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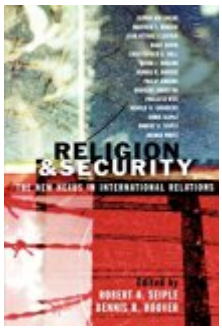

Robert A. Seiple, Dennis R. Hoover, eds.. *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004. xi + 198 pp. $22.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7425-3212-0.

Reviewed by Dianne Kirby

Published on H-Diplo (March, 2007)

There is scholarly agreement that religious actors globally influence political outcomes. There is little agreement, however, as to the extent of that influence or as to why religious actors act politically. There are two main tendencies within the range of religious actors with political goals: those who engage in cooperation and peace-building and those who engage in conflict, at home and abroad. Hence the important acknowledgement in *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations* that while religion can be part of the solution to the present global crisis, it is also part of the problem. In terms of balance, however, it is the positive aspects of religion as a solution that is emphasized in this edited collection. The book originates from a national conference convened in 2003 by the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), the starting point of which was the thesis that "nations that do not foster respect for religion will be vulnerable to a number of significant threats to stability and security" (p. 13). Nations that "protect a principled, robust religious pluralism in civil society are the most likely to enjoy genuinely sustainable security" (p. 3). The essential argument of the book, as reflected in the title, is that the international community needs seriously to take account of the nexus between religion and security, very much stressing the positive aspects of that nexus.

Editor Robert A. Seiple, the first U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, is founder and president of IGE, a "think tank that works to cultivate sustainable environments for religious freedom for all faiths." Editor Dennis R. Hoover works for IGE as vice president for research and publications. He also directs the Christian-based Council on Faith & International Affairs, "an IGE-sponsored initiative forged by a group of emerging and established Christian leaders in international affairs, academics and practitioners alike," which supported the conference from which the book derives.[1] Ambassador Seiple is chair of the Board of Advisors for the Council on Faith and International Affairs (CFIA). Hoover edits *The Brandywine Review of Faith and International Affairs*, the flagship publication of the CFIA. Although a key goal of the *The Brandywine Review* is the articulation of international perspectives shaped by a Christian worldview, the

editorial philosophy of the journal claims to be nonsectarian and nonpartisan, reflecting the CFIA's "commitment to the principle that people who take their faith seriously should be able to participate in public discourse about international affairs, without hiding that faith under a bushel."[2] Implicit in this statement is the notion that people of faith have previously been excluded. To students of U.S. foreign relations and especially of U.S. presidents, such a proposition is quite remarkable.[3] Even more so in light of the number of contributors, all of whom appear to be writing from a faith-based perspective, and whom, in addition to being associated with the IGE or similar faith-based organizations, have worked in or with government. Whether or not the book is based on a faulty premise, it clearly is the product of institutions that seek an enhanced role for religion in U.S. foreign policy and in the international arena.

Highlighting the resources within the Abrahamic faith traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the contributors are tasked with exploring, identifying, and suggesting actions based on positive nexus points between religion and security. The book is divided into four sections, intended sequentially to address four integral thematic pairings: first, religious violence and religious repression; second, religious pluralism and political stability; third, religious influences on military intervention and post-conflict reconciliation, and, last, religious freedom and civil society. Together, the collection's contributors seek to show that religion is an essential component necessary to achieve sustainable security.

These essays, written by committed believers with practical experience and/or scholarly research into the multifaceted and diverse nature of the role played by religion in the modern world, have an important contribution to make to the burgeoning literature on this subject. Paulette Otis, author of the first chapter and a professor of strategic studies at the Joint Military College, reviews the ways in which transnational religion and globalization are changing the traditional assumptions of the Westphalian state system. Philip Jenkins, Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University, provides a thoughtful and persuasive essay that examines religious persecution as an underexplored and yet major element explaining why some processes of nation-building fail. In a jointly authored essay, "Uzbekistan and the Central Asian Crucible of Religion and Security," Chris Seiple and Joshua White, respectively president and vice president of the IGE, draw on their own experiences in the region to reinforce the importance of religious considerations to successful security outcomes.

Section 2 begins with an essay, "Choosing Exclusion or Embrace: An Abrahamic Theological Perspective," by Manfred T. Brauch, professor of biblical theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He presents an erudite analysis of the Abrahamic scriptural legacy of the prophet Isaiah to show how texts have and can be used to promote inclusion or exclusion. Then Christopher A. Hall, professor of biblical and theological studies at Eastern University and also editor-at-large for ***Christianity Today***, explores themes of pluralism and stability from a specifically Christian perspective in his essay "Truth, Pluralism, and Religious Diplomacy: A Christian Dialogical Perspective." Osman bin Bakar, who holds the Malaysia Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia, Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, does the same as Hall, but from his position in the Islamic tradition. Both present insightful arguments about the ways in which religions should approach each other in order to promote genuine respect and peaceful coexistence.

Section 3 contains two essays that address different ways in which faith-based perspectives can help shape constructive responses to violent conflict. Jean Bethke Elshtain, professor of social and

political ethics at the University of Chicago, presents some challenging points in her essay, "Military Intervention and Justice as Equal Regard." She explores the dilemmas of reconciling the moral imperatives of justice and human rights with the traditional preoccupations of states--security, political stability, and national interest. For Elshtain, the possession by the United States of power and ideals augurs well for the world's weak and oppressed peoples. Marc Gopin, a rabbi, scholar, and consultant, as well as director of the Center on World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, draws on his extensive expertise as a scholar and practitioner of reconciliation in his essay, "When the Fighting Stops: Healing Hearts with Spiritual Peacemaking." Gopin presents a moving testimonial from his own experiences in the field that human emotion and exchanges are crucial to peace-making and security. Harold H. Saunders reinforces Gopin's observations in the final section of the book as he too draws on his personal experiences in the field as a practitioner. Saunders, who worked for twenty years at the National Security Council in the White House and State Department, argues the advantages of approaching security through a relational rather than a realist paradigm that brings in civil society.

This volume brings together a wide range of expertise to address vital and contemporary global problems. However, the contributors by and large write from a perspective that assumes the superiority of western democracy and capitalism to all other ideologies and systems, and the essentially benign nature of U.S. power. Kevin J. Hasson, founder and president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and a former attorney-advisor for the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel, re-states important considerations about the spiritual side of human nature and the necessity for human rights and religious freedom in his essay, "Neither Sacred Nor Secular: A Public Anthropology of Human Dignity, Religious Freedom, and Security." His thought-provoking treatment of religious freedom in the context of the problems generated by state-imposed atheism, religion, and secularism is, however, compromised by an overly subjective approach that reflects his conservative predilections. He refers to the "lying," "thuggish" regime of Cuba (p. 151) and cites ***The Black Book of Communism*** (1999) as a "dependable reckoning" (p. 156), when its sources and methodology have generated significant contention, a point that might at least have been mentioned. He makes sweeping assertions about Soviet behavior that derive from his abhorrence of atheism rather than the complex and vacillating attitudes of the Soviet state toward religion. For example, he blames atheism for the "globally destabilizing" nature of the communist enterprise, which "unleashed an appetite that knew no bounds, and country after country quickly fell" (p. 156). Geopolitical considerations are equally absent from his treatment of state-imposed religion, where he suggests that "a particularly strong religious motivation helped the Afghan mujahideen, or 'holy warriors,' to confront and eventually repel the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan" (p. 157). No mention is made of the role of the United States in the Afghan struggle. American policies toward Islamic movements and states throughout the post-World War II period reveal a deep residue of ambivalence, skepticism, and mistrust. Nonetheless, the importance attached to anticommunism and to religious freedom as a Cold War tactic to indict the Soviet bloc, meant the United States allied itself with religious extremists in order to bring down their common atheistic enemy. In the process, conservative political Islam was helped to reassert its position in those places in the Arab world where it had been under pressure.[4]

Paulette Otis attributes the emergence of religion as a critical dimension of twenty-first-century warfare to the failure of other ideas and institutions and religion's power to provide ideological resources supporting social justice and "an ideological basis for social coherence and comprehensiveness" (p. 16). Professor Otis states that the ide-

ologies and corresponding programs of Marxism, communism, fascism, nationalism, and materialism proved unable to provide solutions to the complexities of the world's problems. Conceding that "even capitalism and democracy" had not been successful in some areas of the "so-called Third World," she posits that "the important point today is that much of the world believes that democracy will not work *for them*" (p. 16).The essence of her argument is that the realities of Third World existence combined with such convictions created a vacuum into which entered religion as the default ideology. Professor Otis does not provide examples or case studies to illustrate her argument. She was, of course, writing before the democratic elections in Palestine, which saw victory at the polls for Hamas, a self-declared branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1987 and part of the Palestinian national struggle for liberation, Hamas was declared a terrorist organization by the United States government in 1995. Most informed commentators do not interpret the political ascendancy of Hamas as a consequence of Islam becoming the default ideology for Palestinians. Apart from drawing in poverty-stricken Palestinians through its welfare services, most commentators view its electoral victory as a protest against the corruption of Fatah and its adherence to western-sanctioned programs that failed to deliver the promised progress and justice.

Professor Otis's essay, as is true of the other essays, does not consider the contribution of the United States to the rise of political Islam and its becoming the main ideological and organized means through which popular discontent and dissent could be expressed, albeit as a default option. In the twentieth century, religious extremists in the Middle East lacked a popular base as most Muslims rejected Islamist ideology and their modes of operating. The rise of right-wing political Islam was eased by the success of U.S. policies in eroding the left and progressive nationalism, a process enhanced when the credibility of socialism further suffered from the demise of the Soviet system. In the various treatments of religious extremism, the contributors do not tackle the combination of circumstances that converged to unleash anti-western sentiments throughout the Middle East--above all, the role of neoliberal deregulation in fostering economic problems and social insecurity among Muslim peoples who identified with the perceived humiliation inflicted on Palestinians and Iraqis, who are regarded as victims of western policies. The lack of progress and reform and the continuation of oppressive regimes known to be allied with and supported by the west further inflamed popular anti-western sentiments. Western intervention and implicit western support for the status quo served only to exacerbate such feelings and helped galvanize support for the most ardent opposition, which in the absence of secular left-liberal alternatives meant the Islamists.[5]

Pursuing a theme that features in a number of the other essays, Professor Otis argues that religion has been marginalized in the conventional discourse of international relations, which prioritizes political and economic factors. Certainly scholars of international relations failed to give a proper accounting of the role assumed by religion in the international arena and little enough attention was paid to it as an important component of international relations prior to 9/11. However, despite popular assumptions about secularization, governments throughout the world during the twentieth century, and certainly no less than in preceding centuries, were all too aware of the extent and reach of religious influence and power, and did not neglect religion, nor its representatives or adherents. In the Cold War, U.S.-Soviet rivalry was endowed with a critical religious dimension that had profound consequences for religion and religious leaders on both sides of the East-West divide. It should not be forgotten that many, George W. Bush included, still credit Pope John Paul II with a leading role in the disintegration of the Soviet bloc.[6] Throughout the Cold

War religious actors sought to influence foreign policy, and in doing so promote their own interests and agendas, through wielding soft power. Although Joseph Nye, who coined the term "soft power," made only passing mention of religion, it was to observe that: "for centuries, organized religious movements have possessed soft power."[7] The idea of religious soft power, following Joseph Nye, is that religious actors may, firstly, seek to influence foreign policy and international relations more generally by encouraging governments to pursue foreign policies and programs that reflect their values, norms, and beliefs, and, secondly, by seeking to build transnational religious networks to further their goals.

Interestingly, owing to its provenance, ***Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*** could be viewed as an example of soft power, illustrating how religious actors seek to influence foreign policy by persuading the public and their elected officials that religion is possessed of the means to help resolve international crises and promote global peace and justice. That makes the book worthy of study, not just for the intrinsic interest and merit of individual essays, but for the way in which it is part of a larger process in which religious actors have organized to influence what others do through direct and indirect methods. Equally, rank-and-file Christian evangelicals' usual preoccupation is with domestic rather than foreign policy and by suggesting religion could have as much power and influence over the former as it does the latter could be one means of keeping them in the internationalist fold, and the Republican Party. Interestingly, in the introduction, Douglas Johnston, founder and president of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy in Washington D.C., suggests creating the post of "religion attaché" within the U.S. Foreign Service, to be assigned to countries where religion has particular salience. The stated objective being to help U.S. missions deal more effectively with complex religious issues that typically get short shrift because of other seemingly more pressing business" (p. x).

Ultimately, based on a worldview and a series of assumptions and premises that seem to suggest a political agenda for domestic consumption, this is a book with too many elephants in the room. Not least of these is the failure to discuss the less positive features of U.S. foreign policy as they impact on poor countries, not to mention Christian Right activity in the developing world related to HIV and family planning or the Christian fundamentalists who see in the Palestine-Israel conflict the fulfillment of biblical destiny.

The absence of a wider analysis serves to diminish the usefulness of this book in contributing to crucial questions about religion in the international arena, as both a cause of and a solution to current conflicts and crises, as well as whether or not most of the problems confronting the world today are indeed religious.

Notes

[1]. Institute for Global Engagement website, http://www.globalengage.org/edu/cfia/index.html, accessed 11/19/06.

[2]. Robert Seiple, "Why Brandywine Review?" ***Brandywine Review***1.1 (2003): 1-2.

[3]. See Robert Booth Fowler and Allen D. Hertzke, ***Religion and Politics in America: Faith Culture and Strategic Choices*** (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995); Madeleine Albright, ***The Mighty and the Almighty*** (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006).

[4]. Mahmood Mamdani, ***Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*** (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004).

[5]. Gilbert Achcar, ***The Clash of Barbarisms: September 11 and the Making of the New World Disorder*** (New York: New Monthly Review Press, 2002).

[6]. "Bush Applauds John Paul II for Opposing Totalitarianism," ***Associated Press***, April 9, 2005.

[7]. Joseph Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Washington: Public Affairs, 2004), 98.