cross borders in several ways. Violent domestic conflicts can destabilize an entire region, and religious rebellions in one part of the world can inspire similar rebellions by similar groups in another part of the world. In addition to these, religious conflicts may cause international refugee flows. Finally, religious conflicts can be internationalized with the conflicting sides competing in international forums.[260]

However, although it can affect international relations, religion has not been regarded as an important variable by many International Relations scholars until recently. One of the reasons of this ignorance has been the dominance of the secularization theory over social sciences and International Relations. According to this theory, secularization is regarded as an inherent feature of modernization.

[260] Fox and Sandler, pp. 163-179.

Actually, the main idea of the secularization theory can be traced back to the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinkers believed that modernization necessarily brings out a decline of religion both in the levels of individual and the society; and in the modern industrial age more rational and scientific means are needed to explain the world.[261] For instance, August Comte argued that, as a result of modernization, human society was passing the theological stage of its social evolution and moving towards a new age in which the science of sociology would replace religion. Similarly Engels explained how the socialist revolution would cause religion to evaporate soon.[262]

The fact that religion was seen as a marginal factor in the discipline of IR has brought out several results. First of all, when scholars faced a situation which needs to take religion into account, they have had difficulties in explanation. The clearest example is September 11. The events of September 11 caused great surprise within the discipline. Some scholars continued to reject the role of religion and they proposed explanations without referring to it. Secondly, the secular bias against religion and the assumption that religion is a threat to modern state has caused repressive state policies towards religion in some countries, such as Algeria and Egypt. In such countries, this perspective –the interaction of politics and religion is dangerous- caused policy makers to apply exclusive policies on religious movements and throw them outside the legal framework. This might have contributed to the rise or strengthening of extremist movements.[263] Thirdly, ignorance of religion has been a great obstacle for the study of religion in conflict resolution field until recently.

[261] Thomas, pp. 47-69.

[262] Stark, p. 250.

[263] Ömer Taşpınar, "The Old Turks' Revolt: When Secularism Endangers Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007.

However in recent decades, religion has been more visible both in theoretical and practical terms. In this study, we examined the incorporation of religion into international relations in three categories. First, there is the global resurgence of religion. That is, especially after the end of the Cold-War, religious movements all around the world have increased. However, it does not mean that religion emerged as an important factor in this period for the first time. In fact, religion was always an important variable; however, a series of events have made it more visible. Moreover, it is important to remember that this is not a sudden return of religion. Rather, it began at least six or seven decades ago.[264] After the colonial period, many new states faced economic and social problems and they could not provide development and democracy. In these states, religious movements raised rapidly. In addition to the problems due to the incomplete modernization, modernization itself also contributed to the resurgence of religion. The leaders of religious movements adapted themselves to modern discourses and methods. Furthermore, globalization helped them spread their ideas across borders. These combined impacts left many people with feelings of loss rather than achievement. These people, with a deep sense of alienation, found what they wanted in various religious expressions.[265] After the end of the cold war, this resurgence has become more visible in many parts of the world. Religious conflicts occurred all over the world in the post-cold war era and religious issues have become to be more visible. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 and September 11 attacks in 2001 are important turning points for the understanding of the extent of the resurgence of religion. These events showed how religion can still make impact in the world which was believed to be secular. Moreover, they showed the necessity of including religion as a variable for explanation of these events.

Due to the dramatic effects of the Iranian Revolution and especially September 11, the rise of Islam is probably the most visible part of the resurgence of religion.

[264] Haynes, "Religion and International Relations After 9/11," p. 399.

[265] Haynes, "*An Introduction to International Relations and Religion"*

However, it is important to remind that the role of religion in international relations cannot be reduced to Islamism or radicalism. First of all, the global resurgence of religion does not occur only in Muslim states. Even in Western states, in India, in Israel and other parts of the world, such resurgence is visible. That is why it is called the global resurgence. Moreover, the relation between religion and international relations is much more complex.

The second dimension of the incorporation of religion into International Relations is about the theoretical shifts within the discipline. Beginning from 1980s, secularization theory started to be criticized by an increasing number of scholars in social sciences. This change also started to take place in International Relations after 1990s. Moreover, post-positivist theories of International Relations which have emerged after 1980s differ from the mainstream theories regarding the issue of religion. These theories recognize the impact of norms, values and identities including religious ones. Moreover, while mainstream theories have a state-centric perspective, post-positivist theories include non-state actors, and this enables to include religious actors.

The third dimension of incorporation of religion into international relations, which this study mainly focuses on, is about the increasing understanding which regards religion as an important tool for peacebuilding. Religion was long seen as irrelevant to international relations, or as a threat for the secular international order. However, as explained in the fourth chapter, in recent years, there has been a rising interest in how religion can be used as a tool for peace. Similar to war and conflict, peace is also accepted as a characterizing dimension of religion. Today, faith-based actors are increasingly involved in peace efforts. Not only faith-based actors but also secular actors such as international organizations and non-governmental organizations seek for promoting interfaith dialogue both to prevent and resolve conflicts. Among the faith-based peacebuilding activities, this thesis

examines interfaith dialogue. The features of interfaith dialogue were explained in detail in the fourth chapter.

In the fourth chapter we also examined interfaith dialogue and its challenges. Some theological perspectives are not open for a dialogue with other religious traditions. Moreover, many followers of religions carry the burden of the past and this leads them to have biases against others. In addition to this, to determine the place of religion in conflicts is difficult. When religion is itself the source of the conflict, it may not be an efficient peace tool at the same time. On the other hand, in a non-religious context, where the source of violence is not religious but for instance economic, religious dialogue again may not achieve unless the real source of the problem is eliminated. Moreover, in this chapter we argued that interfaith dialogue initiatives of faith-based actors are usually closed to small groups of people, and they lack collaborative tasks. Furthermore, religious efforts may have limited effect in the political domain. Therefore, this study focused on two secular organizations which have implemented interfaith policies after 1990s. These institutions, the European Union and the United Nations, are assumed to have wider international implications.

In the fourth chapter, we examined how these institutions recently started initiatives that incorporated religion as a policy tool. Another reason why we examined interfaith dialogue with the examples of secular institutions is that this study questions whether the ignorance of religion in International Relations is transforming. As we mentioned in the previous chapters, there is a remarkable shift in IR theory after 1980s. Post-positivist theories recognize norms and values including religious values. At the same time, a global resurgence of religion is occurring. In fact, these two developments in theory and practice are closely related. As we mentioned before, theory and practice are not separable. Accordingly, the resurgence of religion and theoretical changes have a two-way relationship. On the one hand, the resurgence of religion forces scholars to rethink

on the role of religion. Increasing religious movements show that International Relations discipline needs a deeper debate on religion. On the other hand, what is called global resurgence of religion is partly the product of the theoretical shifts. While scholars start to criticize the secularization thesis and recognize the impact of religion in international relations, religious movements or religious dimension of events and conflicts become more visible than it was in the past. At this point, the main question is how dialogue, specifically the one proposed by these institutions, has the potential to transform the role of religion in international relations. In other words, is interfaith dialogue an illustrator for the incorporation of religion into International Relations? In fact, this is the main question of this study. In other words, interfaith dialogue is a kind of case study in this thesis to understand better the incorporation of religion into international relations.

Until quite recently, research in the conflict resolution field did not pay much attention to the role religion plays in peacebuilding. The reason for this is the dominance of the secular, rational problem-solving approaches and methodological perspectives developed by conflict resolution scholars. As explained before, these scholars viewed religion either an instigator of conflict or ignored it at all because religious issues involved in conflicts cannot be addressed from an empirical perspective. However, finally, the proliferation of ethno-religious conflicts since the end of the Cold War has made research on relationship between religion and conflict resolution inevitable.[266]

As mentioned in the previous chapters, rationalist theories share many of the same assumptions, which neglect the role of culture and religion in international affairs. Therefore, there is very little place for culture and religion in the theories of international cooperation. According to realists, the international environment is an anarchic and self-help environment and the main goal of states is to pursue their own interests. Realists take the environment of conflict as granted and they do not

[266] Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana, p. 177.

give a place to cooperation between states. Morgenthau claims that conflicts among nations do not occur because people are unaware of one another culture.[267] He argues that balance of power between states and diplomacy are the best tools to promote international order and stability.[268] Moreover, realists argue that states are the key actors in international politics. However, interfaith dialogue necessitates the existence and participation of inter-governmental organizations, religious institutions, religious non-governmental organizations, and even individuals.

Neo-liberalism and neo-realism are relatively more compatible with the idea of interfaith dialogue because they recognize the possibility of cooperation based on common interests. However, both of these approaches emphasize an objective of the social bond between the states. If states cooperate, according to neorealists, this is explained as a rational response to threats to national security. According to neoliberals, similarly, it is in the rational interest of states to cooperate with each other. In short, both of these theories marginalize the impact of culture and religion in the explanation of international cooperation. In their approach, states cooperate without a shared sense of identity, belonging, or obligation.[269]

At that point, English school and constructivism raise a question about the nature of the social bond in international society. They argue that rationalist approaches leave out a crucial part, the intersubjective element of the social bond in international society. According to the early English School, the intersubjective sense of belonging between states emerged through a common culture. This common culture underpinned different states-systems in history. This contention was mainly developed by Martin Wight, Herbert Butterfield, and Micheal

[267] Morgenthau and Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*.

[268] Ben Mollow and Chaim Lavie, "Culture, Dialogue and Perception Change in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," paper prepared for presentation at International Association for Conflict Management Annual Convention, San Sebastian, Spain, June 20-23, 1999.

[269] Thomas, pp. 150-151.

Donelan. These scholars recognized the role of religious doctrines in different cultures and civilizations, and studied on their consequences for international society. Wight believed that a common culture and a degree of cultural unity among states were necessary for the existence of international society. He argued that a common culture was one of the most important foundations for past international societies. While these early scholars emphasized the role of culture for the international society, the later English School has marginalized the study of religion to some extent. As a foundation for international society, they turned to the common culture of liberal modernity. They have accepted the need for a common cultural foundation for international society, but only if it could be transformed into support for the cosmopolitan culture of liberal modernity. In short, while rationalist theories emphasize the objective and material interests that lead to international cooperation, the English School and constructivism emphasize the intersubjective bond between states.[270]

As we mentioned in the fifth chapter, dialogue projects of the EU and the UN has mostly been developed as a response to the theory of Huntington. If we examine these two counter arguments relevant to the IR theory, the clash of civilizations theory proposed by Huntington mainly fits the realist theory characterized by conflict-based nature and pessimistic views about the existing order. This perspective takes the conflict aspect of realist theories and links it to constructivist approach, which claims that it is not actors, but beliefs, ideas and goals that dominate international political arena. According to this theory, it is civilizational identities and values that lead to clash of civilizations. On the other hand, dialogue initiatives of the EU and the UN have a more liberal approach since they accept the importance of involved actors and the possibility of cooperation. Moreover, they also refer to constructivism in their discourse by recognizing the significance of identities and values.[271] Their discourse seems close to constructivism and

[270] Ibid., pp. 152-155.

[271] Kapucu, Garayev and Arslan, pp. 3-15.

English school since they emphasize a social bond between states and a common culture. However, in fact they do not reject the basic realist assumptions of Huntington. They accept the civilizational divisions and the possibility of conflict within these civilizations. They regard Islam and the West as the main counter-civilizations. Huntington's thesis is mentioned in almost every document concerned with dialogue. In most of these documents, this theory is not accepted. However, even so, referring to this theory is useful in all attempts to analyze the current security and conflict situation. As Malvmig explains, publication of alternatives to Huntington's theory is an indicator which emphasizes that dialogue is urgent and absence of it is a threat for the future. These projects which reject this theory reveal an acceptance of the lines of division described by Huntington. The clearest proof of this is that the dialogue projects themselves, such as Alliance of Civilizations and Europe-Islam Dialogue, are being named after his theory.[272]

In addition to this, it is possible to say that the perspective behind the dialogue initiatives of the EU and the UN are mostly based on a secular, modernist and rational understanding and not radically different from the mainstream IR theory. As we mentioned in the fourth chapter, these projects regard Islam as a threat to universal values, and through dialogue, they try to create a legitimate Islam. This approach shows the security concern within these dialogue initiatives. Rather than an intersubjective social bond among states, which is emphasized by the scholars of constructivism and English Schools, these projects focus on tangible interests, namely security, as the objective of cooperation. By doing so, they instrumentalize religion. While the resurgence of religion brings out a religious peacebuilding agenda, on the other hand, it also brings out security concerns and prevents dialogue from being a fundamental transformation. In addition to the security concern, Elisabeth Shakman Hurd argues that, negative associations with Islam play an important role in the establishment of West's secular, rationality, identity

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[272] Yılmaz, 87-88.

and culture. That is, negative representations of Islam, which exist in dialogue projects, contribute to the reproduction of secularism.[273] Moreover, these dialogue initiatives still have a secular modernist perspective for they regard religion as problematic. They regard the resurgence of religion, especially Islam, as a product of incomplete modernization.

To sum up, it is possible to say that although their discourse seems to make a radical change in the role of religion in international relations, interfaith dialogue projects of these institutions still operates from within a problem-solving approach to international theory. They focus on integrating faith into the existing frameworks of institutions. In other words, they do not challenge the existing framework or social order in international relations. As we mentioned in the previous chapters, Western-centric understanding of international relations is still a very powerful stance, and secularism is still shaping international politics. However, it does not mean that interfaith dialogue does not promise anything. In fact, it is not opposed to a transformation. Rather it is contributing to this transformation. Scott Thomas argues that it is not radical enough in its criticisms of liberal modernity; however, he states that it is a beginning.[274] While evaluating the contribution of interfaith dialogue to peace and transformation of the role of religion, we should do it by paying attention to all the context explained in this study and be skeptical enough to see practical and theoretical limitations of dialogue. Otherwise, an exaggerated celebration of interfaith dialogue would be misleading and even frustrating. This is the main concern of this study.

[273] Shakman Hurd, p. 52.

[274] Ibid.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

International Faith-Based Actors of Interfaith Dialogue

Below, there are 10 international faith-based actors which engage in interfaith dialogue, in a chronological order. They are: Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, International Association for Religious Freedom, The World Council of Churches, the Temple of Understanding, the Roman Catholic Church, World Conference of Religion for Peace, International Interfaith Center, International Committee for Peace Council, World Council of Religious Leaders, and the United Religions Initiative.

Interfaith as a dialogue between people of different religious traditions has been happening ever since people began to identify themselves with a particular type of religious belief and practice.[275] However, at the formal level, it began with the *Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions* in 1893 in Chicago. The 1893 Parliament marked the first formal gathering of representatives of eastern and western spiritual traditions.[276] One hundred years after the beginning, they decided that they should organize a second Parliament, which took place in 1993 in Chicago. This Parliament issued a draft document "Towards a Global Ethics."[277] This declaration was a powerful statement of the ethical common ground shared by the world's religious and spiritual traditions. The Council hosted the second

[275] Interfaith Studies Web Site, access 29 December 2009; available from http://www.interfaithstudies.org/interfaith/interfaithorigins.html

[276] Parliament of the World's Religions web site, access 30 November 2009; available from http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/

[277] Groff, pp. 710-711.

modern Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town, South Africa in December, 1999. The religious and spiritual communities of South Africa were integral to ending the system of apartheid that prevailed until 1990. Holding the 1999 parliament in Cape Town provided thousands of people with the opportunity to witness the role that religion played in creating a new South Africa. Participants were invited to attend workshops, performances, lectures, panel discussions, meditation sessions, and evening plenary sessions led by the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, and other activists. [278]

The next parliament was held in 2004 in Barcelona, Spain, with the support of UNESCO to try to address a series of global concerns: the worsening situations of refugees around the world, the burden of debt on developing countries, the prevention of violence, especially violence which is informed by or targeted towards religion, and the water crisis.[279] As can be seen from this agenda, the focus of the world's religious leaders has turned into the biggest problems of the world. But what kind of a solution can be expected from religious leaders remains as a serious question for many people.[280] In 2007, the Council organized religious and spiritual programs for the 2007 Universal Form of Cultures in Monterrey, Mexico. These programs focused on theme of respect. This theme served as a basis for three different program tracks: "Exploring Our Values," "Matters of Life and

[278] The declaration of the Global Ethics, which was accepted in the 1993 Barcelona meeting included these statements: 1) Providing collective action among the religions, especially the monotheistic ones, to solve the problems challenging the world; 2) Achieving the necessary cooperation that will help strengthen the religious and moral values of the societies; 3) Ending the struggles among different religions and cooperating against the ideologies that exclude and despise religions; 4) Cooperating in solving problems like drugs, AIDS, alcoholism, divorce and breaking up of families, ignorance, poverty, hunger, injustice, war and ethnic conflicts; 5) Preventing the use of religion for political or any other kind of earthily objectives; 6) Providing the protection and development of woman rights, starting from education; 7) Working for the achievement and preservation of the human rights and with all types of mentalities and evolutions that attempt to restrict any of these rights and freedoms

[279] Parliament of the World's Religions web site, access 30 November 2009; available from http://www.parliamentofreligions.org

[280] Yılmaz, pp. 73-98.

Death" and "Living Together." Finally, the 2009 Parliament was held in Melbourne, Australia, in December, bringing together almost 10.000 people.[281]

International Association for Religious Freedom, founded in 1900, is one of the first international inter-religious organizations in the world. Objectives of this association are cited as freedom from oppressive interference or discrimination on the grounds of religion, mutual understanding, respect and the promotion of harmony between communities or individuals of different religions. The IARF works for encouraging interfaith dialogue and tolerance, with member groups in 25 countries, from faith traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Shinto and Zoroastrianism. One of the current projects of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) is "Philippines Interfaith Village Project 2008-2010," which aims to give an opportunity for a peaceful relationship among members of different faith communities in the Philippines through supporting grassroots livelihoods. With this pilot program, the Association seeks to support poverty alleviation at community level in Philippines through projects that involve people of different faith working together. [282] Interfaith dialogue is mostly criticized because it does not go beyond talk. Moreover, the critics emphasize that dialogue cannot achieve if there is a non-religious origin of the problem. Therefore, especially in the recent years, faith-based actors are increasingly involved in such action projects to contribute non-religious problems. The abovementioned project, for instance, recognizes that respect for the right of freedom of religion cannot be simply requested of communities; because where there is poverty, economic or religious conflict follows.

[281] Parliament of the World's Religions web site, access 30 November 2009; available from http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/

[282] International Association for Religious Freedom web site, access 21 December 2009; available from http://www.iarf.net/index.php

The World Council of Churches (WCC) -a community of churches, a modern ecumenical movement- was established in 1948. It brings together 349 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries throughout the world, representing over 560 million Christians. Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, but has worked closely with the Council and sends representatives to all major WCC conferences as well as to its Central Committee meetings and the assemblies. This council has implemented several interfaith dialogue projects until now.[283]

In 1960, *The Temple of Understanding* was founded by a pioneering visionary, Juliet Hollister, with the support of a distinguished group of "Founding Friends," including Pope John XXIII and XIVth Dalai Lama. The initiation at most focuses on advocacy and education. It educates youth and adults both cross culturally and inter-religiously for global citizenship and peaceful coexistence; advocate for acceptance and respect for religious pluralism. The Temple of Understanding has been a non-governmental organization for the past twenty years and in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the past seven years. It advocates for recognition of spiritual values in UN documents and at conferences.[284]

Roman Catholic Church is another important figure for interfaith dialogue. Especially since 1965, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-

[283] One of the projects of the Council is "Inter-religious trust and respect" project, which attempts to strengthen inter-religious trust and respect through bilateral and multilateral dialogues, regional and cross-cultural encounters on topics like religion and violence, perceptions of "the other," and the search for identity in pluralistic societies. Another project, "Christian self-understanding" engages member and non-member churches and Christian communities in reflection on what it means to be a Christian in a world of many religions, and on conversion as an issue in inter-religious relations. Finally, the project of "Churches in situations of conflict" accompanies and equips churches for advocacy in countries where religion is being used to fuel conflict.
World Council of Churches web site, access 20 December 2009; available from http://www.oikoumene.org/en/home.html

[284] The Temple of Understanding web site, access 21 December 2009; available from http://www.templeofunderstanding.org/index.html

Christian religions. On October 28, 1965, the Second Vatican Council promulgated a Declaration –*Nostra Aetate* (The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions) dedicated to the non-Christian religions. This document is characterized by faithful attitudes with regards to the great religions of the world. The Council has declared that, since all the people constitute a sole community, it is opportune that the Church examines "all that men have in common and that it pushes them to live together in their common destiny." It was affirmed that "the Catholic Church does not reject anything that is true and holy" in the other religions, exhorting to dialogue and to collaboration with the other believers. This was a completely new approach to interreligious dialogue on the part of the church. In this way, a field for collaboration with other great religions was prepared.[285]

To foster the work of dialogue, in 1964, Pope Paul VI instituted a special department of the Roman Curia for relations with the people of other religions. Known at first as the Secretariat for non Christians, in 1988 it was renamed the *Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* (PCID). The PCID is the central office of the Catholic Church for the promotion of interreligious dialogue in accordance with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the declaration "Nostra Aetate." The council aims to promote mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Catholics and the followers of other religious traditions; to encourage the study of religions; and to promote the formation of people dedicated to dialogue. Although the PCID is the central office for dialogue in the Catholic Church, dialogue is mainly carried out in the local churches. Many local churches have dialogue commissions, at the national or regional level. The PCID works in close collaboration with these. The President and the Secretary visit local Churches to encourage dialogue. In addition to this, they visit leaders of other religions and different institutions. The council also organizes dialogue

[285] Pier Francesco Fumagalli, "Nostra Aetate: A Milestone," access 18 December 2009; available from http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01111997_p-31_en.html

meetings and publishes books and pamphlets on different aspects of interfaith dialogue.[286]

In 1984, a document called "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" was produced by the then named Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians. This document states that the evangelizing mission of the Church is a "single but complex and articulated reality." It indicates the principal elements of this mission: presence and witness, commitment to social development and human liberation, liturgical life, prayer and contemplation, interreligious dialogue and finally proclamation and catechesis.[287] This document includes interreligious dialogue in the description of mission of the Church, for the first time. The document mentions four forms of interreligious dialogue. 1) The *dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.2) The *dialogue of action*, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people. 3) The *dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values. *4)* The *dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.[288]

[286] The Pontificial Council for Interreligious Dialogue, access 16 December 2009; available from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_pro_20051996_en.html

[287] The Pontificial Council for Interreligious Dialogue: Dialogue and Proclamation, access 20 December 2009; available from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html

[288] Ibid.

Since 1984, two other documents also have proclaimed interreligious dialogue an integral part of the Church's mission: Pope John Paul II's 1990 encyclical, "The Mission of the Redeemer", and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue's "Dialogue and Proclamation".[289] Through all these documents, guided by the Pope and their bishops, all local churches and all the members of these churches are called to interfaith dialogue.

World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) was established in 1970. However, its origins date to 1961, when leaders from the world's major faith traditions began exploring the possibilities for organizing a "religious summit" to address the need for believers around the world to take action toward achieving peace. Today, it is the largest international coalition of representatives from the world's great religions dedicated to promoting peace. WCRP is active in some of the most troubled areas of the world, creating multi-religious partnerships to stop war, end poverty and protect the earth. Some of the recent successes of WCRP include building a new climate of reconciliation in Iraq; mediating dialogue among warring factions in Sierra Leone, organizing an international network of religious women's organizations; and establishing a program to assist the children affected by AIDS in Africa.[290]

One of the continuing projects of WCRP is the Conflicting Transformation Program, which operates around the world to encourage the cooperation of religious communities in response to violent conflict since the mid 1990s. This program aims to equip existing inter-religious councils with relevant knowledge and skills in order to prevent and mediate violent conflicts, and to build new inter-religious councils in conflict areas. These inter-religious councils and groups supported by WCRP have played key roles transforming conflict and rebuilding

[289] "Interfaith Dialogue," access 20 December 2009; available from http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/global_dialogue.php

[290] World Conference of Religions for Peace web site, access 29 November 2009; available from http://www.wcrp.org/

peaceful societies in the Balkans, West Africa and the Middle East. In the past decade, WCRP has engaged its leadership of prominent international religious figures to bring together diverse Bosnian religious leaders in the aftermath of civil war and to support multi-religious peacebuilding efforts in West Africa. Currently, WCRP is facilitating emerging efforts for peacebuilding collaboration among religious leaders in Sri Lanka, Iraq, Sudan, and the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, WCRP is implementing an inter-religious reconciliation program –Kedem- in Israel, since 2003. This program brings together local leaders of Israel's Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities around joint action projects. Currently, some Kedem members (local grass-roots religious leaders) are working together to address the core issues of the conflict and plan local action projects designed to have a tangible impact on their own communities. WCRP has also supported multi-religious collaboration in Africa to promote peacebuilding and prevent further conflicts. It engaged in interfaith visits to conflict-torn regions in Africa, such as Congo, Uganda and Rwanda, to address the post-trauma needs of these communities and facilitate trauma healing trainings.[291]

The events and publicity during 1993, The Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation declared by UN, provided a chance to make the importance of interfaith work far more widely known.[292] Inspired by the 1993 Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation, the *International Interfaith Center* was established in Oxford, UK.[293] As a result of the increasing amount and variety of interfaith activity around the world, it was perceived that a need could be met

[291] Ibid.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Over the years, the IIC has tried to link people from all parts of the world. A series of conferences with subjects of common interest have been arranged. In addition, the IIC has built up an annual or biannual gathering connecting the different International Organizations. It is called International Interfaith Organizations Network (IION). This network provides a forum for the participating organizations to share information, challenges and solutions and to support each other.

by an international interfaith center which was informed about all these different efforts and able to encourage continuing interfaith cooperation.[294]

In 1995, *International Committee for Peace Council* was founded. International Committee for Peace Council is a diverse group of religious and spiritual individuals who are internationally known and respected such as the Dalai Lama. The Peace Council began in 1995 with twelve members. The Council supports local peacemakers in regions of special need. It gives practical assistance to local peace efforts. It also works with the United Nations, governments, and other non-governmental organizations. Until now, The Peace Council organized international days of prayer, and interfaith services at meetings of NGOs and diplomats negotiating a land mine ban treaty, including the service in Ottawa to celebrate the signing of the treaty in December, 1997. It also issued a public statement opposing the United States' war with Iraq. For the objective of conflict resolution and peace-making, it supported efforts by moderate Palestinians and Israelis to promote alternative agendas for a peaceful resolution to Israeli-Palestinian violence. Furthermore, it met with local peacemakers and groups promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland. [295]

The United Religions Initiative (URI) was founded in 2000, however, the seed for the URI was planted in 1993 when it was realized that the UN Charter made no reference to religions. From 1996 to 2000, when the URI Charter was signed, global summits and numerous gatherings and consultations took place in different regions of the world. The results of this process are a URI Charter, interfaith action projects in over 70 countries, and a network of Cooperation Circles and supporting

[294] International Interfaith Center web site, access 21 December 2009; available from http://www.interfaith-centre.org/index.htm

[295] International Committee for the Peace Council web site, access 21 December 2009; available from http://www.peacecouncil.org/About.html

members and Affiliates all over the world.[296] The primary goal of the URI is cited as contributing to promote interfaith cooperation and to end religiously motivated violence. Today the URI includes thousands of members in over 65 countries representing more than 100 religions, spiritual expressions, and indigenous traditions. The heart of URI is the global network of locally organized Cooperation Circles. Cooperation Circle is the basic unit of URI membership and consists of local groups which come together to initiate acts of interfaith cooperation. Each Circle supports the principles of the Charter but they focus on activities most relevant to their local communities. From organizing interfaith civic and religious events to sharing meals and conversation, from intervening peace actions in war zones to arms reduction and AIDS prevention, these circles reach out to meet their unique purposes.[297]

In 2002 the *World Council of Religious Leaders* was launched. The formation of the World Council of Religious Leaders was one of the stated goals of the Millennium World Peace Summit. The objective of this council is cited as serving as a resource to the United Nations and its agencies around the world, nation states and other international organizations, offering the collective wisdom and resources of the faith traditions toward the resolution of critical global problems. The launching of the World Council took place in Bangkok in 2002. Participants adopted a Charter that outlines key areas in which religious leaders can play an active role in reducing conflict and addressing the critical needs of humankind. The World Council of Religious Leaders is cited as aiming to serve as a model and guide for the creation of a community of world religions.[298]

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[296] United Religions Initiative web site, access 28 November 2009; available from http://www.uri.org/

[297] Ibid.

[298] The World Council of Religious Leaders web site, access 21 December 2009; available from http://www.millenniumpeacesummit.com/wc_about.html