ABSTRACT

This paper intends to explore the complex and often implicit relationship between religion, humanitarianism and secularized politics. The research consists of two major parts. The first chapter analyses the theoretical approaches to the role of religion and faith-based decision-making in modern international politics. It does that by discussing three particular topics: the neglected connection between religion and IR scholarship, major theories of secularization, and the influences of religion on international politics. The second chapter intends to move the research from the level of philosophical and abstract towards more practical levels of analysis. It focuses on the issue of faith-based humanitarianism and the substantial role faith-based organizations play in international politics. The research points to two related conclusions. First, while acknowledging that secular humanism is a historic civilizational achievement, it can be argued that it is impossible and misleading to strive for clear-cut segregation of religious and secular spheres of life. Second, faith-based humanitarianism is one of the phenomena which increasingly challenge this artificial dichotomy between the sacred and the secular by bringing religion back into public discourse. The paper does not suggest that the dominant paradigm of international relations be abandoned. It rather calls for its modification in order to account for religion which norms and values can be used to support the existing regime of human rights and institutions. Faith-based organizations should be thus seen as a potential channel leading towards the reconciliation of the sacred and the secular.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................iii
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................iv
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................v
Dedication .........................................................................................................................................vi
Introduction ......................................................................................................................................i

Chapter 1: The role of religion and faith-based decision-making in international politics ..........4
    1.1 Religion and IR scholarship: Neglected connection .............................................................4
    1.2 Discourse of secularization/secularism: Taylor vs. Asad ..................................................7
    1.3 The influences of religion on international politics ..............................................................18

Chapter 2: Faith-based humanitarianism: Religious within secular ...........................................22
    2.1 Faith-based humanitarian organization and what about them ............................................22
    2.2 The Bible and the Flag: Missionary beginnings of FBOs ....................................................23
    2.3 The shift from missionary to aid and development objectives ............................................27
    2.4 FBO controversy: Between proselytism and philanthropism ............................................30
    2.5 Religious humanitarianism and the politics today .................................................................35
    2.6 The future of FBOs: Politicization and the faith-factor .......................................................42

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................46

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................................49
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.6: De Cordier’s faith-factor graph................................................................. 45
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Byers, for his support and always prompt and constructive feedback regarding my writing. Also, many thanks to Dr. Tsering Shakya for acting as my second reader and for navigating me through many fruitful discussions that preceded the writing of my thesis. Finally, I am endlessly grateful to my family and friends for believing in me and being by my side throughout the whole course of my studies.
DEDICATION

Mojim roditeljima
Introduction

Current international politics is largely framed within the dominant secular humanism paradigm. Rooted in the Age of Enlightenment and rational reasoning, this paradigm insists on a clear divide between the sacred and the secular, irrational and rational, faith and reason, church and state, private and public. And yet, the modern world order is inevitably intertwined with religion: on the one hand, religion played an essential role in European expansion and colonialism, while on the other, religion dimensions can still be found in the realms of current global ethics and liberal international order (Barnett 2008). What relates both arguments is the phenomenon of humanitarianism, especially the one based on religious principles and values. This paper intends to explore the complex and often implicit relationship between religion, humanitarianism and secularized politics.

The paper consists of two major parts and consequently has two goals. The first part explores the role of religion and faith-based decision-making in international politics by discussing three particular topics: the neglected connection between religion and IR scholarship, major theories of secularization, and the influences of religion on international politics. More precisely, the chapter primarily aims to analyze and deconstruct the discourse of secularization which typically serves as an ideological cornerstone of modern international politics and a building block of national identities. This will be done by examining the largely opposing perspectives of two prominent theorists of religion and society: Charles Taylor elaborates on the necessity of secularism for democratic regimes, while Talal Asad claims that a secular state does not guarantee toleration and that the argument concerning the loss of the social significance of religion no longer holds.
While this chapter strives to conceptualize the contemporary theoretical positions on the often implicit role of religion in secularly oriented world politics, the second chapter intends to move the research from the level of philosophical and abstract towards more practical levels of analysis. It focuses on the issue of faith-based humanitarianism, a modern phenomenon which can be seen as one actual manifestation of often concealed and overlooked interrelation between religion and politics. Relatedly, the essay aims to explore the ambivalence of faith-based humanitarianism and the substantial role played by faith-based organizations (FBOs) within the supposedly secular framework of international politics. Faith-based humanitarianism can be seen as a challenging concept for international relations (IR) theory because it strives to bridge the artificial sacred/secular dichotomy and bring religion back into public discourse. The term faith-based humanitarianism carries the legacy of missionary colonialism, often actually serving as a vehicle of new imperialism. Nevertheless, faith-based humanitarianism can also serve as a basis for social capital, conflict resolution and development, as has been demonstrated in many cases (e.g., Latin American liberation theology, Aceh tsunami relief, the Balkans postconflict reconciliation).

This paper argues that 1) the discourse of religious exclusiveness and proselytism is largely imposed on faith-based organizations: FBOs are not rigidly marked by their root tradition, but are willing to adjust to new conditions and cultural/religious/social surroundings; 2) FBOs are important players in the international community’s response to humanitarian emergencies: they have an overlooked potential for contributing in the broad field of humanitarian aid and development, social reform and conflict resolution; and 3) the secular and religious elements of the international order are not (and do not need to be) as cleanly segregated as many IR theorists presume. There are substantial religious dimensions of the supposedly secular liberal order and IR theory should re-recognize the importance of religion in government
and international organizations policy. Faith based humanitarianism is one way of reconciling the sacred and the secular.
Chapter 1:

The role of religion and faith-based decision-making in international politics

1.1 Religion and IR scholarship: Neglected connection

International relations theories have traditionally not given much attention to religion (Glazier 5). Even today, religion is largely overlooked by IR scholarship, and sometimes portrayed as the source of considerable evil. According to Jonathan Fox (2001), there are several reasons for this perception. First, modern social sciences have their origin in the discourse of rejection of religion: the Age of Enlightenment tradition promoted rational explanations of human behaviour and the official separation of church and state. Many influential social theorists, such as Voltaire, Auguste Comte, Emil Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx, anticipated the declining and ultimate disappearance of religion from the world’s stage, thus setting the foundation for secularization theory. Also contributing to the emerging dichotomy between the religious and the secular was a shift in 19th century international law from natural law sources (largely based on the Christian belief and scripture) to positive law sources (treaties, customary international law). Rational choice theory, in the form of the economic theory of religion, then arrived in the 20th century as a new trend in the sociology of religion: it proposed the idea of a “free market of religions” ruled by consumerist “cost-benefit” logic. A final reason for the avoidance of religion in the social sciences studies is a problem related to its quantitative measurement: since religious beliefs and observance are some of the hardest variables to measure, it is exceptionally difficult to determine the influence of religion on political, economic, cultural and other social issues. This obstacle has contributed to the scarcity of IR literature on religion (Fox 54-59).
Until the last decade of the 20th century, religion was mostly absent from IR literature and the “Western myopia on [the] subject of religious power has been astounding”, as Scott Appleby noted (2003:2). However, the early 1990s recognized the increased significance of religion in the public sphere, together with the role religion plays on the level of international politics (Hackett 2005). An upsurge in literature on religion and politics commenced with an influential and controversial account written by Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*. Huntington’s thesis about “civilizational” and cultural differences acting as the major factors in future conflicts and world divisions attracted both ardent proponents and critics.1 After his study was published, numerous studies on the role of religion in international affairs started bringing myriads of related issues to the table. To name just most significant works from that period, *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, edited by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (1994), investigates the negligence of religion in IR scholarship and emphasizes the importance of religion in international diplomacy; Jose Casanova’s influential study, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) and Rodney Stark’s “Secularization, R.I.P.” (1999), reconsider the relationship between religion and modernity and revaluate the classic secularization thesis; Scott Appleby’s and Martin E. Marty’s compilation *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies and Militance* (1991) collects essays around the controversial issue of religion fundamentalism and global conflict.

Particularly after the September 11th terrorist attacks demonstrated to the world the destructive potential of religious ideologies, old Huntingtonian debate regained the momentum

---

1 Many scholars (Fox and Sandler 2004, Hackett 2005) argued that Huntington’s thesis came as an oversimplification of international relations theory. The “civilizational” formulation, or any other formulation based on ethnicity, nationalism, religion, should be acknowledged as an important factor but not the paradigmatic force that defines international politics (Fox and Sandler 171).

and the Western scholarship saw the escalation of studies on Islam, religion and violence. On the other hand, this tragic event increased the awareness about the ambivalent potential of the sacred in international affairs and revealed the necessity of better understanding the variety of religious interpretations and beliefs (Hackett 2005). In the first decade of the 21st century, IR scholarship devoted closer attention to religious issues. The integration of religion into the study of international affairs became one of the crucial issues (e.g. Jonathan Fox’s and Shmuel Sandler’s Bringing Religion into International Relations, 2004), while the other was devoted to exploring the religious dimensions of specific diplomatic efforts, such as conflict transformation and peacebuilding (e.g. Faith-based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik, edited by Douglas M. Johnston in 2003). Additionally, a new journal, The Review of Faith and International Affairs, has recently appeared as “the first and still only journal devoted exclusively to analysis and commentary regarding the role of religion—for good or ill—in global affairs”. Some other works dealing with issues relevant to IR, but not strictly considered as IR, have started searching for new paradigms to reframe and better comprehend the changing religio-secular dynamics of the globalized world. For instance, Talal Asad’s influential book, The Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity, argues that religion has always be an important factor in the sphere of global politics and power, and that the religious and the secular are more profoundly intertwined than it is usually perceived (Hackett 2005). The popular doctrine of secular

---


humanism, which dominated the fields of the Western social sciences for decades, has come under the challenge.

After providing a concise overview of IR literature concerning religion, this chapter will further examine the concepts of secularization and secularism with particular reference to the modern nation state. By contrasting the theoretical perspective of two prominent scholars, Charles Taylor and Talal Asad, some light will be shed on the contemporary philosophical discourses of the sacred and the secular. Taylor’s understanding of secularism and its connection to the modern democratic nation-state will be discussed by analyzing his views on 1) the origins of secularism in Protestant Reformation, 2) “modern social imaginary” and the necessity of secularism for democratic regimes, and 3) challenges to secularism seen as a “part of a broader project” of reframing self-understanding of modern age humanity. While Taylor sees religion in the public sphere as dangerous due to its exclusionary potentials and tendencies, Asad argues that religion can still play a positive role in modern democratic societies. His analysis, which relies on the interrelating concepts of nationalism, secularism and religion, suggests that we should look into complex socio-political realities and the particular circumstances under which power relations shape our understanding of both the religious and the secular. In order to better comprehend the role of the religious in international politics, it is necessary to start with a basic analytical distinctions between three relevant and mutually related concepts: the secular, secularization, and secularism.

1.2 Discourse of secularization/secularism: Taylor vs. Asad

Within popular contemporary discourses, the meaning of the term secular is taken to be self-evident. Indeed, as Edward Baily writes, “[s]ecular is really quite easy to define! […] It
always means, simply, the opposite of ‘religious’—whatever that means’ (1997:18). Searching for more helpful description, Jose Casanova (2007) defines the secular as a “central modern category—-theologico-philosophical, legal-political, and cultural- anthropological—[used] to construct, codify, grasp and experience a realm or reality differentiated from the religious”. In terms of institutional divides, the religious usually refers to ecclesiastical institutions and churches while the sphere of the secular includes state, economy, science, art, entertainment, health and welfare, etc.

According to Casanova (2007), the term secularization usually refers to supposed empirical-historical patterns of transformation and differentiation between these two institutional spheres. The term has been used since the French Revolution to denote a process of transferring property from the control of ecclesiastic authorities to civil jurisdiction. As it spread into the other spheres of life, is was soon employed as an ideological concept referring to “the liberation of modern man from religious tutelage”, or to the process of “dechristianization” and “paganization” (Berger 1967:106). The concept gained its academic credibility and full significance in the 1960s and 1970s, becoming a bone of contention for scholars in various social sciences. More recently, the notion of secularization has been mostly understood to have two different meanings: the decline of religious beliefs and practices, and retreat of religion from the public space. In this respect, there are two kinds of theories on the process of secularization (De Leon & van Leeuwen 2003:78). The first theory argues that it was the development of science that caused the decline of personal faith, which in turn led to the marginalization and disappearance of religion from the public sphere. The second theory suggests that the disappearance of religion from the public sphere resulted in the decline of personal faith: secularization arose due to institutional changes in the modern world, as well as the functional differentiation of relatively autonomous systems such as economy, politics, and science. Such
changes ultimately resulted in religion becoming only another subsystem rather than a dominant world view.

*Secularism*, on the other hand, refers more specifically to the kind of secular world-views established and promoted through “historico-philosophical and normative-ideological state projects, projects of modernity and cultural programs or as an epistemic knowledge regime [...] assumed as the taken for granted normal structure of modern reality” (Casanova 2007). Most common historical forms of modern secularism, Casanova argues, exist as various normative models of legal-constitutional separation of the secular state and religion, various types of cognitive differentiation between science, philosophy and theology, or various models of practical differentiation between law, morality and religion.

According to Taylor, secularization is an important element of a general process of modernization; however, it is particularly strongly tied with Christian history, one of the hallmarks of Western modernity. In his *Varieties of Religion Today*, Taylor argues that the “Western march toward secularity” is rooted in the process of Protestant Reformation and the turn to personal religion (2002:13). The shift from institutional religiousness to inner personal commitment of believers came together with rejection of any kind of external mediation in communication with God. The locus of religion became identified with first-hand individual experience, not with corporate life, which caused religion to become “fragile and contested” (2002:7). This process fits a broader cultural pattern of modernity which implies several major features: first, the development of multicultural tendencies of Western societies; second, the erosion of the project of Christendom due to the binding of Christianity with a particular society; and finally and most importantly, the rise of new kinds of religiousness and spirituality, including atheism and agnosticism, which appeared as a consequence of the weakening of the institutional forms of religion (De Leon & Van Leeuwen 2003:79).
The need for defining a secular space, according to Taylor, originates from the medieval Christian religious wars against heretics, or, more precisely, from a search for how to overcome these wars. This phenomenon caused a demand for rules of peace and legitimate authorities independent from confessional allegiance and limited religious frameworks (1998:32). In his “Modes of Secularism” (1998), Taylor points out to the three possible strategies for achieving peaceful existence and political order: the common ground strategy, the independent political ethic strategy and the overlapping consensus strategy. The first strategy is based on the promotion of “common ground values” which would encompass only those doctrines common to all Christian sects, or even to all theists. These universal religious beliefs, similar to Aquinas’s natural laws (Taylor 1998:33), would ultimately unify humanity beyond the bounds of Christianity. The second strategy looks for a ground autonomous from divisive religious values and based on independent political ethics (i.e. doctrines of human rights, sovereignty, freedom and equality). However, the modern social diversification of both religious and secular spheres undermines both of the aforementioned approaches. This leads Taylor to propose a third model, called the overlapping consensus mode, which accepts that a universally agreed basis of human behaviour cannot exist, either on political or religious grounds. This model actually aims to “respect the diversity of [human] understanding, while building consensus on the ethic” (1998:38). Taylor argues not only that the overlapping consensus model can be seen as most desirable one, but it actually must be followed.

Taylor argues that the inescapability of secularism flows from the nature of the modern democratic nation state (Taylor 1998). He accepts Benedict Anderson’s view of nation-states as “imagined communities” which are embedded in particular kind of modern social imaginary (38). In order to explain what he considers as the “modern imaginary”, Taylor introduces a crucial distinction between two phases in Western history concerning the presence of religion
(and God) in the public sphere (De Leon & Van Leeuwen 2003:79). He argues that there has been a gradual shift from hierarchical (vertical), mediated-access societies to horizontal, direct-access societies. In the first type of society, there was a clear distinction between the “realm of the sacred” and the “realm of the profane”. God’s presence was in the sacred (in terms of holy spaces, times and actions) while people had only limited access to this enchanted world: they could have reached the sacred only through particular mediators like kings and priests (Taylor 2002: 65). The second type of society developed from the Reformation and Modernity as a more horizontal social imaginary. Here, the sacred lost its explicit and exclusive place and the divine was no longer to be reached through mediators; instead, it became available through broader and more accessible social structures.

The modern social imaginary assumes a shift that has come about in various forms: the rise of the public sphere, the development of market economies; the rise of the modern citizenship state, as well as the decline of the significance of religion. According to Taylor, the heterogeneity of hierarchical belonging was abolished through these modes of secularism and a “direct-access society” was established on the basis of equality and individualism (1998:40). Modern ideology of nationalism presented a new order of thought and new way of thinking about people and how they may configure themselves as societies. Secular worldview changed the possible ways of imaging social wholes. Instead of allowing only particular persons or agencies to maintain the privileged role of mediators, modern society allows all the members to be “immediate to the whole”. However, it also requires commitment from its citizens (1998:41-43). In other words, “the modern democratic state needs a healthy degree of [...] patriotism” in order to create a strong sense of common identity, but also to rise above the other poles of personal identities stemming from family, class, gender and particularly religion (1998:44). At this point Taylor deems secularism as a necessity for the democratic life of religiously diverse
societies. Ethnic and religious identities strongly unite people as well, but they also tend to exclude minorities from public debate and promote intolerance. For Taylor, “the logic of non-secular or exclusionary regimes in the democratic age is frightening” and that is why modern age makes secular regimes required (1998:47).

Taylor sees secularization “as part of a broader project that attempts to reframe the questions concerning the self-understanding of our age” (De Leon & Van Leeuwen 2003:80). Here, he points to two crucial characteristics of this phenomenon: it is schizophrenic and irreversible. Taylor believes that the secular age is schizophrenic - or better, deeply cross-pressured - because people still manifest an attraction to religion although they are mostly and officially self-distanced from it (2007:727). At the same time, society remains dissatisfied with the exclusive humanism of modernity and its rejection of any notion of transcendence (De Leon & Van Leeuwen 2003:80). For these reasons, a number of dilemmas and demands founded on both faith and exclusive humanism occur in modern secular age (Taylor 2007:723-727). The process of secularization is also an irreversible phenomenon, states Taylor, “because it is also the process of our creating a world in which Christendom is disappearing from the horizon” (De Leon & Van Leeuwen 84). The retreat of Christendom in the modern world is obvious, although religion persists: deeper engagement with religion happens today in various forms of spiritual life with a strongly emphasized individualistic component. In this new framework, Taylor predicts, connectedness between faith and national/political identities will gradually but undoubtedly weaken (2007:518).

5 Nevertheless, while concluding that the secularism of overlapping consensus is the only available mode for modern democracy, Taylor still recognizes that secularism can be seen as a contested sphere and potentially act as a source of new kinds of conflicts. Modern democratic patriotism has developed its own ethical core which is not solely rooted in the earlier independent ethic – particular elements of history, language, culture and religion are also likely to be included. For that reason, issues like abortion or state funding of confessional schools may still become matter of heated public debate.

6 By Christendom Taylor means a civilization where society and culture are profoundly informed by Christian faith (2007:514).
Despite his valuable contribution to the secularization theory, a number of questions are left unanswered by Taylor, such as: What is the place of religion in the public spheres of non-western modern societies? What about religious fundamentalism, ethno-phyletism and the resurgence of radicalized religion all around the world? Does the politicization of religion necessarily threaten modernity? How important is the role of religious belief in the age of secularity, and how stable are our secular modern imaginaries?

Talal Asad provides a valuable discussion of some of Taylor’s concepts and strives to find the answers to these questions. His general approach to issues of secularism is marked by questioning the universal validity of the concept. In his Formations of the Secular (2003), Asad argues that the secular should not be thought of as the space in which real human life gradually emancipates itself from religion; today, the secular is a part of a doctrine of secularism, a phenomenon whose genealogy can be traced through the Renaissance doctrine of humanism (191). Concerning the notion of secularization, while it has been widely understood that this idea is central for the development of modernity, in both descriptive and normative terms, Asad criticizes all three basic elements of this thesis. In doing so, he concurs with Jose Casanova⁷ that political-religion does not necessarily threaten modernity; however, he also believes that the principles of differentiation and the loss of religion’s social significance no longer hold. The entry of religion into political debates creates “modern hybrids” and neither religion, economy, education nor science remain autonomous. As a result, Asad asserts that social significance of religion is certainly not decreasing (2003:181-182).

Religion can still play a positive role in modern society and can be compatible with modernity, Asad suggests. Yet, this applies only to those religions that are able and willing to

⁷ Casanova (1994) points to three elements of secularization usually taken as essential to the development of modernity: 1) separation of R from politics, economy, science, due to increasing differentiation of social spaces; 2) the privatization of R within its own sphere; and 3) the declining social significance of religious belief, commitment and institutions.
enter the public sphere for the purpose of pursuing rational debate, participating in a liberal discourse and making a distinction between law and morality. For Asad, secularism cannot be understood as merely the “division between public and private realms that allows religious diversity to flourish in the latter. It can itself be a carrier of harsh exclusions” (Connolly 2006:75). Everything depends on how religion becomes public, that is, whether it contributes to the development of civil society and public debate - as in Poland and the US- or it becomes a rebellion against modernity –as in Egypt and Iran (Asad 2003:182). The public sphere itself should not be simply understood as a forum for rational debate but also as a space necessarily articulated by power. Specifically, for Asad, this denotes the idea that free public debate is a liberal virtue and is shaped by various limits, which can be imposed by both external factors, through laws and conventions, and the internal limits intrinsic to particular speaking and listening subjects. According to Stock (2006), Asad believes it is “nonsense to want to allow religion to enter the public sphere but to limit its movements inside it: once religion is ‘in’, it will interfere with anything in terms of its own rather than in terms of the generally accepted public discourse”. Modern society’s public sphere is still very diverse with regard to the system of its moral values. The only option religious spokespersons have in that situation is to act as secular politicians do in liberal democracy, that is, to manipulate given conditions and use a variety of communicative skills and devices (Asad 1999:183).

Contrary to Taylor’s optimistic views of the modern secular national state as an “imagined community” and a “direct-access society” with absence of hierarchy, Asad argues that the reality is actually much more complex: first, even in so-called democratic societies, there is no such space in which all citizens can negotiate freely and equally with one another and second,

---

8 When religion enters into the public sphere, several challenges arise: first, different religious concepts and practices shape the ability of participating subjects to be publicly responsive; second, new discourses are introduced into the public sphere that may threaten or even change the pre-existing structure of the public sphere; and third, the public sphere will likely become a site of conflict over non-negotiable human rights, like a woman’s right to an abortion (Asad 2003:185).
an ordinary citizen is not allowed to participate the process of decision making as the elites do (2003:2-4). Although both scholars take secularization as a way of transcending different and particular identities built on class, gender and religion into a unifying experience (which is, according to Taylor, based on “citizenship as the primary principle of identity”), Asad is rather sceptical about that mediating character of the modern imaginary. Taylor’s concept of a coherent and undisturbed social imaginary should be by definition widely shared in society. However, even if he himself does not believe that all members of a society necessarily share a same social imaginary, this remains unexplained in Taylor’s account. As Stock (2006) observes, Taylor neglects to specify whether it is possible for different moral orders to exist in society and what the reaction of society would be: transformation of a social imaginary or exclusion of non-mainstream and disobedient groups?

For Taylor, secularism should provide a basis for communal identity and shared social values. More precisely, he argues that secularism of overlapping consensus as the only available mode for modern democratic nation-state. He argues that religion in the public sphere is a potential source of conflict and violence because religious motives are easily appealed to in order to limit individual rights and freedoms of citizens. In order to be successful, democratic regimes must be secular, while religious identities with their exclusionary tendencies are to be overshadowed by citizenship identity based on a “healthy degree of patriotism”.

Asad is not persuaded by Taylor’s explanation that secularism is based on a society characterized by stability, certainty and prosperity and that it is a necessary precondition for democracy. Taylor points to religious texts and religious ideology as a motive for violence, which often results in censorship of religious discourse or at least its prevention from expression in the public sphere. For instance, the Muslim world has been largely criticized for its alleged incapability to embrace secularism, enter modernity and break with its violent roots. However,
this view ignores historical evidence about Muslim societies that existed prior to the age of secularity, which explicitly recognized and even embraced the existence of other beliefs through the Millet system. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that a “secular state [itself] does not guarantee toleration; it puts into play different structures of ambition and fear” (Asad 2003:8). Asad warns that there are various secular agents who also have either experienced or caused acts of violence. For example, the US, with its model of secular constitution, has experienced waves of intolerance and violence (as, for instance, the experience of the anti-slavery movement, and subsequent civil rights movements suggests), while, on the other hand, it was also deeply involved in setting the stage for fundamentalism religious violence in Afghanistan which erupted at the end of 20th century. It is usually hard to find a clear and single motive for a violent action, Asad notes, as it sometimes involves networks of actors and a complex plot.

The authority of religion may actually be strengthened by rhetoric that invokes a national community as a religious one. Asad notes that sharp separation between the religious and the secular produces the paradoxical claim that although religion is regarded as alien to secular, the secular is also seen to have generated religion (2003:194). Indeed, nationalism can be approached from the perspective that presents it as “humanist religion”. Benedict Anderson’s famous thesis – supported by Taylor as well - explains secular nationalism as an “ideological construct that includes in the present an imagined realm of the nation as a community with a ‘worldly past’. Nationalism employs highly abstract concepts of time and space to tell a particular story, a story about the nation as a natural and self-evident unity whose members share a common experience” (194). However, Asad is not convinced that nationalism should be understood as a religion of nation-state: although it is evident that there are some connections

---

9 One of proponents of this idea is Julian Huxley who believes that “humanist religion” is to replace traditional theological religion. After some devastating and violent forms such as Nazism and Communism, nationalism is appearing as the highest level of the evolution of religious forms (Asad 2003:188).
between secular rituals and modern political values and that modern nation employs elements of religious languages and practices, that does not mean that nationalism has religious origin (189).

On the other hand, Asad warns, some religious movements, like Islamism, can be regarded as nationalist or secular in nature. Here, he discusses how the contemporary Islamic revival can be easily seen as “crypto-nationalism” or “cultural nationalism” due to the fact that Islamism has been succeeding Arab nationalism in the contemporary history of the Middle East (199). However, although there are some common motives of Islamists and of Arab nationalists, there are great differences as well: Islamic umma is not an “imagined community”, individuals are not autonomous, and sharia is a system of rules above all individuals. Asad argues that the crucial question to pose here is: What circumstances obliged Islamism to emerge publicly as a political discourse? He concludes that the Islamist preoccupation with state power does not come from its devotion to nationalist ideas but as a response to a state’s inescapable initiative to constitute and regulate legitimate social identities and arenas (200).

Compared to Taylor’s harmonious vision of a modern imaginary based on a principle of citizenship and the secular mode of overlapping consensus, Asad’s perspective on a modern nation-state seems rather depressing, though more realistic than Taylor’s one. For Asad, no one is able to escape the ambitious power of a modern nation-state: it is not a non-hierarchical, free-access society offering equal opportunities for all, as Taylor advances. Rather, the modern state seeks to regulate all aspects of its citizens’ lives, from the most intimate, such as birth and death, to the most public (199). Furthermore, the democratic character of a modern state does not necessarily depend on its secular orientation, as Taylor would argue; there are too many examples testifying to the complexity of this issue and pointing to ever-present, although sometimes obscured, power structures underlying every kind of society. Concerning the place of religion in such circumstances, Asad argues that despite obvious similarities that many
theological and political concepts share in structure, no hasty connection or intuitive parallel should be made between religion and politics: the practices these concepts organize differ according to the specific historical formations in which they occur (191). Still, as Elizabeth Shakman Hurd points out, “[d]efining the secular and the religious is a political task. Religious beliefs and practices are interwoven with political authority in complex and changing ways that don’t necessarily align with state boundaries or conventional secularist assumptions” (2008). Taylor’s contribution to discussions of secularism, secularization and the modern nation-state is undeniable; however, he seems to overlook the exhausting complexity of interrelatedness between religion, politics, morality and power.

1.3 The influences of religion on international politics

The preceding discussion on (non)secularized world politics can be complemented with another author’s perspective on the issue of secularism. Mark Juergensmeyer’s thesis that secularism is a Western construct which unsuccessfully seeks (and constantly fails) to separate the religious and temporal spheres. As a reaction to imposed secularism and the modern era, religion actually experiences a revival and becomes a central part of identity formation, which can lead to a new kind of confrontation, both military and ideological. After the end of the Cold War, Juergensmeyer argues, the West seems to need a new “empire of evil to mobilize against”; thus a “new cold war” is emerging in the postmodern era between secular forces and “culture-based politics” (1993:1–2).

Whether or not we agree with Juergensmeyer’s “new cold war” thesis, it can be argued that religion influences international politics in many different ways, as presented by Fox (2001). The first way concerns the role of religion in decision-making. Religious belief systems and
worldviews can influence the outlook and behaviour of policymakers and result in intractable foreign policies; such policies can lead to international incidents and conflicts such as a long-lasting Arab-Israeli conflict rooted in claims over the same territory that are based at least partly on religion (Fox 61-62).

Secondly, in the realm of religion and legitimacy, religion can act as a potential source of normative power. Both domestic and foreign policy can be influenced and legitimated by religion. To draw only on a few illustrative examples, in December 2009, a high court in Germany reaffirmed a ban on shopping on Sundays that aims to protect the Christian idea of Sunday as a day of rest and “spiritual edification”. In modern day Serbia, various kinds of discrimination and intolerance against non-Orthodox Christian churches and many small religious communities are legitimated through the officially privileged position of the Serbian Orthodox Church as primus inter pares (Ilic 21). And if one is to explore the issue of religion and foreign policy, one needs only to look at Tony Blair’s religion-inspired decision to participate in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Bush's invocation of Biblical prophecy to justify the war in Iraq and his description of the “war on terror” as a “crusade” also show that modern concepts of war can have their origins in theological justification. Besides these examples, leaders of persecuted minorities, opposition and independence movements are often religious figures (e.g., Mahatma Gandhi, Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Catholic clergy in Latin America).

---

10 The protection of Sundays in Germany's Basic Law is a holdover from the Weimar Constitution of 1919. Sunday is enshrined in Article 140 of Germany's Basic Law as a day of rest and “spiritual edification” (Gregson 2009).
11 John Burton, Tony Blair's political agent and “mentor” says that [Blair’s] religion gave him a “total belief in what's right and what's wrong”, leading him to see the so-called War on Terror as “a moral cause”. “Tony's Christian faith is part of him, down to his cotton socks. He believed strongly at the time, that intervention in Kosovo, Sierra Leone – Iraq too – was all part of the Christian battle; good should triumph over evil, making lives better” (Wynne-Jones 2009).
12 According to Hamilton’s article, “[i]n 2003 while lobbying leaders to put together the Coalition of the Willing, President Bush spoke to France’s President Jacques Chirac. Bush wove a story about how the Biblical creatures Gog and Magog were at work in the Middle East and how they must be defeated”; the parallel between a holy war and war on terror was made in Bush’s speech at press conference on September 16, 2001.
Finally, as Fox argues, religion is obviously an international issue. It easily crosses states’ borders by playing a role in numerous ethno-religious conflicts which can even draw international military intervention.\textsuperscript{13} Militant religious fundamentalist movements also seek to export their ideologies and reach new members, while theocratic regimes, like the one in Iran, strive to establish themselves often by providing support to some militant groups. Today, thanks to the use of the media, Internet and other new technologies, religious ideas manage to cross borders more easily, which makes these problems more urgent (Fox 67-71).

Beside the issues mentioned above, religion is often related to a myriad of other issues in international politics: human rights and religious rights, enshrined in international documents; nationalism, ethnicity and identity issues; environmentalism, population growth and personal wealth; controversies of modernization and globalization; conflict management, humanitarian interventions and general attitudes on war and peace, to name just a few. Out of these, faith-based humanitarianism seems to be particularly significant for the study of religion and international politics because it challenges the already complex and ambivalent relationship between religion, secular doctrine of human rights and violence.

The doctrine of human rights is usually seen as one of the crucial elements of a secular humanism paradigm. The doctrine is rooted in a core mission of the alleviation of human misery and is widely acknowledged as the “universal and self-evident answer to human cruelty and suffering” (Jansen 2009). Nevertheless, its seemingly universal narrative of how the “modern civilized” world should perceive, judge and deal with violence, reveals, at the same time, an ambiguous stance towards violence as a legitimate means to respond to complex emergencies. Or, as Asad puts it,

\begin{quote}
Human rights are often declared to be a ‘universal ideal’ in opposition to ‘cultural relativism’ and the latter regarded as little more than an excuse for condoning local cruelties. […] Of course everybody generally has an opinion about the customs and beliefs of other people (‘other cultures’), regarding
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} Such was a military intervention in Kosovo in 1999.
them as good, bad, or indifferent. But in my view that fact is less interesting than the question of the kind of violence (moral, legal, military) that judgments justify (2003: 148).

In the light of this controversy, some critics argue that humanitarian intervention and humanitarianism itself no longer work. For instance, David Rieff, the author of *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (2003), believes that the world has become too complex and violent and that humanitarian interventions lack capacity to deal with multifaceted ideological and ethno-religious conflicts. Humanitarianism cannot provide long-term solutions to the underlying problems, neither can it create civil, social and political stability. What Brian D. Lepard suggests instead is to rethink the principles of humanitarian intervention within an ethical framework based upon the “core values” shared among major world’s religions (in Barnett, V. 2003). He argues that positivist legal traditions based upon “state-oriented” values should be accompanied with the more dynamic human rights laws derived from common practices and understandings. By incorporating religio-ethical principles, humanitarianism, usually seen only as the manifestation of a secular worldview (Jansen 2009), would possibly increase its capacities to respond to complex emergencies and provide long term solutions. Faith-based and secular understanding of morality can reinforce one another, as Lepard anticipates, and provide a new framework for humanitarian intervention (in Barnett, V. 2003). Having all this in mind, the following chapter aims to analyze the phenomenon of faith-based humanitarianism as a potential vehicle of overcoming aforementioned setbacks of its secular counterpart, as well as a means of bringing religion back to the supposedly secular public sphere.

14 The seven most popular world religions—Christianity, Baha’i, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism and Chinese “folk religions”—which attract more than seventy-five percent of the world’s population, all include principles based in the integrity of each human being and responsibility for one another, with special obligations toward the poor, the vulnerable and the victims of oppression or tyranny (in Barnett, V. 2003).
Chapter 2:

Faith-based humanitarianism: Religious within secular

2.1 Faith-based humanitarian organization and what about them

Today, it is widely acknowledged that religious organizations, primarily those influenced by Christian theology and ethics, helped to create modern humanitarianism in the early nineteenth century and have shaped its principles and endeavours ever since. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are widespread today and are involved in various kinds of humanitarian projects, enterprises, and programs from Californian evangelicals running HIV/AIDS treatment centers in Rwanda to Islamic agencies based in London running pediatric clinics in Egypt (Barnett 2008). There is no generally accepted definition of faith-based organizations; however, as Ferris notes, they are usually characterized by having one or more of the following characteristics: affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; a governance structure based on religious beliefs or affiliation and/or decision-making processes based on religious values (Ferris 312). Common knowledge of faith-based agencies is mostly limited to what we know about Christian organizations; we have very little knowledge about religiously-inspired organizations outside of Christianity, such as Islamic charitable and philanthropic organizations. There are various obstacles in perceiving and understanding faith-based humanitarianism, from epistemological pitfalls deriving from the exclusionist dualism between religious and secular, to common ignorance of religious traditions, beliefs and practices and, consequently, their different assistance portfolios. According to Barnett (2008), numerous questions need to be posed in order to grasp the complexity of this issue: How do different religious traditions vary in terms of their
understanding of humanitarian action? How do faith and secular organizations differ and do they act differently when they are in the field? Does the presupposed differentiation between “faith” and “secular” means that “secular” agencies’ staff are without religious commitment or spiritual beliefs? Finally, how do faith traditions evolve in their humanitarian practices?

This chapter intends to examine the role of faith-based humanitarian organizations, particularly Christian and Muslim organizations, within the secular framework of international politics. The chapter looks into the following issues: the shifts in historical development of FBOs, FBOs as agents of proselytism and philanthropism, and the relationship between religious humanitarianism and the politics today as well as in the future. It will be argued that faith-based organizations are, together with secular humanitarian agencies, important players in the broad field of humanitarian aid and development. Despite numerous challenges they encounter, such as alleged and actual attempts of proselytization, FBOs will be approached and analyzed as particularly salient manifestation of unavoidable interconnectedness of religious and secular dimensions of world politics.

2.2 The Bible and the Flag: Missionary beginnings of FBOs

In order to properly approach the modern-day faith-based organizations in their relation to humanitarian assistance it is necessary to look into their missionary beginnings and relation to the Western imperial expansion. It is widely believed that Western Christianity was closely connected to the colonizing and civilizing mission of the West. Many unambiguously consider the “West” as “Christian” and believe that colonialism was a power which gave missionaries both confidence and the ability to move into unknown and hostile lands. In Barnett’s words, “missionary activity was the central embodiment of the cultural and religious expansion of
Europe” (Barnett 2008). Nevertheless, in his famous account, *The Bible and the Flag*, Brian Stanley questions the orthodoxies of this general historical knowledge and the common “belief that 'the Bible and the flag' went hand in hand in the history of Western imperial expansion” (Stanley 12). Stanley does not deny or excuse the missionaries' mistakes and failures; he rather argues that the general motive for missionary activity was to promote Christianity, not to establish an empire. Missionary movements of the early nineteenth century did accompany the colonial spread of the West; however, as Stanley posits, evangelicals primarily believed that they had a mission to spread the gospel and give all non-believers the choice to escape “eternal damnation”. By adopting militaristic language like a “crusade against idolatry” and “war for salvation”, evangelical missionaries intended to offer to individuals the opportunity to restore a right relationship with God (Stanley 63-64).

Andrew Porter’s analysis of the connections and disjunctions between Christian religion and the British Empire (1990) also casts some light over this issue. Porter argues that the colonial enterprise necessarily encompassed the “three C's”- Christianity, civilization, and commerce; the questions was only which of the three “either could, or should, be introduced first, in what forms and with what degree of overlap” (1990:93). Missionaries preached and proselytized through activities that were designed to create a morally sober and civilized society through religious institutions. Christianity worked on the introduction of modern schools and modern advances in health, science, and technology (Porter 32-38). Close association between commerce and Christianity also developed but once again motivations appear contradictory: was this a financial system created by missionaries, foreign capitalists, and colonial administrators to efficiently “civilize” the colonial peoples and transform their societies into European ones, or, as argued by Stanley, was it aimed at eliminating the slave trade which many evangelicals and missionaries considered evil?
A “new wave” of missionary activity occurred in the 1830s-1850s. This “new wave”, as Porter notes, resulted from the fact that the missionary societies “were riding high on the back of the humanitarian tide” during that period (Porter 137). At various moments missionaries collided with colonial administrators and foreign capitalists who pursued power and profits and not God (Porter 92). While colonial administrators frequently had little interest in civilizing the population and promoted instead security and commercial interests, missionaries primarily strived to convert and civilize the locals along Christian principles. These tensions between missionaries and foreign capitalists led to a further change in the character of faith missions. In the second half of the 19th century, missions became driven by a “determination to operate in isolated and unfamiliar territory, as far as possible beyond any European influence or colonial rule and at a distance from other missionary bodies” (Porter 224): missionary activities started experiencing a slow transition in objectives, values and principles. The “colonial other” became gradually acknowledged as a fellow human being with qualities and values equal to Christian-European ones. The goal of destroying other cultures and religions in the name of the gospel began to lose legitimacy. Rather the doctrine has grown more towards the creation of the social conditions that would actually improve the social well-being of locals (Stanley 75).\footnote{As one set of 1873 missionary instructions commanded: “Do not ANGLICISE YOUR CONVERTS. Remember that the people are foreigners. Let them continue as such. Let their foreign individuality be maintained. Build upon it, so far as it is sound and good; and Christianize, but do not needlessly change it. Do not seek to make the people Englishmen. Seek to develop and mould a pure, refined Christian character, native to the soil” (Porter, 328).} By the end of the nineteenth century many American missionaries viewed charitable institutions, such as clinics, orphanages and schools, not necessarily as magnets for possible converts but instead as places that could help save societies, not only souls.

The first decades of the 20th century thus saw a rise of "anti-imperialist" sentiment among Protestant missions: their strong conviction in the fundamental unity of humanity put missionaries at odds with the racist and Social Darwinian theorizing underpinning the imperialist
project. In that light Porter concludes that “missionaries might not advocate empire, but were
often associated with institutions or beliefs identified by local peoples with imperialism” (Porter
316).

Still, at the turn of the century, many western political, and economic and religious elites
did not see missionary activity as a separate and distinct feature of Western expansion but rather
as a critical element of it. The World Missionary Conference (WEC) held in Edinburgh, Scotland
in 1910, came as a highly self-conscious and scientific effort to consider how best to Christianize
the world (Barnett 2008). Some of the most important religious, political, and economic figures
of the period participating at the Conference argued that in order to promote the missionary
movement it is necessary to understand the conditions under which a society would be receptive
to the message of the gospel. The complicated relationship between missionaries and political
power was one of the major topics discussed at the WEC. The conference participants agreed
that the colonialism of the Christian powers provided an extraordinary opportunity for spreading
the word of God; they also proposed how missionaries should best respond to the colonial
powers. Within this agenda, identified was a set of rules that resemble contemporary
humanitarian principles. It included a principle of humanity, stating that all individuals had the
right to hear the gospel and have the opportunity to convert; a principle of neutrality and
apolitical approach, discouraging missionaries from confronting the colonial government in
order not to jeopardize access to the local population in need; and finally, a principle of
protection of fundamental rights of the population. There were several particular activities
addressed at the conference: opium and liquor traffic and enforced labour (Report of
Commission IV).
2.3 The shift from missionary to aid and development objectives

Faith-based action, such as the World Missionary Conference, played a significant role in creating the international institutions, law and ethics that are frequently treated, at least today by those in the West, as essentially secular (Barnett 2008). For instance, as Barnett notes, the founders of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) initially saw themselves as part of a civilizing mission working within the existing boundaries of civilized society, that is, Christian Europe. According to John Hutchinson, ICRC reflected the “religious and moral assumptions of the nineteenth century European bourgeoisie...They had naturally assumed that mercy and compassion were uniquely Christian values. The first task for the Red Cross, they believed, was to propagate these virtues more widely within Christendom itself, especially among the common people whose weak moral sense seemed to them to need careful nurture” (as quoted in Barnett 2008). Believing that non-European and non-Christians are not able to comprehend and honour the humanitarian principles adopted by the Red Cross, the ICRC was utterly surprised by the willingness of the Sultan of the Muslim Ottoman Empire to accept the Geneva conventions in 1865. The only debatable point was the decision of the Ottoman Empire that it would not adopt the symbol of the cross but of the Islamic-based crescent and the ICRC authorized this symbolic change.

The early twentieth century marked an increase in the number of humanitarian agencies. Save the Children was established in 1919 and Oxfam International during World War II. With the rise of the human rights regime and end of the Holocaust, the immediate post-World War II period saw a dramatic increase in the number of both secular and Christian organizations responding to humanitarian emergencies, such as Care International, Christian Aid and Church World Service. As Ferris emphasizes, it was various NGOs, and particularly churches, who

The shift from missionary to aid and development objectives of the FBOs was followed by the trend within faith-based relief and development agencies to clearly distinguish themselves from missionary organisations and to form alliances with the secular aid and development movement (Benthall 2006:4). Yet, there are some organisations which continue to combine humanitarian with missionary objectives. For example, as Benthall observes, some Islamic charities, such as Islamic Relief Worldwide, have explicitly decided to specialise in relief and development only, while others, such as the Saudi-based International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) have a mixed agenda. This kind of organization may be problematic in terms of having unchallenged charitable status in the donor country, while it may be suspect or even banned in some other countries. Concerning the IIRO in particular, the main goal of this organization is “reislamisation” of the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union, where it sees an Islamic civilisation as being endangered by communism over past 70 years (Benthall 2006:4).

Even though the relationship between Islam and politics has often been very delicate and problematic, humanitarianism has traditionally been one of the fundamental principles of the Muslim religion. There are various non-state actors operating from or within the Muslim world with an interest in relief. However, according to Benthall, Islamic welfare and modern relief agencies differ greatly among themselves in terms of their relationships with state governments as well as their relief policies: Islamic organizations can work as organs of autocratic states, but can also be entirely independent of government; they may concentrate on proselytizing and spreading the Islamic faith, or they can argue in favour of the concept of individual religious choice and enhanced cooperation with their secular and Christian colleagues; they can classify
themselves as NGOs and use the jargon of Western aid professionals, or they can entirely reject the Western discourse (2003:1). To present briefly just a few, the Aga Khan Foundation is formally a non-denominational development agency strongly identified with the Ismaili community, a Shia Muslim sect which has spread over many parts of East Africa and Asia. The Foundation is well-known for its strong tradition of solidarity and philanthropy, and it enjoys stronger relations with Western NGOs than with more mainstream Muslim organizations. Further, the Edhi Foundation, funded by Muslim alms, is now prominent in emergency relief, medical care and refugee aid. The first Red Crescent society founded by the Ottomans in 1877 involves today 30 national societies; it carries out a wide variety of functions and shares commitment to its principles across different cultural traditions. Finally, the above mentioned International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Founded by the Saudi Arabia-based Muslim World League in 1978, this organization became the largest Islamic relief agency by the 1990s (Benthall 2003:1-2).

Although the world of Islamic philanthropy is as heterogeneous as its Western counterpart, some common features can be identified due to the shared religious tradition that underpins it. Hossam Said (2006) presents the Islamic perspective on humanitarian assistance and points to several major principles. One of them is “zakat”, or charity, which is a compulsory and holy duty for all Muslims and one of the five most important pillars of Islam.\footnote{The compulsory zakat means that 2.5% of one's savings, per annum, are given to the poor (Said 2006).} Another crucial principle is that the humanitarian actions should be performed independent of all religious, racial or political criteria; it should be available to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Although according to the Islamic laws Islamic NGOs are obliged to follow their donors’ wishes, the money from general donations is to be allocated according to the need. Most of the humanitarian work is focused on projects to support orphans and refugees and publishing appeals on their behalf, but it is also devoted to other complex emergencies, natural disasters,
and long-term sustainable development (Said 34-40). It is evident that Islamic NGOs mostly operate in Muslim regimes – Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan, Mali, Egypt, Chechnya, Iraq, Bangladesh – however, that can be explained by a specific donor politics. Eighty-five of donations come from Muslim donors and the NGOs are under legal and religious obligation to spend those donations exactly where the donor has specified.17

Both Said and Benthall note that after September 11th, Islamophobia affected many Muslim individuals and organisations and brought Islamic aid under the shadow of suspicion. Muslim charities and NGOs in particular were affected and many were scrutinised or closed due to their alleged association with terrorism. Although there are some evidence that Osama bin Laden personally funded relief and development programs in Sudan and Afghanistan in the 1990s, clear associations between Islamic charity and anti-Western violence are rare. Organizations such as the Muslim World League, the IIRO, Benevolence International and the Saar Foundation have denied nearly all the published allegations against them. The main problem was a lack of transparency and accountability that made it difficult for some organizations to refute public suspicion (Benthall 2003:4).

2.4 FBO controversy: Between proselytism and philanthropism

Like most religious movements, faith-based organizations are generally inspired by two kinds of motivations: firstly, they seek to grow by convincing others to join them, and secondly, they are often enthusiastic about providing assistance and consolation to disadvantaged members of society, even those living halfway across the world. While the second motivation inspires various global outreach projects, be it providing assistance to the poor, sick and suffering to

17 Said points out that Islamic Relief also works in a number of non-Muslim areas. For example, in the past they worked in Latin America, Serbia, Azerbaijan, while currently they operate in Sri Lanka and South Sudan, often working with local partners to implement projects (Said 42-43).
disaster relief to political activism aiming at social reform, the first motivation may result in missionary efforts. Although this may seem counterintuitive, Michael D. McGinnis argues that oftentimes these two kinds of motivation go together: those destitute and suffering are “good candidates for conversion”: discontented individuals (or even an entire community) are often willing to replace their existing belief and value system with a new and promising one (7-8).

The connection between proselytism and humanitarian assistance is often controversial, particularly when such a connection is perceived to be concealed. Contemporary forms of proselytizing-driven humanitarianism in Russia, China, India, Indonesia and throughout the Islamic world are mostly ascribed to US-based evangelical Christian groups. As McGinnis notes, these efforts of Christian missionaries occasionally generate faith-based diplomatic incidents or even international diplomatic disputes between the US and the countries in which proselytizing operations are taking place. This phenomenon demonstrates that motives that can be exclusively religious in nature may cause consequences having dramatic effects at the political level: the efforts of host governments and cultural elites to restrict the activities of American missionary-oriented faith-based organizations can escalate into serious diplomatic tensions (McGinnis 1).

One of the many diplomatic incidents triggered by the connections between humanitarian aid and proselytism is the controversial enrolment of faith-based organizations in the global tsunami disaster relief project in 2004. According to Inter Action, the largest alliance of U.S. based NGO organizations, some of 22 faith-based organizations providing tsunami aid were missionary organisations (like Southern Baptists' International Mission Board, World Help, Samaritan's Purse and Gospel for Asia) which intended to use the tsunami disaster as a rare opportunity to make converts in hard-to-reach areas (Innovative Minds 2005). In the battle-worn Indonesian province Aceh, one of the most devastated areas, refugee camps have become the “battleground for religious groups”, argues Michael Casey: both Muslim and Christian groups
were distributing their holy books with aid packages. Although this situation could cause raised eyebrows no matter where it took place, in the largest Muslim country in the world the Christian proselytizing was seen as particularly problematic (Casey 2005).

Already sceptical of the motives of the Christian groups, one particularly glaring incident only exacerbated the tensions. World Help, a Virginia-based missionary group, was accused of the attempted conversion of 300 Muslim tsunami orphans by placing them in a Christian children's home in the United States. As exposed in the Washington Post, World Help made no attempt to hide their disdain for Islam and particularly the means in which it is practiced in Aceh; the Aceh people were described as “strict Sunni Muslims” who “have been very instrumental in spreading Islam throughout Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia”.\(^{18}\) In an age of global communication, such information was quickly spread throughout Aceh and turned into outrage and fear that Acehnese tsunami orphans would be trafficked and converted. The result by the Indonesian government was swift and strict; these children would not be placed in a Christian home, and furthermore, any attempts to remove children from the country would be considered abduction. World Help was accused of having the ultimate intention to convert the Acehnese away from Islam. Although the organization denied its intention to abduct 300 Muslim tsunami orphans from the province, it immediately stopped all fundraising efforts for the remaining 250 Indonesian orphaned children (Cooperman 2005).

Whether aid workers are seen as relief providers or evangelists largely depends on how their activities are framed in political discourses and media coverage. By presenting another example of faith-based diplomatic incidents, David Dixon (2005) elaborates on his argument that missionary activity can be framed in different ways depending on its function in actual

\(^{18}\) According to Alan Cooperman and Washington Post, before World Help changed its Web site, it contained an appeal for funds for the Acehnese children described as “homeless, destitute, traumatized, orphaned, with nowhere to go, nowhere to sleep and nothing to eat.” The appeal proposed: “If we can place them in Christian children’s home, their faith in Christ could become the foothold to reach the Aceh people” (Cooperman 2005).
international alliances. He presents two recent international political incidents involving Christian proselytizing in fundamentalist Islamic countries: the first incident happened in Afghanistan in 2001 and involved foreign aid workers who were arrested on charges of spreading Christianity; the second incident took place in Yemen in 2002 when a gunman killed three American hospital workers in a Baptist hospital before surrendering himself to Yemeni officials. In the first case the country was, at the time, a political enemy of the US, while in the second incident, Yemen is a strategic political ally of the US. Dixon analyzes the American media coverage of the two events to show that the way in which the proselytizing and the national government are portrayed changes from one set of news coverage to the other. Although the workers were involved in similar kind of activities, the word choice of “aid workers, not proselytizers” in the case of Afghanistan, versus the label of “missionaries” in the case of Yemen illustrates an attempt at persuasion on the part of the media to further promote the existing political paradigm. This was particularly evident in the post 9/11 world of “you are either with us, or against us”: the Afghani Taliban government was consistently viewed as unjust, irrational, extremist and violent, while Yemen, the US ally in the war on terrorism, was depicted as a “good guy” (Dixon 18-24). In this case, the media coverage of the incidents was driven by political, not religious interests.

The above cases are what makes the sensational news, but the majority of religious nongovernmental organizations are not primarily motivated by the desire to proselytize; rather, they are attempting to provide assistance to those in need. They have been increasingly promoted as “agents of community and rural development and, more recently, as agents of social capital formation” (Candland 356). Religious organizations have a great potential to enrich individuals and communities: religious values and practices are often deeply entwined in daily lives and can
serve as the basis for binding people together, while religious leaders often play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, opinions and behaviour of community members.

However, although faith-based organizations proved to be successful in delivering crucial social services, religious norms and motives are often neglected in the study of their social capital formation, community development and collective action. Fear of religious violence and extremism is a common reason why many social scientists do not treat religion as the basis for progressive social solidarity, argues Candland, who points to the cases of Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand where militant religious ideologies have promoted violence against religious minority communities and atheists, especially communists. Furthermore, not every kind of religiously inspired social bond is able to promote social capital formation. For instance, Catholicism in Southern Italy has a much smaller potential for social change than Catholicism in Latin America, where religious groups have been at the forefront of grassroots activism for social change (Escobar in Candland 356).

FBOs can contribute significantly to the formation of social capital by engaging community development at a grassroots level through the promotion of education, literacy, health, employment, and other public goods that increase social opportunity. The case of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a faith-based NGO which successfully contributes to development initiatives in 20 African countries, demonstrates the actual potential of faith-based initiatives for ensuring greater social justice, human dignity and local ownership. The MCC has a holistic, grassroots approach to addressing development challenges and long-term commitment to poverty reduction and empowerment. Their programmes are directed towards peace education in elementary schools, healthcare, advocacy, income generation, and training of youth groups and women concerning responsible parenting, family planning and sex education, including AIDS issues. The MCC approach and practice proved to have advantages at different levels
comparing to other similar and governmental agencies. In contrast to the traditional missionary model of simply giving, the MCC rather strives on building partnerships, not unilateral dependency relations, with host communities; also, the close relationship with local partner networks allows for transparency in expenditures and accountability. Its respect and support for local cultures and solutions makes it well accepted by members of local communities; similarly, the MCC avoidance of a heavy dependence on government funding results in its actions not being perceived as external intervention (Dicklitch and Rice 665-670).

2.5 Religious humanitarianism and the politics today

The shift in faith-based humanitarian objectives from proselytism towards social development was generally followed by improved relationship with other actors in the humanitarian aid realm, including secular development and peace-building agencies. Frederick Barton, a Director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Geneva, deems this kind of multi-agency cooperation a necessity of the modern time. In order for all actors to join forces in relief, reconstruction or development efforts, it is essential to recognise the significant and unrealized potential of faith-based organizations, in terms of their considerable experience and resources. As he argues, common moral ground with universal human rights causes and principal values can be easily found and provide a significant opportunity for working together (Barton 91). Many FBOs have signed on to the NGO/Red Cross and Red Crescent Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Work. Besides, most of them promote the principle behind Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that, “[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed
with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

These values are shared among the majority of faiths and traditions: the “globalization with solidarity” of Roman Catholicism proposes the building of peaceful unity across the boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity, and class; the concepts of liberation theology in South America focus on social equality; Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist groups are similarly inspired by messages of social justice and compassion (Barton 92). These core values have traditionally served as the source of successful cooperation, particularly in spheres such as health care and children’s and refugee issues. One particularly salient example is the partnership between UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, and over 400 different faith-based organizations in more than 100 countries. In October 2008, a Global Interfaith Network was formed by the representatives of UNFPA and more than 75 religious leaders and representatives of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith-based organizations. The network members agreed to strengthen cooperation between religious leaders, political decision makers and secular civil society with a goal of coping with the global urgencies of maternal death, AIDS and poverty.

Despite these shared values and productive cooperation, obstacles to coordination and further growth of faith-based organizations are also present. They start at the most fundamental level of language and professional vocabularies and extend further into various misperceptions and stereotypes which sometimes prevent groups from working together effectively. Confusion exists even about the types of groups involved and the accompanying terminology. In order to set out a basis for comparison of these organisations across religious and geographical

---

19 This principle is echoed in a statement by one of the world’s largest faith-based, international humanitarian organizations, World Vision International: “We regard all people as created and loved by God. We give priority to people before money, structure, systems, and other institutional machinery. We act in ways that respect dignity, uniqueness, and intrinsic worth of every person.” (World Vision International Website)

20 To name just a few successful partnerships, UNHCR has long worked with faith-based organizations; The World Bank has held a series of meetings in recent years aimed at furthering dialogue with faith institutions; UNICEF has worked successfully with FBOs on projects worldwide (e.g. with the Christian NGO “Children at Risk”); The UNAIDS Secretariat and Caritas Internationalis operates as a confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations present in more than 200 countries and territories (Barton 92-93).

boundaries, Benthall (2006) proposes a typology of faith-based organisations in the context of international development, as sketched out by Gerard Clark:

1. *Faith-based representative organisations or apex bodies* which rule on doctrinal matters, govern the faithful and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors;

2. *Faith-based charitable or development organisations* which mobilize the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups, and which fund or manage programmes which tackle poverty and social exclusion;

3. *Faith-based socio-political organisations* which interpret and deploy faith as a political construct, organising and mobilising social groups on the basis of faith identities but in pursuit of broader political objectives or, alternatively, promote faith as a socio-cultural construct, as a means of uniting disparate social groups on the basis of faith-based cultural identities;

4. *Faith-based missionary organisations* which spread key faith messages beyond the faithful, by actively promoting the faith and seeking converts to it, or by supporting and engaging with other faith communities on the basis of key faith principles;

5. *Faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organisations* which promote radical or militant forms of faith identity engage in illegal practices on the basis of faith beliefs or engage in armed struggle or violent acts justified on the grounds of faith. (Cited in Benthall 2006:5)

According to Benthall, this typology is an excellent start, but problematic in that some FBOs already cut across it by fitting into more than one category or by their own self-declaration. Barton alternatively proposes another line of comparison, that is a distinction between “confessional NGOs,” which officially belong to specific religious groups, and “faith-inspired NGOs,” which base their organizational missions more loosely on certain religious values (94). Still, any kind of typology causes confusion and results in a simple fact that international organizations are often unaware of the full catalogue of faith-based organizations.

---

22 As Benthall notes, a Christian charity such as the very large World Vision would seem to fit into category 2, except that it also raises substantial funds from the general public through media campaigns as a broad-based relief and development agency. Also, many Islamic charities in the Middle East and North Africa are informally linked to opposition movements, some of which would fall under 3 or 5. Some of these, under pressure of political events, dissociate themselves from 3 and 5 in the near future, in order to join the international body of accredited charitable organisations (Benthall 2006:5-6).
Another obstacle to successful cooperation between secular and faith-based organizations stems from their natural competition for resources: groups that should be working together instead often clash with each other over limited funds. Also, faith-based organizations often experience setbacks in terms of lack of ability to build the human resources necessary for monitoring and evaluating their efforts in different countries. On the other hand, donor organizations sometimes prefer to fund governments which may deny FBOs access to funds. As Barton notes, even when government funds do reach faith-based organizations, there is a lot of uncertainty regarding how this government money may be used. This confusion stems from a longstanding tension between church and state and a common understanding about the necessity for modern society to be secular and publicly detached from any religious connotations. Despite a wide acceptance of the freedom of religion concept, there is no consensus in the international community about whether and how the standards separating church and state should be actually established. Finally, secular organizations are often sceptical about the traditional inclinations of faith-based organizations towards evangelization and personal salvation (Barton 94).

One of the major controversies in the domain of faith-based humanitarianism which has always sparked scepticism among social scientists is the connection between religion and conflict. It is often claimed by religious practitioners that it is “bad, flawed religion” not the “good and real one” that causes or inflames conflict; on the other hand, social scientists prefer the point that religion mostly serves as a secondary explanation to conflict, while the main responsibility lies in the sphere of political and economic conditions. What David Little, a prominent scholar of religious studies, argues, though, is that religious groups have a mixed record in this arena: religion can play the important role either as a cause of conflict or a cause of peace. In terms of its connection to conflict, he points to two areas, nationalism and terrorism, in which religion can be particularly important in the generation of violent conflict. Sometimes,
faith-based organizations have been reluctant to address the tough political challenges of a peace-building agenda. Even worse, religious leaders or organizations can sometimes work on promoting ethno-religious divisions, as in the Balkans, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and India. Barton draws particular attention to those who contribute to conflict-prevention while at the same time cooperating with combatants (Barton 95). On the other hand, despite the obstacles and various challenges that faith-based organizations face today, a positive move can be recognised in the general acknowledgment of their significant potential for conflict resolution, mediation and conciliation. Religious factors may contribute significantly to the process of establishing peace as well as in the efforts to create institutions and capacities to sustain and defend peace (Little 17-21). According to Little, there is a revolution in thinking about violent conflict and the constructive role that religion plays today, including important changes in regard to the connections among religion, conflict, and peace. Religious practitioners express a growing interest in non-violent techniques of dealing with unstable and conflict-prone settings. So-called Track II diplomacy, as distinct from Track I official diplomacy, consists of unofficial activities undertaken by non-governmental groups and individuals (including religious ones) to assist official negotiations or to create an environment conducive to peace (Little 14). Terms like “forgiveness,” “mercy,” “reconciliation,” and “restorative justice,” that once exclusively belonged to theological and religious discourses, have moved today to the center of public debate. Utilized by politicians, lawyers and international relations experts, these concepts have expanded their meaning and found their place in the modern international moral order. However, although they largely contributed to the creation of truth and reconciliation commissions and similar secular institutions, it is very unlikely, as Little notes, that they will ever lose their religious significance altogether (Little 15).

23 He uses the example of Hamas as a well-known religious organization for coupling charitable works with support for terrorist activities.
FBOs can be an important partner with multilateral organizations within a four-pillar framework of issues that must be addressed in conflict-prone settings: security, justice and reconciliation, governance and participation, and economic and social well-being (Barton 96). Religious and faith-based organizations can be especially effective in justice and reconciliation processes taking place in post-conflict societies. The most effective mechanisms include inter-religious dialogue, intra-religious dialogue and joint projects that focus on shared needs of different religious communities. Religious organizations, such as faith-based groups or charities, and institutions such as mosques, churches and synagogues, help to bring people together and provide hope in a post-conflict environment. Among these institutions and organizations, locally-based FBOs proved to be particularly important actors in social reconstruction work. Thanks to their close alignment with local contexts and local needs, these organizations often find themselves in a better position than similar secular and international organizations. Due to a common religious or cultural heritage, but also due to their rather long-term goals, these local FBOs can achieve a deeper understanding of evolving local situations than their secular counterparts. As Barton concludes, that may significantly improve their ability to build capacity for sustainable social services (96).

One of the best examples that prove this argument is the case of postconflict Bosnia and a number of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Muslim and Jewish nongovernmental organizations which have strived to promote ethno-religious reconciliation. Some of the early efforts for reconciliation proved ineffective or even counterproductive. Nevertheless, the final efforts resulted in the formation of Bosnia’s Inter-Religious Council (IRC), an organization

---

24 According to Zoran Cirjakovic (2007), the phenomenon of recent Islamic revival in Bosnia-Herzegovina noticeable through the increased collaboration between the Wahhabi, Salafi and other extremist groups is related to the activities of various Islamic humanitarian organizations and charities such as Vezir, Furkhan, AIO [Active Islamic Youth], Muslimski omladinski savet [Muslim Youth Council], and Visoki saudijski komitet [High Saudi Committee]. More than 120 of them were suspected of having ties to Islamic terrorist groups in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan (189).
which brought together leaders from the four religious communities and NGOs like Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Islamic Relief Worldwide, as well as some local organizations. The Council aims to encourage inter-faith collaboration in local, educational, and infrastructural development projects. Another attempt at supporting the reconciliation process and overcoming the hostility among different ethnic-religious groups in Bosnia has been the Pontania Choir, an innovative peacemaking project initiated by the Order of Franciscans in Sarajevo and aimed at interpersonal reconciliation (Smock 1-2 and Little 20)

   Religious organizations’ involvement in community development, relief or reconciliation projects largely depends on official policy responses regulating activities of FBOs. As McGinnis notes, the range of government responses is remarkably wide and includes diverse methods of encouraging or discouraging FBOs from engaging in particular practices, such as, for instance, proselytising activities (McGinnis 9). Through the use of symbolic, legal and regulatory, and financial policies, political leaders strive to manipulate the incentives of religious leaders and the members of faith-based organizations. Policy instruments symbolic in nature include promotion of either religious beliefs or secular values in public education. Legal and regulatory policy instruments can require all religious organizations to register or they can apply more draconian measures such as assigning differential legal rights to members of different religious faiths. Finally, financial policy instruments can provide tax breaks to charitable activities, as a means to encourage their activities. McGinnis argues that overt political manipulation of religion is commonplace in modern world despite public officials often being restricted by the doctrine of separation between church and state as well as by the norms against infringement of religious freedom. It is not just that officials may try to take advantage of faith-based service organizations by involving themselves in direct partnerships; they can determine what types of proselytizing
activities are appropriate or inappropriate for government funded programs of international humanitarian aid or development assistance (McGinnis 8-11). In that way, suggests Christopher Candland, government policies can have a significant positive or negative impact on the actual potential of faith-based organizations to act as a resource for social capital and social development. Government manipulation of religion may decrease the socially transformative power of religious institutions and inhibit faith-based social reform: government’s use of religious rhetoric to legitimate public policies usually fails in a same way that attempts of religious movements to promote their strategies through governments fail. Only religious institutions which are not used by governments to legitimate arbitrary or dictatorial rule can actually stimulate social change (Candland 371).

2.6 The future of FBOs: Politicization and the faith-factor

Many analysts in the West speak about religious traditions in monolithic terms, lumping different elements into the same basket while at the same time failing to notice similarities. For instance, the Islamic world of humanitarian aid is rarely seen as a historical parallel to Western Christian aid agencies in terms of their similar development and values. On the other hand, a rich variation between Islamic aid agencies is usually unacknowledged. Today, Both Islamic and Christian-based humanitarian agencies are “shadows of their former, religious, selves” (Barnett 2008). Until the late nineteenth century, they were primarily focused on their missionary component, desired to save souls, not lives of the people in need. As they evolved, they moved from “saving souls” through missionary work, to “saving lives” through the means of charity and philanthropy, to “saving entire societies”, in terms of providing long-term solutions to root causes. For example, as Barnett notes, World Vision International remains an evangelical
organization, but no longer runs church revivals. One of the potential explanations for this is the larger degree of bureaucratization, rationalization, and professionalization of FBOs. On the other hand, so-called secular agencies can hardly deny religious affiliation or spiritual motivation of their members. Indeed, not just because of this blurred line between technical rationality and faith but also because of the increased competition for the same resources and funds, faith-based and secular agencies begin to resemble each other. While affected by the same external environment, both kinds of agencies are actually driven by a desire to find objective measures of outcomes, effectiveness, and success (Barnett 2008). Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations have a long shared history of responding to people in need and today are important co-players in the international community’s response to emergencies.

For these reasons, FBOs need to be analysed not only in the context of their respective faiths, but also in the context of the various other ideologies, motivations and values that drive non-profit humanitarian institutions in general, especially those that operate transnationally. In order to be fully acknowledged by their secular counterparts, FBOs have to abide by the major principles of humanitarian action such as the principle of non-discrimination which requires that emergency aid should be given on the basis of need alone (Benthall 2006:6). Nevertheless, this compliance to “universal humanitarian standards” is not an easy objective either for faith-based or for secular agencies. Modern-day humanitarianism has been undergoing a radical shift concerning its social purposes and organizing principles: in order to achieve long-term goals of eliminating poverty and consolidating peace processes, new trends of politicization and militarization of humanitarianism have been introduced while old humanitarian principles of “neutrality, impartiality and independence” have started being questioned. New perspectives and approaches enlighten today the issue of humanitarianism from the grounds of economy, security politics and ethics; they pose, however, new and various challenges to understanding this
In this context of constant re-evaluation of principles and approaches, secular and religious organizations remain generally suspicious of each other’s motivations. In order to build a trusting partnership, demystification of religion, humanitarianism and politics is required. As Barton argues, faith-based groups must accept the political dimension of their enterprise: working in conflict-prone places and giving funds are both essentially political activities. At the same time, Barton claims, secular groups do not need to be afraid of a presence of religion in daily operations. They should acknowledge the potential of FBOs to involve many more citizens in the international humanitarian and reconstruction efforts by appealing to organized religious communities (95-97).

It can be concluded that the presence and active involvement of religious factors in development and relief is marked by certain ambivalence stemming from risks and potentials intrinsic to the nature of religious belief and practice. As De Cordier presents in his graphic below, “[t]o what extent being faith-based brings added value or not for an aid organization depends on the extent that it maximizes the potential of religion at the detriment of the risks. There are also a number of factors that determine the space, intensity and evolution of the faith factor and its ambivalence” (2008:14).

---

25 According to Thomas Weiss, the author of *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*, globalization and neoliberal reforms contributed to the Third World instability in two ways: first, they opened borders to organized crime (especially the trade in illicit commodities and natural resources) used to finance violence and wars, and second, they diminished access to education and social services causing yet further deterioration of “weak” states into grave humanitarian crises. These new kinds of conflicts, so-called complex emergencies, are followed by new humanitarian responses, often in a form of military intervention. In response to these wars, “new humanitarians” have undergone a radical shift concerning their social purposes and organizing principles. In order to achieve long-term goals of eliminating poverty and consolidating peace processes, they introduce new trends of *politicization* and *militarization*. Partnerships between humanitarian organizations and business, military groups and political parties have become common practice (Weiss 2007).
Figure 2.6: De Cordier’s faith-factor graph

According to De Cordier’s graph, faith-based humanitarianism embodies both risks and opportunities. The major determinants of this ambivalence include diverse factors: the presence and nature of conflict and especially the role of religion and religious identities in the violence; social mobility including rural-urban and international migration; the actual role of religion and religious actors in society and in local identity; relationship between secular and religious elites; the nature and position of the state and civil society; the different actors in the humanitarian landscape in the given context; and, finally, the public discourse and the opinion climate shaped by both global and local media. As providers of social services which were earlier explicitly offered by the state and non-governmental secular organization, faith-based humanitarian organizations have become today a part of a global social safety net. From the perspective of De Cordier, FBOs appeared as important players on the global humanitarian scene as the consequence of failure of development strategies that were dominant since the beginning of the post-colonial era (14-15).
Conclusion

Humanity in the past did not make an institutional difference between sacred and secular powers: religious and political leadership were functionally merged. While acknowledging that secular humanism is a historic civilizational achievement as it ended medieval religious violence, it can be argued that it is impossible and misleading to strive for clear-cut segregation of religious and secular spheres of life. Although the Age of Enlightenment paradigm is still largely considered one of the conceptual cornerstones of modern society, the 21st century brings new challenges to the table of the international community and requires new approaches to the world issues. One such issue, the ambiguous interrelation of religion, humanitarianism and contemporary politics, was the general topic of this paper.

The research was conducted on two levels of analysis. First, the paper deconstructed the theoretical approaches to the role of religion and faith-based decision-making in international politics. The brief overview of IR literature on religion demonstrated that religion has long been a nearly absent topic in the studies of global affairs. However, that situation has recently started changing: as some authors anticipate, once religion becomes fully recognized, the related scholarly literature will grow extensively in both theoretical and empirical terms (Fox and Sandler 179). The neglected connection between religion and IR scholarship helped establishing a firm discourse of secularization. In regard to that, the paper presented two contrasting theories of secularization and argued that Talal Asad’s view is more realistic and convincing than Charles Taylor’s. Asad strongly opposes Taylor’s stance on the necessity of secularism for democratic regimes and argues that a secular state does not guarantee toleration. He also emphasizes that defining the secular and the religious has always been a political task, although there has been a powerful ideological impulse against the recognition of that fact.
In its second part, the paper moved the analysis to a more practical level to examine the role of faith-based institutions in everyday life. The paper argued that FBOs demand more attention from both scholars and policy makers for at least two major reasons: first, despite the accompanying discourse of religious exclusiveness and proselytism, faith-based organizations should be seen as a valuable means of overcoming the problematic relationship between religion, secular doctrine of human rights and violence, and second, faith-based humanitarianism is one of the phenomena which challenge the secular/sacred dichotomy since it proves that religion still finds its place in a world order which is ideologically deeply entrenched in the framework of secular humanism. Once created out of necessity, today this framework turns to be a formal artificiality of IR theory which can only be removed by a demystification of both religion and politics. By doing so, this paper argues, both spheres could benefit. Religious institutions would become visible actors in political arena and would thus be given a chance to achieve accountability alongside other agents of social change. Political institutions, on the other hand, would acknowledge non-secular ethical dimensions of politics that exist no matter how hard the discourse of secular humanism is imposed; in addition, they would gain a valuable “different level” partner in approaching people’s needs, emotions and expectations.

As shown in this paper, the complex relationship between humanitarianism, religion and international politics suggests that these elements will continue to coexist within a perplexing but powerful network of philanthropy, power and interest. The religious dimensions of international order should be reconsidered and appreciated in order for numerous benefits of this relationship to be fully obtained. To conclude, this paper does not suggest that the dominant paradigm of international relations be abandoned. It rather calls for its modification in order to account for religion which norms and values can be used to support the existing regime of human rights and institutions. In line with Asad (2007, 2003, 1999) and Hackett (2005), this paper argues that the
key element of successful governance of modern nation-states is not necessarily their secular orientation but rather careful management of religious and cultural differences. Faith-based organizations should be thus seen as a potential channel leading towards the reconciliation of the sacred and the secular.
**Bibliography**


http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/2008/03/17/remaking-the-world/

*Christian Century* (Sept 6).  
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_18_120/ai_107760355/?tag=content;col1


World Vision International http://www.wvi.org/wvi/about_us/who_we_are.html