

## Faith and Foreign Policy

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HM Ambassador Holy See

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My thanks to the organisers of this series of talks on faith in public life for their invitation this evening. Thank you Dame Nuala and Canon John for your kind words of introduction.

Tonight, I have been asked to talk about faith in public life. In particular, I want to look at faith and foreign policy. Why foreign policy? For two reasons: first - it is my professional remit; second - it is also an area of life which we are increasingly exposed to.

I want to speak to two areas – the first area which will set the context, will look at foreign policy and religion more generally; why religion was often ignored in foreign policy considerations; and why it now deserves to be taken seriously and in a balanced perspective. The second area of the talk will give application by focusing on aspects of the UK's diplomacy at the Holy See.

The views expressed here this evening are done so in a personal capacity and should not be taken as the official position of Her Majesty's Government.

Why was religion ignored in foreign policy?

Let us begin by considering this question and look at some shifting perspectives in the last ten years. The July 2007 report by the Washington based Centre for Strategic and International Studies said "Religious leaders, organisations, institutions and communities can mobilise religion to sanction violence, draw on religion to resolve conflicts, or invoke religion to provide humanitarian and development aid."<sup>1</sup>

Yet for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century religion was ignored in foreign policy. In all the strategic reports at the time of the Millennium on the next decade, century, etc I don't recall one which identified religion as a serious issue. Indeed Time in 1966 and The Economist in 2000 repeated Nietzsche's prediction of the 'Death of God' (or at least the demise of God).

Professor Scott Thomas writes that the ignoring of religion started with the Enlightenment and was pushed along by thinkers such as Max Weber. He describes elements of the mindset which wanted to marginalise religion by presenting it as little more than a form of reassurance – a psychological compensation for people in societies or countries with low levels of human development or poorly developed welfare states.<sup>2</sup> You are familiar with the idea that over time, societies would develop themselves out of

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<sup>1</sup> Mixed Blessings: US Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict Prone Settings, Centre for Strategic Studies, Washington DC, July 2007, page 1

religion; and therefore, it was a passing phase not worthy of consideration. The Political Scientist Bernard Lewis wrote in 1977 “Westerners, with few exceptions, have ceased to give religion a central place among their concerns, and therefore have been unwilling to concede that anyone else could do so. For the progressive modern mind, it is simply not admissible that people would fight and die over mere differences of religion”.<sup>3</sup>

The former US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, when reminiscing about her own diplomatic career had the honesty to admit that religion was often ignored or left out of the equation. She wrote “I found it incredible, as the twenty-first century approached, that Catholics and Protestants were still quarrelling in Northern Ireland and that Hindus and Muslims were still quarrelling off against each other in south Asia; surely, I thought, these rivalries were the echoes of earlier, less enlightened times, not a sign of the battles to come”. But she continues later in the same paragraph; “since the terror attacks of 9/11, I have come to realize that it may be I who was stuck in an earlier time. Like many other foreign policy professionals, I have had to adjust the lens through which I view the world.”<sup>4</sup>

She gives a practical example. In the mid 1970s the CIA dismissed an internal proposal to study religious leaders in pre-revolutionary Iran as useless sociology.<sup>5</sup> Of this Albright says “Because we underestimated the importance of tradition and faith to Iranian

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<sup>2</sup> Scott Thomas, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 31

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lewis, ‘From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East’, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004, page 285

<sup>4</sup> Madeline Albright ‘The Mighty and the Almighty’, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 9

<sup>5</sup> James A Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

Muslims, we made enemies that we did not intend to make...Even in Vietnam, from the outset the anti-communist cause was undermined because the government in Saigon repressed Buddhism, the largest non-communist institution in the country.”<sup>6</sup>

The consequences? Albright writes “We were caught off guard by the revolution in Iran for the simple reason that we had never seen anything like it. As a political force, Islam was thought to be waning, not rising. Everyone in the region was presumed to be pre-occupied with the practical problems of economics and modernisation. A revolution in Iran based on a religious backlash against America and the West? Other than a few fanatics who would support such a thing?”<sup>7</sup>

This begs the question why or how did a sort of ‘group think’ manage to ignore religion as an issue in international affairs. To address this we have to broaden the cultural context beyond foreign policy. While no doubt the marginalising of religion started with the Enlightenment, it was more likely fuelled in recent decades by secularisation/modernisation theory. Put simply, this holds that as societies modernise they secularise.<sup>8</sup> The theory is broadly based on empirical data from north Western Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It was commonly assumed that the world was following a trajectory set off in north Western Europe at the time of the Industrial Revolution. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it went unchallenged.

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<sup>6</sup> Madeline Albright ‘The Mighty and the Almighty, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 43

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, pages 39-40

<sup>8</sup> The secularization thesis is advocated by Steve Bruce. David Martin accepts secularization, but that it takes place in very different contexts and Grace Davie advocates the notion of the European exception.

However, about 20 years ago it became clear that the statistics tell a different story. Peter Berger, an eminent American sociologist and expert on religions, was long an advocate of the secularisation theory, but changed his view on the basis of the empirical data. But those who predicted the 'Death of God' were simply wrong. Those who extrapolated the European experience to the rest of the world were wrong. Those who said there was a correlation between economic, social and political modernity to decreasing religious practice were also wrong. The evidence from the United States, Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe points to religious practice either walking hand in hand with progress, and in some cases actually being the spur, or at least being a neutral variable. Berger said recently 'We don't live in an age of secularity; we live in an age of explosive, pervasive religiosity.'<sup>9</sup>

Scott Thomas writes "Many scholars and policymakers are still committed to the modernization mythology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and believe that the global resurgence of religion is the result of incomplete modernisation."<sup>10</sup>

To be fair to the advocates of secularization theory, it is easy to look back equipped with data and disprove a theory. The advocates of the secularisation theory were right in part, but only in part. Secularisation theory described a particular phenomenon in a particular region, namely industrialised and post industrialised Europe, where there was a dramatic

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Berger, Pew Forum on Religion

<sup>10</sup> Scott Thomas, Journal of International Affairs, Volume 61, Number 1, page 40

drop in church attendance from agrarian societies to industrial and post-industrial societies.

Religion is now one of the key issues in International Affairs and Foreign Policy. There is scarcely a week without a religious story on the front pages of our newspapers. We have seen in these first seven years of the millennium stories about the Saffron revolution in Burma, a debate on Europe's Christian roots, debates on the nature of Europe's migration, a re-examination of the parameters between the secular and religious realms, not to mention those using religion as a justification for their terror.

Former President Clinton said "In the wrong hands, religion becomes a lever used to pry one group of people away from another....Does this mean that policy-makers should try to keep religion walled off from public life? The answer to that question is a resounding no. Not only shouldn't we do that; we couldn't succeed if we tried. Religious convictions, if they are convictions, can't be pulled on and off like a pair of boots."<sup>11</sup>

Albright says that when travelling round the world she is always asked "Why can't we just keep religion out of foreign policy?" She responds "my answer is that we can't and shouldn't. Religion is a large part of what motivates people and shapes their views of justice and right behaviour. It must be taken into account."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> William J Clinton, quoted in Madeline Albright 'The Mighty and the Almighty, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page xi

Certainly from a purely evidential base Albright is right - let us look at some of the facts we know about religion in the contemporary world.

- In a 2005 Gallup poll, two thirds of the world's population claimed to be religious.<sup>13</sup>
- The proportion of people attached to the world's four biggest religions, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism – rose from 67% in 1900 to 73% in 2005 and may reach 80% by 2050.
- In terms of sheer number of adherents, the world's largest religions have expanded at a rate that exceeds that of global population growth. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a bare majority of the world's population (50%) were Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Hindu. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, nearly 64% of the world's people belonged to these four religious groups.<sup>14</sup>
- In 1900, Africa had 10 million Christians representing 10 % of the population; by 2000, that was up to 360 million, to 46 percent of the population. That is the largest quantitative change that has ever occurred in the history of religion.
- “Most Nigerians identify themselves by their religion first. In a recent Pew survey, 91% of Muslims and 76% of Christians said that religion is more

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<sup>12</sup> Madeline Albright 'The Mighty and the Almighty, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 285

<sup>13</sup> Gallup, 'Voices of the People', 16 November 2005

<sup>14</sup> World Christian Encyclopaedia, cited in Timothy Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, 'God is Winning' (awaiting publication), but longer version of a piece in Foreign Policy, 'Why God is Winning', July/August 2006 pages 39-43

important to them than their identity as Africans, Nigerians, or members of an ethnic group.”<sup>15</sup>

### So Religion Counts

So “Is God Dead” as asserted by Nietzsche, Time and The Economist?<sup>16</sup> Perhaps it is more accurate to talk, as Giles Kepel did in 1994 about the ‘Revenge of God’ rather than the death of God!<sup>17</sup>

Let’s look at some key dates and examples. Some have said that 1967 marked the beginning of the end of the hegemony of the belief that religion did not matter in foreign policy. Tim Shah of the Council of Foreign Relations writes “In that year, the leader of secular Arab nationalism, Nasser, suffered defeat in the Six Days War”. Shah says that “By the 1970s, Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini, “born again” President Jimmy Carter and Pope John Paul II had dramatically demonstrated the increasing political clout of religious movements and their leaders.”<sup>18</sup>

The signs of the power of religion in foreign policy were evident throughout the period, but often religious considerations were ignored or marginalised as coincidental. Tim Shah writes “a combination of rosary-welding Solidarity workers in Poland and

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<sup>15</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, March 21, 2007, cited in *Mixed Blessings: US Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict Prone Settings*, Centre for Strategic Studies, Washington DC, July 2007, page 29

<sup>16</sup> Time Magazine, April 8, 1966

<sup>17</sup> Giles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994



Kalishnikov-weilding mujahideen in Afghanistan helped defeat atheistic Soviet communism. Albright says “In Poland, John Paul II helped construct a bridge that would ultimately restore the connection between Europe’s East and West.”<sup>19</sup> The Pope’s visits sparked a revolution of the spirit that liberated Poland, brought down the Berlin Wall, reunited Europe, and transformed the face of the world.”<sup>20</sup>

But it was not just in Poland or Afghanistan that religion mattered. Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington argues that some of the religious movements helped to usher in the ‘third wave’ of democracy in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Sub Saharan Africa and Asia from the 1970s to the early 90s.<sup>21</sup> For example in Nicaragua and El Salvador, Christian Churches played a prominent role within the reformist and revolutionary movements of the 1980s. In the 1990s, religion, ethnicity and nationalism collided with devastating force in the Balkans.<sup>22</sup> In the Philippines, Cardinal Sin and Catholic organisations openly condemned the Marcos regime.<sup>23</sup>

Obviously, religion, like ethnicity continues to be a major source of identity. And often the clash of identities can lead to conflict. A recent study found that “the majority of contemporary conflicts are not between nation states; rather they involve state and non-

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<sup>18</sup> Timothy Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, ‘God is Winning’ (awaiting publication), but longer version of a piece in Foreign Policy, ‘Why God is Winning’, July/August 2006 pages 39-43

<sup>19</sup> Madeline Albright ‘The Mighty and the Almighty, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 67

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, page 68

<sup>21</sup> Samuel P Huntington, ‘Religion and the Third Wave’, The National Interest, Summer 1991, pages 29-42

<sup>22</sup> Sheherazade Jafari, Journal of International Affairs, Volume 61, Number 1, page 114

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, ‘God is Winning’ (awaiting publication), but longer version of a piece in Foreign Policy, ‘Why God is Winning’, July/August 2006 pages 39-43

state actors and are often based on identity.”<sup>24</sup> There is also significant scholarship which documents the positive role of the mainline Christian churches in helping the democratising process in Africa or the positive role that Pentecostal Churches are having on political reform in Latin America.<sup>25</sup> The US Council of Foreign Relations cites more than 30 of the 80 countries that became freer in 1972-2000, owed some of that improvement to religion.

So religion matters in the world and if foreign policy is to be effective it too must address religion as an issue.

What is the purpose of foreign policy and thus diplomacy? Put simply: the purpose of foreign policy has been described as “persuading other countries to do what we want.”<sup>26</sup> Now if Diplomacy is captured as “the art of persuading others to act as we would wish, effective foreign policy requires that we comprehend why others act as they do.”<sup>27</sup> That, it could be argued, leads to the need for a greater appreciation and understanding of religion.

For a diplomat it is crucial to understand deeply the society you are in. How you do this is not as easy as it sounds. Religion can pose a serious challenge for many Western

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<sup>24</sup> Sheherazade Jafari, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 111

<sup>25</sup> Paul Gifford, *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, 1995, Leiden, Brill and *African Christianity: its public role*, London Hurst & Co.

<sup>26</sup> Madeline Albright *The Mighty and the Almighty*, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 11

Diplomats. Much of that is cultural. It is difficult to act as a bridge between the society one represents and one's host state. The temptation is to see the world through the prism of one's own domestic society; and perhaps be favourable towards that which is familiar. But this may lead to miscalculation which can result in serious strategic errors.

In July 2007, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies produced a report on religion and foreign policy. The CSIS report states that "miscalculating religion's role has sometimes led to failure to anticipate conflict or has actually been counterproductive to policy goals. It has kept officials from properly engaging influential leaders, interfered with the provision of effective development assistance and at times harmed national security."<sup>28</sup> Professor Bryan Hehir of Harvard says "there is an assumption that you do not have to understand religion in order to understand the world. You need to understand politics, strategy, economics and law, but you do not need to understand religion. If you look at standard textbooks of international relations or the way we organise our foreign ministries, there's no place where a sophisticated understanding of religion as a public force in the world is dealt with."<sup>29</sup> Hehir says that "policy makers must learn as much as possible about religion and incorporate that knowledge into their strategies. It's like brain surgery – a necessary task – but fatal if not done well."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, page 75

<sup>28</sup> *Mixed Blessings: US Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict Prone Settings*, Centre for Strategic Studies, Washington DC, July 2007, page 2

<sup>29</sup> Bryan Hehir cited in Madeline Albright *The Mighty and the Almighty*, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 66

<sup>30</sup> Bryan Hehir cited in Madeline Albright *The Mighty and the Almighty*, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 74

So where to from here? How do we arrive at a situation where foreign policy is better equipped to deal with religion? It must start with two things. First, we must sensitise ourselves to a world in which religion is alive and well; not the world in which we might feel more comfortable. Secondly, we must begin to see religion as much as a source of healing as we now see it as a source of division.

*PAUSE*

Getting the Perspective right?

Now that religion is on the agenda, is the perspective right? One could simply catalogue the negative by-products or uses of religion. Such a negative focus would naturally raise questions about the foundations which would produce such negative results, in this case God or religion. Those questions would be justified. But simply cataloguing a series of negatives while ignoring any counter prevailing evidence would fail the most elementary scrutiny.

So religion is back on the agenda. How is foreign policy to approach religion? For a start you can't get away from it. Centres for the study of religion are springing up everywhere. But what of the approach? And what of this new paradigm in foreign policy and faith?

There is another major risk apart from ignoring the elephant in the room and that is seeing the 'elephant' in every room. The risk now is that we go too early to the other extreme and see a religious cause or base to issues and problems which are essentially

about race, ethnicity, or some other factor. That major risk is casting religion exclusively in a negative frame of reference. The CSIS Report found that “The tendency to see religion as a problem prevents fuller engagements with religion as a solution, and the over emphasis on Islam prevents more holistic approaches to religion and faith based analysis...Despite the fact that religion is seen as powerful enough to fuel conflict, policymakers less often engage with its peacemaking potential.”<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, our task is to take religion seriously as an issue in foreign policy, yes; to recognise that it can be a source of good or evil, of course; but not to allow a situation to arise where it is presented exclusively as the determining negative variable.

Some say that the reason people reject religion especially in Europe, is because in the past it was so often tied to war, violence and power. Today, the association of religion and violence is once more to the fore. But not all associations are justified. There can be a tendency to identify conflicts as religious when they are more accurately geo-political conflicts. Labeling a conflict as “religious” can be a lazy way to reduce complex struggles into simplistic frameworks.

Increasingly today religion is perceived as a threat because of its association with terrorism. A major challenge is to bring it back to a situation where it is a vehicle for peace and helping resolve conflicts. There are powerful practical illustrations to be made which show that the picture is more nuanced than simply condemning religion out of hand as a source of terror or war.

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<sup>31</sup> Mixed Blessings: US Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict Prone Settings, Centre for Strategic Studies, Washington DC, July 2007, page 41

Let's draw an analogy with politics. Some would say that we do not condemn politics because it has sometimes in the past delivered us tyrannies or dictatorships. This is broadly one of the points explored in the work of the historian Michael Burleigh who describes the political ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely National Socialism, fascism and communism among other things, political ideologies which have led, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the murder and bloodshed of tens of millions of human beings. Yet politics still governs our life. We have the ability to appreciate the good of the concept, while recognising its capacity to be manipulated for violent ends.

The same is true of religion. Albright writes "We know what a globe plagued by religious strife is like, we do not know what it would be like to live in a world where religious faith is absent. We have, however, had clues from Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Nazism". She continued "it is easy to blame religion – or more fairly, what some people do in the name of religion – for all our troubles, but that is too simple. Religion is a powerful force, but its impact depends entirely on what it inspires people to do. The challenge for policy makers is to harness the unifying potential of faith, while containing its capacity to divide."<sup>32</sup>

I am not contesting that people, states, or faiths themselves have not used religion to foster violence or hatred. Such a view would fly in the face of history. Rather my contention is to try to re-balance our view of religion in foreign policy. Let's change the

perspective. We can see in certain contexts where faith has not served to fuel a conflict, but has acted as a restraint on ethnic violence, etc. Monica Toft has shown that “from the 1940s to the 1960s, religious conflicts represented no more than a quarter of civil wars, but in the 1970s, they jumped to 36%, then to 41% in the 1980s, and up to 43% in the 1990s. Since 2000, 47% of Civil Wars have been religious.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, religion has mobilized millions of people to oppose authoritarian regimes, inaugurate democratic transitions, support respect for human rights, and relieve human suffering. It is also a growing source of ethnic and national identity. Religion contains an immense capacity to define and mobilise people within and across state boundaries, both for good and for ill.”<sup>34</sup>

There is often little examination of the successes which are in part down to religion or what might be termed ‘faith based diplomacy’. For example the actions in the Philippines which brought down the Marcos regime or the role of the Buddhist Monks in their peaceful protest against the Burmese Junta or closer to home the witness and action of countless people motivated by faith who served to bring peace to Northern Ireland.

According to the Journal of International Affairs, “Religion can be one of the most powerful healers in post conflict situations. It can play a significant role in establishing peace in the present and dealing with the past.”<sup>35</sup> The Political Scientist Paul Martin

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<sup>32</sup> Madeline Albright ‘The Mighty and the Almighty, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, page 66

<sup>33</sup> cited in Timothy Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, ‘God is Winning’ (awaiting publication), but longer version of a piece in Foreign Policy, ‘Why God is Winning’, July/August 2006 pages 39-43

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, ‘God is Winning’ (awaiting publication), but longer version of a piece in Foreign Policy, ‘Why God is Winning’, July/August 2006 pages 39-43

<sup>35</sup> Editors’ Forward, Journal of International Affairs, Volume 61, Number 1, page vi

wrote “when conflict has ceased, only a few agencies are equipped to address the specific religious values, attitudes and loyalties that underlie ongoing tensions, let alone use them as tools in peace-building. The above factors pose a challenge for policy makers seeking to improve relations among religious groups. The very same elements of social capital that can be conducive to alleviating poverty, such as group loyalty, empathy and trust, can just as easily reinforce animosities.”<sup>36</sup> Albright writes “There are people who are willing to die – and kill – for their faith. This was true a thousand years ago and it is no less true today. But also religion at its best teaches forgiveness and reconciliation, not only when those acts are relatively easy, but also when they are almost unbelievably difficult.”<sup>37</sup>

What are some of those faith inspired movements out there working away for peace? Let me give some examples. There is the International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy – founded by Doug Johnson a former US Diplomat who has played a central role in Sudan, Pakistan and other parts of the world. He outlines in his pioneering 1994 book, the costs of overlooking religion’s critical role in international affairs.<sup>38</sup> He says a faith based mediator has means that a conventional diplomat lacks. One illustration of that could be the international agreement which the Holy See brokered between Chile and Argentina some 30 years ago. Or the role played by the Organisation of Islamic Conference in brokering a settlement between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Martin, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 83

<sup>37</sup> Madeline Albright *The Mighty and the Almighty*, Harper-Collins, New York, 2006, pages 69-70

<sup>38</sup> Douglas M Johnson and Cynthia Sampson, eds, *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994



Other scholars say that “Governments must ensure that their approach to conflict includes examining the ways in which religious resources, knowledge and identity are available to advance peace processes.”<sup>39</sup> Then there is the Church of England Vicar – Canon Andrew White who was the driving force behind the Alexandria Process bringing Christian and Muslims together. Today Andrew White is in Baghdad working for reconciliation. Canon White said recently, “I believe that religion is indeed the major cause of much conflict in the world today. And I would say that if it is a cause, it must also be a cure.”<sup>40</sup> Then we have the Rome based Sant’Egidio community which takes its inspiration from the Second Vatican Council. Its crowning moment was the successful brokering of the ceasefire which ended the Mozambique Civil War. Not to mention the well known and highly influential contributions by Northern Ireland’s Church leaders. What this shows is that religion can be as much a force for peace as a source of violence.

Why is religion’s conflict resolution capacity not more positively perceived? Scott Thomas writes that some studies of religion get it wrong. He says they equate serious religiosity with fundamentalism.<sup>41</sup> “Like the concept of Fascism, fundamentalism simply becomes a sweeping term of abuse used to denigrate any social or political groups assumed by the West to be a threat to peace, democracy, progress and social order.”<sup>42</sup> In the recent Centre for Strategic and International Studies report, it was said that when

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<sup>39</sup> Sheherazade Jafari, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 125

<sup>40</sup> Canon Andrew White, cited in Sheherazade Jafari, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 120

<sup>41</sup> Scott Thomas, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 22

government and military intelligence communities acknowledge religion, their analysis is limited to terrorism and in, particular the misuse of Islam.”<sup>43</sup> “

There is a risk that I too am engaging in selection bias and over-stressing a positive emphasis. But my point is to arrive at a balanced perspective on the role of religion in foreign policy, it is not to deny that religion, like politics, can lead to bad ends, but it is simply to present another critique to the one we often hear. I want to approach religion and faith in foreign policy, not from the prism of violence or terror, as I feel that has been sufficiently covered elsewhere, but rather from a more neutral prism.

This brings me to the second part of tonight’s speech – the practical application of religion and foreign policy.

### Diplomacy and the Holy See

The most frequent question which I am asked in this job is what exactly I do in representing the UK at the Holy See. The puzzlement is not confined to the public, but includes specialists, politicians and church people. It is an interesting and legitimate question because ultimately the embassy to the Holy See is not like other bi-lateral embassies which have sections dealing with trade, defence, consular affairs, etc. The Holy See is closer to one of our multi-lateral diplomatic missions than one of our bi-lateral missions in terms of the work that it does. But it still begs the fundamental

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, page 33

<sup>43</sup> Sheherazade Jafari, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 114

question what do you do? The best way to answer this, I believe is by giving an insight into what the Holy See is.

First the Holy See is a hybrid of the global and the local. The Catholic Church is a force on the world stage: a global religious institution with over 1.1 billion adherents (17% of the world's population); reach into every corner of the planet through its 500,000 priests, 800,000 sisters/nuns, 219,655 parishes<sup>44</sup>; serious influence in as many countries as are in the Commonwealth, a privileged status as interlocutor with the two other Abrahamic faiths – Islam and Judaism – and two generations of intense experience in inter-faith dialogue and many centuries of co-existence. The global diplomatic spread of the Holy See has increased dramatically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in particular. In 1936 there were 34 states with diplomatic ties to the Holy See: today that stands at 176 with the establishment of ties between the UAE and the Holy See. The Holy See has a highly respected diplomatic corps with sharp eyes and ears, not only in 176 countries, but far closer to the ground than any ordinary diplomatic corps ever gets through its network of bishops in each region and clergy in each locality. The Holy See knows what is going on in the world at governmental and grass roots level, has extraordinary access at the highest political level in most Catholic countries, and knows who's who in the world's faith communities.

Second: the Holy See is a respected interlocutor which pursues a policy of neutrality. Added to its global reach is the Holy See's central role in the wider/global intellectual and moral debate where religion and public policy are joined. The Holy See is taken

seriously in the religious world and in particular in the world of ideas. The Holy See is a key stabilising influence in the global faith/politics debate. This global presence, and the experience it brings, means that the Holy See's thinking on a wide variety of themes and areas, far beyond the normal foreign policy subjects carries weight.

Third the Holy See is a global opinion former. While the Vatican, which is the headquarters of the Holy See, is exceedingly small in physical size, the Holy See is a sovereign entity with an unusually large global reach which touches one sixth of the world's population and many more beyond. The Papacy is one of the world's key opinion formers.

Fourth a hybrid of state and religion. The Holy See is the world's oldest organisation. It is perhaps also one of the most complex when it comes to governance and decision making. On the one hand, in matters of doctrine it is very centralized, yet in other areas it follows a very well practiced model of subsidiarity which devolves power to the most effective level. It is both a state and a religion. That is part of its uniqueness. It has a direct connection (or what some might call a quasi citizenship type relationship) to over 1.1 billion Catholics world-wide (including over 12% of the UK population).

Taking these four characteristics - global and local; respected interlocutor; state and religion; global opinion former - it creates a potentially significant force in global diplomacy. But it is not about projecting global power, but projecting global ideas.

Those ideas are captured in a body of thought known as Catholic Social Teaching which

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<sup>44</sup> *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae 2006*

covers a very broad spectrum from social justice, discrimination, state-society relations, church and state to human rights, etc.

For these reasons the United Kingdom maintains an embassy to the Holy See. Time only permits us to look at one area where we can see how this theory takes on practical application. It is an area of fundamental importance to the United Kingdom.

### International Development

On international development we can speak to a strong record between faith groups and the international community in our efforts to eradicate poverty internationally. Help for the 'other' the poor and unprivileged often goes to the core of what faith groups are about. The Director of the World Bank's Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics said that virtually every religious tradition has a major focus on the world's poor, and our charitable traditions have been shaped and driven by religious organisations. He continued "such groups mitigate the effects of famine, epidemics, human trafficking, and the collapse of government provided services. For example, more than 50% of the hospitals in Africa are operated under the auspices of faith based organisations."<sup>45</sup> In the US some credit the influence of evangelicals with renewed US support for humanitarian spending which under President Bush has seen a 67% increase in aid to Africa, including \$15 billion in new spending for programmes to combat HIV and AIDS."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mixed Blessings: US Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict Prone Settings, Centre for Strategic Studies, Washington DC, July 2007, page 9

Professor Paul Martin has argued in the *Journal of International Affairs* that “Treating development aid as a purely secular enterprise no longer reflects the reality and complexities on the ground.”<sup>47</sup> He says “it is in the interests of international policymakers to take religious factors and religious organisations into account. By making poverty alleviation a shared objective and enlisting the world’s religions to help, governments and other funding agencies can increase dialogue and understanding among religions and reduce poverty as a breeding ground for other threats to international security.”<sup>48</sup>

The UK is conscious that in much of the Developing world, it is faith groups that provide many of the educational and health services. The Catholic Church through its social services arms in the form of Caritas Internationalis (a federation of 162 Catholic aid agencies - including TROCAIRE - making it the world’s second largest development body after the United Nations), CIDSE (a federation of 15 international Catholic NGOs) and the many religious orders and dioceses operating schools, hospitals and social services centres, etc, make a valuable contribution to International Development.

The Catholic Church is a very big player in grass roots development worldwide, but especially in Africa (where it is responsible for nearly one quarter of health care provision). In many parts of Sub Saharan Africa faith groups are the primary providers of medical and educational infrastructure. UNAIDS and the WHO are helping faith groups with a comprehensive mapping programme to determine their capacity on the

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<sup>46</sup> Walter Russell Mead, ‘Gods Country?’, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 85 No.5, page 38

<sup>47</sup> Paul Martin, *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 61, Number 1, page 78

ground. As one of the largest providers of education on the African continent, the Church provides places in school to some 12 million children each year. Therefore the Holy See is a crucial partner to the international community if we are to deliver on the MDGs by 2015.

As Gordon Brown said in November 2004 ‘it is the churches and faith groups that have, across the world, done more than any others - by precept and by example - to make us aware of the sheer scale of human suffering - and our duty to end it. Indeed, when the history of the crusade against global poverty is written, one of its first and finest chapters will detail the commitment of the churches in Britain to help the world's poor.’

Today, the UK works extensively with the Holy See to ensure that International Development remains a top priority for bodies like the UN, EU and G8. While there are some areas of difference between the United Kingdom and the Holy See on some aspects of International Development, the Holy See has repeatedly praised the UK’s record on increasing overseas aid over the past decade. We have nearly doubled the amount spent on development aid. This year we will be spending over \$11 billion or 0.47% of national income. By 2013 we will meet the UN target for nations to spend 0.7% of national income on aid.

The UK has valued greatly the support of the Holy See for our efforts both in bi-lateral and international fora. We were particularly grateful for the Holy See’s early endorsement of the International Finance Facility. The International Finance Facility is a

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, page 86

novel way to use the capital markets to front load development spending. The Prime Minister, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to the Vatican in 2004 to launch the concept and the late Pope John Paul II gave it his full moral support. In November 2006, Pope Benedict XVI went one step further and gave it his full practical support. He sent Cardinal Martino to London to purchase the first IFF-Immunisation Bond on his behalf. The Bond raised over \$1 billion dollars. IFFIm has been designed to accelerate the availability of funds to be used for health and immunisation programmes in 70 of the poorest countries around the world. It is expected to help prevent five million child deaths between 2006 and 2015, and more than five million future adult deaths by protecting more than 500 million children in campaigns against measles, tetanus, and yellow fever.

The Pope's involvement helped to transform the launch and ensure the success of the initiative. It also showed that the Holy See is at the cutting edge of international development initiatives. That was true again in February 2007 when at the launch of the Advanced Market Commitment – a programme to support R&D into finding vaccines for curable diseases which afflict mostly the Developing World - the Pope told Gordon Brown – “I assure you of the Holy See's full support of this humanitarian project, which is inspired by that spirit of human solidarity which our world needs in order to overcome every form of selfishness and to foster the peaceful coexistence of peoples”.

The Call to Action



This brings us to the present. Tonight, I would like to leave you with one area of engagement with the world of faith in which you and your faith communities can play a major part. It is an area which shows the new dimension to foreign policy and faith – and aims to build a partnership which can lead to a noble joint endeavour. It is the challenge of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. What are they? The Millennium Development Goals are set of pledges which were set out by the international community back in 2000. They are<sup>49</sup>:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Half way to 2015, vital progress has been achieved:

- 3 million more children survive every year;
- 2 million people now receive Aids treatment;
- There are 41 million more children in school;
- 2 million lives are saved every year by immunization;

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<sup>49</sup> See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/goals.html> for the detailed pledges

- Polio, leprosy and neonatal tetanus are on the verge of elimination; and
- African economies have been growing at 6% for the past three years, and are set to grow faster in the years ahead.

But it is not enough. The Prime Minister said recently there is "no chance" of meeting those targets on present trends.<sup>50</sup>

- 72 million children are still not in school
- Half of the developing world lack basic sanitation.
- Over half a million women still die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Over 33 million people are living with HIV, and more than 1 million people die of Malaria every year, including one child every 30 seconds.
- 980 million people still live on less than \$1 a day.

Speaking at the United Nations last July the Prime Minister said “we need to mobilise all our efforts. The eighth Millennium pledge was that we would “develop a global partnership for development”. The time has come for us all to live up to that promise. He continued...”We've thought too much of the Millennium Development Goals as something that governments have got to do between governments ... I think we should

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<sup>50</sup> 25 January 2008 at World Economic Forum, Davos

see this as a collective endeavor, I think we should summon up all the energies of the private sector, of the NGOs, of faith groups as well as of governments."

With so much of the capacity on the ground throughout the Developing World, faith communities are making and can make a huge contribution to the MDGs. Because it is also where social institutions are weak or government is viewed as illegitimate, that faith based institutions and local religious leaders often play a critical role in meeting the needs of their communities. They carry moral authority, define social values and goals and are often most trusted among the people.<sup>51</sup> The Prime Minister has said that faith groups have a central role in realizing the MDGs.

That was in evidence on 25 January this year in Davos when people from faith communities, joined politicians, business leaders, etc to commit to deliver the MDGs with a renewed focus. Those people pledged to work together to help the world get back on track to meet the MDGs. They will only succeed if governments, the private sector, faith groups, civil society, and NGOs join with. That also means you and me.

In September, at the UN - and for the first time ever – the UN Secretary General will bring together governments, businesses, civil society organisations, NGOs and faith groups. The Secretary General will convene the summit to mark the halfway point to the

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<sup>51</sup> Cynthia Sampson, 'Religion and Peace building' in *Peacemaking in International Conflict; Methods and Techniques*, eds., I. William Zartman and J Lewis Rasmussen, Washington DC, US Institute of Peace Press, 1997, page 275

MDGs, take stock of progress, and agree additional steps the international community will take to accelerate action.

Faith leaders have risen to the 'Call to Action'. The Cardinals of Edinburgh and Westminster welcomed the Prime Minister's challenge. They said "today we have the means to achieve the MDGs - now we need the will.... We have long believed that faith groups in particular are crucial to deliver the MDGs because in much of the Developing world, it is faith groups that provide many of the educational and health services... We believe that such a partnership on the international level - involving all the relevant stakeholders in society - could make the difference between success and failure in 2015."

### Conclusion

In summary, 'religion matters' as much in foreign policy as domestic. To understand the world in which we live, we have to comprehend religion as a source of influence and motivation in peoples lives. Religious motivations simply do not disappear because they are not mentioned. Simplistic and catch-all sentiments rarely if ever convey the complexity of our world, so too when talking about religion and foreign policy. It is not sufficient to see our faiths as being alien to our cultures or being exclusively associated with negative frameworks such as violence or terror.

For many people religion is a source of fundamental values and principles which underpin our civilisations. Faith is a feature of modern life, including our foreign policy.

When viewed exclusively through a negative prism we are selling our societies short and abandoning one of the best assets we have to help us face many of the contemporary challenges.

As we have seen here tonight – indeed as we have seen in this society over the past 40 years - religion has played a much needed positive role in bringing peace and stability to many situations. Now the challenge is to see the bigger canvas: it is to realise that religion can serve to propel us forward to achieve the greatest challenge of our time, feeding the hungry, educating the young, housing the poor and caring for the sick. That is the more powerful, and more accurate religious image and in 2008 and in the years leading up to 2015 we have an opportunity to show that religion has a key role in realising the MDGs.

THANK YOU