Between Religion and Security

Jane Lindsay

History tells us that religion has often been at the heart of protracted and bloody conflicts. In the last 10 years, in the form of terrorist attacks on New York, London, Mumbai and more, religion – and particularly Islam - has been associated with violence and insecurity more than ever. This has coincided with – or perhaps precipitated – a new interest in religion in sectors that have traditionally marginalized it, including the media and the academy. In an increasing body of literature, the alignment of religion with insecurity is commonly accepted: one is left in no doubt that religious actors can be, and often are, the source of, or can legitimise, violence, conflict and terror. The policy community has taken this association seriously. Since 2001, a number of significant initiatives suggest that the understanding of, and engagement with, religion is now firmly planted within the scope of Government security apparatus in the UK and elsewhere. The UK’s counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST indicates that ‘Al Qaida inspired terrorism... draws on and then reinterprets different theological traditions’ (HMG, 2011b: 35). One of its ‘focus areas’, Prevent, aims to ‘stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism’ and has involved increasing engagement with Muslim communities through policing and local government as well as the sponsorship of ‘acceptable’ Muslim organisations and projects.

However, religion’s relationship to security is not limited to either the domestic or the counter-terrorist context. The 2009 UK National Security Strategy (HMG, June 2009) explicitly acknowledged ‘ideologies and beliefs’ as potential drivers of insecurity around the world (HMG, June 2009: 61) and the 2010 version names international terrorism (predominantly that associated with Islamist ideology) and Irish-related terrorism (predominantly that associated with dissident republican groups) to be the most significant threats to UK national security (HMG, October 2010a: 27).

In the minds of the mainstream media, the academy and the policy community, religion and insecurity are inextricably linked. And yet, for all the books written, speeches made and theories advanced which try to come to terms with the – largely unexpected – appearance of religion as a significant...
feature of Western public life in late modernity; and for all the policies made, resources committed and relationships built to deal with the role of religion in the major security challenge facing the West, no attempt has yet been made to undertake a conceptual analysis of the relationship between religion and security.

Just as recent acts of terrorism have raised the profile of religion and its relationship to (in)security, so too has it raised the profile of ‘security’ itself. Since 2008, three National Security Strategies have been published in the UK alone; and at least 15 NATO members have published or prepared such documents since 2001 (the vast majority of them for the first time). And yet, undoubtedly, the focus of academic enquiry in the last ten years has not been on this new, powerful dimension of public policy, but on the religious actors whose destructive activity has made it so urgent. This has coincided with perceptions of the ‘desecularisation of the world’ (Berger, 1999). After two centuries of social science seeming to be ‘centrally concerned with the decline, erosion or eclipse of religion’ (Beckford, 2003:31), the secularisation thesis has come under increasing challenge and social scientists are now rushing to understand how and why religion is suddenly important again (e.g Berger, 1999; Stark, 1999; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2009).

Though the category of religion is still far from being the mainstream subject matter of political science, some scholars are now addressing the question of religion’s relationship to security and international relations. Some of this literature, predictably, focuses on religion’s apparent predisposition to violence and conflict, in some instances leading to the conclusion that forms of religion are incompatible with the values of freedom, democracy (Baruma, 2010), and with our security (Jergensmeyer, 2003; Kepel, 1994). On the other hand, apologists for religion have construed the relationship more positively, suggesting that religion can act as a source of legitimacy and a ‘power broker in human relationships’ (Otis, 2004:17,21) and advocating theological rejections of violence and models of faith-based diplomacy as ways to ‘inspire religious activity in more helpful directions’ (Johnson, 2003:3).

Yet, despite their differences, these seemingly opposing perspectives have one thing in common: adherence to the differentiation of religion from public life. Whether religion is a dependent variable through which temporal concerns are expressed or whether it is a source of tolerance and understanding, it is construed as private and voluntary. Both approaches tend to define religion according to its substance, characterising it as a belief system which motivates individual action (for good or ill), a predisposition characteristic of political science which has its roots in an act of seventeenth century political expediency.

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Between 1644 and 1648, the Westphalian towns of Munster and Osnabruck hosted negotiations towards a European settlement of the so-called ‘Wars of Religion’. The Treaty of Westphalia established a new world order, based on the concept of the sovereign ‘nation-state’ whose domestic governance would be protected from the influence of external actors. In light of the long and costly conflict it brought to an end, delegates also signed off a series of agreements limiting the public role of ‘religion’ as ‘For the state to be born, religion had to become privatised and nationalised’ (Thomas, 2005: 25).

Before the Treaty of Westphalia, religious factors had played a significant role in public life across Europe: sectarian rivalries had contributed to three decades of conflict within the Holy Roman Empire. The designation ‘religion’ as applied after Westphalia, thus, was far from ‘natural’ or ‘historical’ – it was a rational conceit which was necessary to build a world of autonomous nation-states and inter-state relations based on rational and material considerations. And this was a Western conceit, contributed to not only by Reformation theology (Philpott, 2000), not only by the philosophical contributions of Machiavelli and Hobbes, but by the very spirit of the age. In absentious religion from public life, the Treaty of Westphalia not only resulted in the creation of the category ‘religion’ as a privately and voluntarily held set of beliefs, but also in the creation of ‘international relations’ as we know it, based on a vision of the world as a network of autonomous and secular nation-states. A relationship of otherness thus inheres in the very definition of these terms. It is an otherness which has been practically manifest in the United States Constitution as well as that of the French Republic, and which has been sustained by the discipline of international relations theory which emerged to describe, account for and analyse relations between ‘secular’ polities. And, consequently, it is an otherness which has been written into the history of the twentieth century, narrated in terms of war and peace between nation-states, of materialistic ideologies, and of territory and power.

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5 The First Amendment to the United States Constitution (1791) reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” This has been interpreted in different ways (Jefferson (1802) famously invoked a ‘wall of separation’ between Church and State while Reagan (1982) suggested the amendment existed to protect religion from ‘government tyranny’.

6 Although the French Constitution was most recently revised in 1958, it continues to be guided by the preamble ‘the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen’ approved by the new National Assembly of France in 1789 which states: “The sources of all sovereignty resides in the nation: no body, no individual can exercise authority that does not proceed from it in plain terms... No one should be disturbed on account of his opinions, even religious, provided their manifestation does not upset the public order established by law.” Since 1905, the official principle of ‘laicite’ (political secularism) was adopted by the French government in the ‘Loi concernant la separation des Eglises et de l’Etat’: “The Republic assures freedom of conscience. It guarantees the free exercise of religious worship under the sole restrictions hereafter in the interest of public order. The Republic does not grant recognition nor pay nor subsidies any church.”
This genetic predisposition (Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003: 1) of international relations has proved problematic for analysts since 9/11. Consequently, a new range of approaches, broadly labelled ‘constructivist’ has emerged which come to terms with religion’s role by challenging and redefining the intellectual frameworks of international relations, inextricably tied to the modern distinction between church and state (Fox & Sandler, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Snyder, 2011; Hurd 2011). As Snyder (2011: 14) suggests, constructivism offers ‘friendly terrain’ for considering religion’s relationship to politics because it allows for both to reflect the material and the ideational: constructivist accounts can speak simultaneously of relations of power and order, identity and value.

Analyses of secularism (Hurd, 2011, Asad, 2003), as well as religion, have proven to be particularly interesting in this regard. Rather than the neutral or objective universal future predicated by modern narratives, the ‘secular’ has emerged as constituted by and constitutive of, a particular civilisation and cultural context: a ‘series of political settlements that define, regulate, and manage religion in modern politics, including international politics’ (Hurd, 2011: 60). The deconstruction of secularism not as the opposite of ‘religion’ but as somehow comparable to it opens the latter category to necessary scrutiny, challenging social and political scientists to recognise the mutability of religion (Beckford, 2003:3) and to overcome their historical assumption about the solidity of the category ‘religion’ as an object characterised by the separation of belief from practice.

This paper contributes to this conversation, scrutinizing the category of religion and its functional similarity to security, a product of international relations theory and therefore something that is supposedly ‘secular’. I therefore consciously adopt an interdisciplinary approach not merely by introducing religion as a new subject of political science, but by bringing key debates and analysis from the study of religion to bear on international relations. Security, I suggest, can be used as prism through which we can recover the social dimension of religion, helping us to overcome the assumption that it is ‘other’ than public life in the West. Both religion and security, I suggest, are systems of social differentiation, providing communal ideational orientations towards the world with implications for the actions of states and other actors in the international context. Both can involve symbolic practices which serve to identify outsiders, creating and enhancing social solidarity and generating sacred moments of collective ritual emotion. Security, I suggest, is located within the fabric of the Western ‘secular sacred’ and demonstrates that ‘the categories of ‘politics’ and ‘religion’ turn out to implicate each other more profoundly than we thought’ (Asad, 2003: 200).

This paper is set out in three sections. First, I reflect on the shift underway in the analysis of security – characterised particularly by the Copenhagen School and Human Security models. I recognise in these recent approaches attempts to move beyond the nation-state as the de facto subject and object of security. This shift suggests that the dominance of the nation-state as the primary unit of international relations is in question in a context where transnational non-state actors have a significant role.
However, I argue that the decentering of the nation-state needs to go further – its influence still remains in our perception of the relationships between actors at national and international level. Secondly, I explore the ‘national security’ paradigm, arguing that the ‘nation’ should properly be envisaged as an ideational rather than purely rational unit. Understood this way, ‘national security’ becomes as much about collectively binding ideas, values and forces as about self-interest and rational calculation and, like religion, produces human orientations towards the world as well as collective ritual moments of symbolic emotion which both enhance solidarity and confer sanctity on the community. Finally, I suggest that recent history is evidence of the transmission of ‘sacred’ security within an expanding Western ‘security community’. I thus propose a new framework for considering the relationship of religion to security which takes into account the power of ideational forces in motivating global actors and constituting international relationships. The result, I suggest, reflects a challenge for international relations and the sociology of religion which is not how to ‘bring religion into international relations’ – for it is already present – but how to challenge the universalist assumption of Western liberalism and thus the necessary polarity of self and other which is the dominant mode of political discourse.

**Beyond Statism: broadening the scope of security**

The discourse of security has largely been the preserve of international relations and strategic studies. Their ‘guardianship’ of security has undoubtedly been formative, often tying it to the 1940s blueprint of the ‘national security state’: a territorial, ideological and military institution designed to face the developing Soviet threat. Thus, ‘security’ tends to act as a catch-all expression representing an amalgamation of foreign, defence, intelligence and other external policies; the shared objective of protecting the nation-state or sub-state values such as its economy, infrastructure or territory; and the pursuit of this objective via capabilities which are resourced, sponsored or supported by the nation-state.

However, in recent years, the discourse of security has undergone a significant shift. Buzan and his colleagues (Buzan et al, 1999) explain that there has been tension between so-called ‘wideners’ – who seek to broaden the scope of security to include a range of non-military factors - and ‘traditionalists’ – for whom security should remain tied to the territorial nation-state construct. In light of the broad scope most national strategies now ascribe to security, the tide seems to be with the former group. The Copenhagen School purposely side-steps the normative question ‘what ought to be security’s scope’ by focussing on the process of ‘securitization’ by which issues are elevated above routine politics and given emergency status. Nevertheless, securitization theory demonstrates the need for a security framework which is sufficiently flexible to accommodate actors other than the nation-state. The
significance of identifying securitization as an act, thus, might be in removing from security the assumption that its referent objects will always be sub-state categories such as territorial sovereignty, government institutions or national infrastructure. We are thus able to acknowledge that transnational objects like transport, energy supplies and the so-called ‘global commons’ of air, sea and cyberspace may also be subject to securitization. The implication, then, is the decentering of the nation-state as the primary unit of security discourse.

Similarly, the ‘human security’ approach advocated by the UN Development programme represents a security model which makes the individual, rather than the nation-state its subject and makes his freedom (from fear and want) the primary objective of security activity. This type of approach seems to have influenced the former Labour Government (see HMG, March 2008; June 2009) who embraced a distinctly ‘human’ concept of national security with the aim not to protect the state and its institutions but to ‘enable people to live freely and with confidence.’ Although labelled as being vague and unhelpful by critics who argue that it is an articulation of other objectives rather than a framework for security (e.g Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2008), the human security approach suggests that the protection of the nation-state alone need not be the objective of security activity and that security may been pursued on behalf of other subjects.

In fact, as long ago as 1952, the dominance of the nation-state in security studies was being questioned. In his conceptual analysis of security, Wolfers (1952) suggests it cannot be explained or understood merely by reference to a single dimension, but must involve the answers to seven constituent questions: what is to be protected; who is to be protected; to what degree; from which threats; using what apparatus; at what cost; and over what time period? A testament to the ambiguity of security as a category, Wolfers demonstrates that the question of subjects – ‘who is to be protected’ and referent objects – ‘what is to be protected?’ – are far from the only ones at stake. Not only this, for Wolfers, the focus of security around the ‘national interest’ should not be assumed to imply attachment to the nation-state and its material assets, as traditionally thought, but may actually reflect another dimension of security in protecting moral assets. He explains ‘if nations were not concerned with the protection of values other than their survival as independent states... most of them ... would not have had to be seriously worried about their security’ (Wolfers, 1952: 488). We are, thus, faced with both a much wider and deeper concept of security than has usually been presented. If ‘security’ need not be applied merely to material ‘referent objects’, and these referent objects need not be at sub-state level, then we are pointed tentatively in the direction of a model of security that goes beyond international relations theory’s statist limitations. This is a universalisable model in which security involves a subject and an object or objects: it is attached to a particular actor or collective and the

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7 A description of national security coined by the former Cabinet Office Security and Intelligence Coordinator, who describes ‘security’ as a state of confidence that risks can be managed and people can ‘go about their normal life, freely and with confidence’ (Omand, 2006).
values it seeks to protect but makes no assumption about that subject or about the relationship between it and others in the international context.

It is apparent, then, that though it has traditionally been dominated by the nation-state concept, security is not reliant on it. The human security model demonstrates that the subject of security need not be the nation-state, while securitization theory demonstrates that security can be applied to any number of objects. Wolfers outlines a number of other ways in which security and the state can be decoupled, helping us to move away from the traditional statist ‘defence’ model. While these frameworks offer a broadened scope for security which better reflects the current global context, as Shaw (1993:162) has noted ‘broadening the issue agenda for security studies does not necessarily involve broadening the conceptual base’ (Shaw, 1993:162). In other words, although it is widely recognised that the scope of security is broader than had traditionally been imagined, and that non-state actors too are involved in both its pursuit and denial, we have yet to fully understand what this means for the way security operates. I suggest that security has an often-ignored social dimension which has also hitherto been limited by the blueprint of the national security state. By introducing insights from the study of religion, security’s role in creating and sustaining ideational – and not rational – communities is revealed with important consequences for its relationship to religion.

Given its significance as an objective of foreign relations and the increasing complexity of the global context in which the nation-state is no longer the only significant actor on the world stage, and in which technological and economic globalisation renders state boundaries increasingly insignificant, several scholars advocate greater sociological analysis of security (Shaw, 1993; Luard, 1990; Burton, 1972). While I agree that the social dimension of security has been underplayed, this might be as much because of the influence of sociology on international relations as of its absence.

The development of political science, in fact, owes much to the attempts of early thinkers to engage with the idea of social relations. Hobbes and Locke, the patriarchs of what we now call political realism and idealism respectively, founded schools of thought based on opposing views of human nature. The former opposed man’s natural state and civility, arguing that political order is a created artifice necessary to overcome our innate anarchical tendencies and to prevent ‘bellum omnium contra omnes’ (Hobbes, 1996); while the latter retained an essential optimism about man’s natural state. However, these differing opinions about human nature did not prevent them from sharing common assumptions about the nature of society. It is highly significant that both men influenced the development of social contract theory which asserts that ‘society’ is the product of the willing surrender of certain rights by individuals in exchange for certain protections. Though Hobbes, Locke and the third major contractarian, Rousseau (1998), developed very different conceptions of state authority derived from this notion of contractual solidarity, they nevertheless helped to establish ‘social contract’ as the central motif of civil society. With it came the assumption that order achieved
by rational exchange was the only alternative to the disorder produced through natural individualism. ‘Society’, thus, was analogous with the nation-state. And, given Walker (1992) argues international relations theory construes the global context as a reflection of the ideological expression of the nation-state, it follows that the sort of ‘global civil society’ envisaged by Thomas (2001) is a rational-contractual mechanism – the state writ large.

In this context, security can only be conceived of as a political objective, to be achieved through the transactional integration of communities (Deutsch, 1970) built upon rational contract and calculation. International relations theory, and the models of security it offers, is thus not only a product of the Western philosophical milieu but also reflect its sociological assumptions. This means that international relations theory is not only ideologically reliant on the nation-state as the source of political agency, but on rational materialism as its motivation. The discourse of security is thus bound up in these same assumptions.

In recent years, Buzan (2004) has noticed the limitations of this vision of international society, arguing that the result has been for international relations theorists in general – and the English School in particular – to rely too heavily on the assumption of pluralism (the coexistence of sovereign nation-states in a rational-contractual system) rather than solidarism (the development of a ‘society of states’ which share not only transactional and institutional frameworks but also values, meanings and identities) in describing the global context. He thus sets about a ‘social structural interpretation of English School theory’ (Buzan, 2004:15) resituating the ‘pluralist-solidarist’ debate and borrowing from Wendt8 to explore the underdeveloped concept of ‘world society’. Buzan highlights the value of the English School in synthesising realist and rationalist perspectives by offering three concepts (international system, international society, world society) each representing relationships of increasing integration (the first two at state and the last at transnational level). States, according to the English school, do not just exist autonomously alongside each other but can coexist in relationships which are constituted by and constitutive of their character and behaviour. However, in revisiting the ‘world society’ concept, Buzan limits its application to the transnational level, suggesting that it is the best way to explain the phenomenon of the non state actor in a globalised world (Buzan, 2004: 12, 88, 139). While this is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough for it posits a qualitative difference between rational inter-state relationships and those ideational ones between non-state actors which is unhelpful. In fact, I would argue that the operation of security demonstrates that all actors and relationships in the international context can be oriented as much by powerful ideas and emotions as rational calculation.

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8 See Wendt (1999:247-50) – arguably the most significant social constructionist who offers three ‘modes and degrees of internalisation’: coercion, calculation and belief.
In accounts of ‘religious actors’ scholars are increasingly cognisant of the need to consider social relationships and motivations other than those based on self-interest. MacIntyre (quote in Thomas, 2005: 90-94), for example, argues that actors can be motivated not only ‘because there are things they want, but also because there is a certain conception of the kinds of persons, societies or communities they want to be in the world.’ Similarly, in arguing against rational-choice models of religion, Spickard (1998) and Mellor (2000) have both identified the potency of non-utilitarian modes of social action. Kubalkova (2003) has argued for the introduction of ‘international political theology’ in order to ensure that international relations is able to recognise the significance of ‘assertive rules’ as a source of agency.

These arguments, I suggest, may be useful in describing the operation of security. The association of ‘closed’ or ‘assertive rule’ systems with substantive religious positions, as well as the analogy of society with state, has led us to preclude non-rational forces as potential determinants of collective behaviour. However, just as the nation-state must be recognised as only one paradigm of society, so we might call religion one example of a social action system, one in which non-rational forces exert themselves on individuals and groups and orientate their behaviour. The result is that the normative assumptions are removed from both of these categories and we recognise the fact that societies can exist through ‘assertive rules’ as well as through contract. And crucially, so too can societies exist in which both contractual and non-contractual rules matter. This possibility was excluded by the privatisation of religion in the West, where religion in the public sphere had been ‘routinized’ or ‘rationalised’. However, if the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism has taught us anything, it is that actors on the world stage continue to be motivated by non-contractual rules and not by rationality or self-interest. What has not yet been considered is just how powerful these ideational forces might be in our own system.

**Sacred Security? Pre-contractual solidarity and International Relations**

Against the grain of dominant rational utilitarianism of his time, Emile Durkheim explained social life by explicit reference to symbol and ritual, to the non-rational and the emotional. For Durkheim, social order should not be described as the product of rational choice or calculation but explained as the result of supra-individual forces which exist prior to and outside of the intellect and yet exercise constraint over individuals. He called these non-rational foundations of society ‘social facts’ and considered sociology’s primary purpose to be the investigation of them. Rejecting ‘thick’ description – the overlapping of different explanations of social phenomena which interestingly is characteristic of much constructivism today – Durkheim (1982) argued that there is a single discoverable reality.

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9 ‘Assertive rules’ involve an immediate demand which must be followed and are distinguished from ‘contractual rules’ which involve the application of reason and judgement by the individual.
which can be revealed via scientific investigation. For him, all social institutions and currents, including in the law, education, crime, family and religion, carry the status of ‘social facts’ orientating and motivating human behaviour hence ‘social life must be explained not by the conception of it formed by those who participate in it, but by the profound causes which escape their consciousness’ (Durkheim, 1982: 171).

Durkheim’s nephew and protégé, Marcel Mauss, shared his mentor’s unease with utilitarian contractual assumptions about social relationships. In his classic work, The Gift, Mauss (1990) used ethnography to demonstrate that one of the logical necessities of the contractual system – the ‘free gift’ – was a misnomer. By demonstrating that gifts are not free but in fact play an important function in the enhancement of social solidarity, he exposed the distinction between contract and gift (and thus obligation and freedom) as a modern conception rather than a universal social truth.

Just as Durkheim and Mauss disputed contemporary accounts of society by demonstrating the existence of pre-contractual solidarity, so too must we challenge their intellectual legacy which continues today. We are, thus, required to question the assumptions of modernity which are at the root of international relations. Recognition that the ‘nation-state’ is merely one form of society must be part of a broader programme of critique which recognises modernity itself as a rational creation, a social-intellectual construct or, as Alexander (2003: 193) calls it an ‘ideology’. Viewed in this way, the assumptions and themes of modernity are removed from their privileged status, are no longer taken as factual but as ideological which means they can be systematically de-normativised.

In questioning the very assumption at the heart of the modern project – that we have reached the pinnacle of an evolutionary process – Alexander (2003) reflects one of the characteristic motifs of ‘late’ or ‘high’ modernity: epistemological uncertainty. It is in this spirit of uncertainty, in fact, that the very trope of linear progression so characteristic of modern discourse has been inverted to generate the ‘constructivist’ and ‘post-positivist’ theoretical approaches which seeks to add ‘meaning’, ‘ideas’ and ‘narratives’ back into conversations that have, for so long, been dominated by the indomitable takeover of rationality. However, these sort of accounts often result in ‘adding’ or ‘bringing in’ (Fox & Sandler, 2004), perpetuating existing frameworks rather than providing alternatives. Alexander has thus argued for a ‘strong programme’ of cultural sociology which is ‘as hardheaded and critical as materialist sociology’ and, crucially which ‘makes collective emotions and ideas central to its methods and theories precisely because it is such subjective and internal feelings that so often seem to rule the world... [it] forms the will of collectivities; shapes the rules of organisations; defines the moral substance of law; and provides the meaning and motivation for technologies, economics, and military machines’ (Alexander, 2003: 5). In high modernity, the realisation has finally been reached that the first rule of the Westphalian synthesis — the separation of private from public — is impossible. Urry has written of globalised society in exactly this spirit,
drawing on Hetherington’s analysis of the Bund to argue that communities exist based on ‘mutual sentiment and emotional feeling...maintained symbolically through active, reflexive monitoring of group solidarity’ (Urry, 2000: 143).

It is for this reason that, although it remains the most prevalent on the world stage, the ‘national security’ paradigm need not be considered a restatement of statist security, but instead reflects the very paradigm of security’s social dimension: it is connected culturally and historically to specific ideational communities, helping to create and sustain them.

Accounts of nationalism have traditionally relied on Gellner’s principle ‘that the political and national unit should be congruent’ (Gellner, 1983: 1) and therefore consider the ‘nation’ to be a historically contingent social entity only ‘insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern, territorial state’ (Hobsbawm, 1990: 9-10). It follows, then, that ‘nation’ is a political construct, a system of classification, and that the prefix in ‘national security’ merely refers to the specific administrative, economic, technical and bureaucratic machinery involved in the creation or pursuit of security.

Hastings (1997), however, has identified medieval foundations of the ‘nation’ concept, making it not only conceptually separate from the nation state but prior to it. Moreover, in arguing that tradition, and not sovereignty or territory, creates national solidarity, Hastings envisages the ‘nation’ entirely independently of the rational basis accorded to the nation-state. It follows that ‘nationalism’ should no longer be conceived of as a secular political ideology, but an ideational expression of communal sentiment.

What is more, Smith (2000: 792) has argued that far from a secular doctrine of self-determinism, nationhood is first and foremost a form of society, a collection of people united by forces other than contract or territory. But not only this, the nation is, in fact, a ‘sacred communion of citizens....its sacred properties help to create cohesive national identities and engender a sense of national self-confidence and exclusivity, attributes which in turn feed into the conduct of international politics as a force for stability as well as order and destruction’ (Smith, 2000:795).

Just as Durkheim argued that ‘the division of the world into two comprehensive domains, one sacred, the other profane, is the hallmark of religious thought’ (Durkheim, 2001: 36), so Smith invites us to conceive of religion by reference to its function. Indeed, it was this socially differentiating function of religion that modernity had sought to deny in accounts like Weber’s (1994) which, using the schema of ‘routinization’, described the evolution of society in terms of the increasing control and rationalization of charismatic authority. As Habermas explains: ‘What Weber depicted was not only the secularisation of Western culture, but also and especially the development of modern societies from the viewpoint of rationalisation’ (Habermas, 1990: 1).
By suggesting that the nation is an example of a ‘sacred community’, a collective which is self-consciously set apart from others, Smith gives us an entirely new way to conceive of society and thus international relations and security. No longer is security merely a political construct intimately connected with one version of society, the nation state, and its ‘monopoly of the legitimate use of violence’ (Weber, 1946: 334). Instead ‘national’ security can be understood as something which helps to create and sustain the symbolic forces and narratives which constitute nationhood especially in the country which created it.

On one hand, the USA might be considered to be the paradigmatic modern nation state – born out of a rejection of the ‘old world’ establishment of England; founded on a series of Enlightenment-inspired freedoms and inspired by the possibilities of rationalism and progress to ‘assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Law’s of Nature and Nature’s God entitle them’\textsuperscript{10}. Yet, on the other, it continues to demonstrate uniquely high levels of public religiosity and its own sacred narrative which suggest that it is a unity held together by more than mere social contract. Since the 1960s, sociologists have called America a unique ‘civil religious’ culture in which a core of traditional American values and ideals are elevated to sacred status (Parsons, 1966; Bellah, 1967).

Similarly, Tiryakian (1982) has argued that the legacy of the Puritan ethic in the US was the breakdown of the dualism which had previously been characteristic of Christianity, between ‘this’ and ‘other’ worlds, effectively extending the earthly horizon and making the sacralisation of the mundane possible. As a result, America itself has been sacralised, the traditionally Christian motifs of mission and service have been assimilated and ‘those viewed as standing outside the moral community may be treated not only with indifference qua social actors but also on occasions of sacrilsation, as ‘enemies of the Lord’ enemies whose destruction is sanctified and which becomes a course of action calling for the mobilisation of saints’ (Tiryakian, 1982: 357). What Tiryakian is describes here, of course, is the seemingly inevitable outcome of ‘sacred nationalism’: in the very moments within which a community, its values and symbols are sacralised, so are enemies – those outside the communion whose existence potentially threatens it – created.

There is certainly evidence of this in the US context. Smith (2000) suggests that the sacred community is characterised by the appearance of four ‘sacred properties’ (ethnic election, sacred territory, national sacrifice and a sacred narrative). Not only is it possible to identify all four in the United States, these properties seem to have developed as a direct result of experience of conflict.

The agenda of the Pilgrim Fathers on their arrival in the US was religious in both substance and rhetoric, defining the United States as exceptional, uniquely chosen and uniquely required to act: ‘A sense of mission to redeem the old world by high example was generated in pioneers of idealistic

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\textsuperscript{10} Text from the United States Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4 1776.
spirit on their arrival in the new world... It appeared thereafter in successive generations of Americans, with changes in the type of mission, but with the sense of mission unaltered’ (Merk, 1963: 3). America’s sense of ethnic election, then, has long been bound up in the identification of the inferior ‘other’ and has resulted in attempts to change the ‘other’ or worse destroy it. For this reason, Merk has called the nineteenth century doctrine of Manifest Destiny a ‘special variety’ of nationalism. This doctrine incorporated not only the concept of American election but also represented America as a great experiment of democracy which, at once, could teach lessons to the Old World and at the same time ‘regenerate backwards peoples of the continent’ (Merk 1963: 3). It was via this process that sacred territory was secured for the United States. The annexation of the North American continent, though, required the expulsion and destruction of the native American ‘other’ and, at the same time, established a covenantal relationship between nation and land.

Manifest Destiny is a reminder that, from its earliest incarnation to the present day, the United States has narrated its own history in terms of a ‘mission’. This idea, suggest Merk, began with the flight from the Old World, developed through the annexation of the continent and, by the twentieth century, had become a feature of Wilsonian foreign policy. America, thus, feels itself ‘impelled...to be a redeemer’ (Bell, 1975:202), its relationship to the world is defined not only by ‘otherness’ but by a sense of superiority and election of which the inevitable conclusion has been polarity and conflict. Yet, while the experience of conflict creates distance between the United States and the ‘other’, it seems to have had a paradoxical effect internally.

Reflecting on the experience of the first Iraq War (1990-1991), Aho suggests that the embroidery of national flags onto military uniforms, the widespread wearing of yellow ribbons among the domestic US population, and the establishment of correspondence between school children and soldiers on the front line, all had the effect of enhancing national solidarity. This suggestion is supported by research undertaken by Simmel and Coser\textsuperscript{11} which indicates that inter-group conflict can restore or enhance integration, leading Aho to conclude that ‘while groups ostensibly fight only to secure their own short-term interests at the expense of others, the latent ‘function’ or intended end of such fights is social solidarity’ (Aho, 1994:15).

Actions taken in the name of American ‘security’, then, may have contributed as much to internal cohesion as to the achievement of specific material goals. But security has played an important role not only in enhancing the solidarity of the American polity, but it is sacralisation. From the very beginning, the national security concept was embedded in America’s sacred narrative of election and mission. Both the Truman Doctrine speech and the NSC68 paper reflected on America’s role of ‘leadership’ in the free world and outlined the ‘fundamental purpose of the United States’ by recalling

\textsuperscript{11} Aho refers to Lewis Coser’s text \textit{The Functions of Social Conflict} and George Simmel’s \textit{Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations}. 
the sacred rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence. But national security has also contributed to the ethno-history of the nation by providing the context for moments of national sacrifice and collective ritual behaviour. The most obvious example, of course, is war itself. As Caillois (1959) explains, war is constitutive of the social life because it generates an enemy – consolidating collective identity and providing meaningful symbols and events which create social order. In this, American history is paradigmatic. What is significant about America’s relationship with war is not merely the sense of exceptional patriotism which it has inspired – characterised by intense reverence for the soldier, the veteran and for festivals such as Independence Day – but its sacred character.

‘Security status’ has the same sociological resonance as war in Caillois’ account – it demarcates time, relationships, and connects the individual to a bigger cause. However, unlike war, security is more than a moment or an event, more than merely the collective experience. Security acts as the sort of social fact Durkheim described, exerting an orientating influence over the American population in a variety of ways. The most extreme example of this, of course, is the bodily orientation of the military.

In the sacred narrative of the United States, then, security may offer a paradigm of Durkheimian religion: situations of threat or potential threat create the circumstances for relationships of inclusion or exclusion, a sacred community is energised around totemic symbols; and relationship with profane enemies must be managed by complex systems of prohibition. There might even be something in the experience of a ‘security’ situation which might be called transcendent because it regenerates social solidarity by interrupting the routine in a ‘paroxysm of collective experience’ (Caillois, 1959:1179)

**Sacred Contagion? Vanguard theory and the transmission of security**

Security’s sacred character is also evident in its transmission across the world. In re-invigorating the idea of the ‘security community’, Adler and Barnett (1998) account for the increasingly complex network of social relationships which comprise ‘international relations’ without dispensing with the state system entirely. The security community, then, reflects a new model of power as the subject matter of friendship rather than animosity, moving international relations from the ‘logic of anarchy’ to the ‘logic of community’ (Adler and Barnett, 1998:9). In the construction of communities of dependable peaceable relations, ‘it is the social frame of collective meanings that matters most for individuals’ competence and intentional actions and organises them into epistemic communities’¹², social movements, terrorist networks and world religions’ (Adler, 2005: 176, my italics). Security, then, is a practice which integrates units within the system. The important distinction Adler makes,

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¹² In this context, the ‘epistemic community’ refers to the network of knowledgeable agents who influence the development of policy. Critically, Adler suggests that these communities do not only exhibit commonalities of practice but also of value.
however, is in recognising that these ‘communities of practice’ and the frameworks and institutions which regulate their behaviour leading to trust and collective identity, are unified at a more fundamental level. Adler suggests that the ‘rational’ action (force, coercion, sanctions, deterrence) of security actors is actually embedded in a context of ‘background knowledge’.

Similar to Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’, background knowledge, says Adler ‘is the context within which rational action takes place’ (Adler, 2005: 202). It organises communities around shared perspectives and self-understanding. Only as a result of this is shared identity generated and, more importantly for us, is communal activity oriented. In light of this, we might sensibly recall the ‘social facts’ which Durkheim considered to be the proper subject-matter of sociology. These supra-individual forces, he recognised, exercised constraint over individuals and orientated their behaviour. Elevating Durkheim’s theory of social facts into the global order, I would suggest that the institutions, shared meanings and symbols which constitute the ‘background knowledge’ of security communities are actually themselves social facts operating on an international rather than local scale. Freed from the limitations imposed on it by the (often normative) assumptions of international relations theory – that it is the objective of states in protecting themselves and their interests and therefore that international relationships are either of enmity or rivalry – we instead recognise that security is something which both creates and is reliant upon relationships of identity.

Furthermore, the development and expansion of security communities is evidence of the ‘transmission’ of a particular identity, as Adler suggests, communities of practice expand when their agents ‘successfully compete for epistemic and material authority and manage to get non-members to adopt their practice, learn the community’s knowledge and discourse, and thus adopt its identity.’ (Adler, 2008: 201) This, I would suggest, has been the experience of America’s propagation of the values of security, freedom and democracy through the twentieth century.

Buzan (2004: 222-7) has used what he calls ‘vanguard theory’ to explain the transmission of ideas. By a combination of power and persuasion (the practice of security), the values of Western Europe, which was at the time the dominant power in Western civilisation – reified into a particular view of the international order at Westphalia – were transmitted across the world. The system of sovereign states was far from a global reality at the time but was universalised by a community of practice and, in the process, the ideals of rationalism, science, nationalism and sovereignty were internalised.

Taking from Buzan’s ‘vanguard theory’ the ‘inside-out’ trajectory from sub-global to global level, and taking from Adler that apparently rational practice of ‘security communities’ is, in fact, orientated by shared ‘background knowledge’, we might suggest a Durkheimian interpretation of international relations which casts new light on security and its relationship to religion. Having

13 Defined as ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 53)
criticised purely substantive accounts of religion on account of their being structurally absent from public life as construed by international relations, this thesis has instead offered a functional account of religion as a value system of social differentiation and social action. In this, it speaks not only to relationships within nations but between and beyond them. Like the ‘social facts’ which orientate the behaviour of individuals in particular communities, so ‘background knowledge’ accumulates and orientates the behaviour of states within international communities of practice. Values are thus shared within the international system as a means of creating security, not undermining it (as accounts which pit religion against security would suggest). But more than this, the sanctity of security – conferred, in the first instance, by its relationship to the American civil sacred – suggests not only that this system of social values helps to create security, but also that it helps to transmit it within and beyond the boundaries of security communities.

Mellor (2000: 277) has used Durkheim’s approach to explain the vitality of religion in the global context suggesting that rational actions gain social significance ‘from the emotional energy that underpins them’. In the same way, we have seen that the expansion of the ‘security community’ – a community of practice – is reliant upon a shared context of what we might call ‘sacred values’. So might we, in fact, liken the spread of security to the ‘inherent contagiousness of sacred things’ which was central to Durkheim’s conception of the social life. For Durkheim, individuals’ experience of the world is transfigured by moments of intense collective experience during which vital emotional energy is attached to ‘sacred’. Thus sanctity is not an inherent property but something superimposed onto objects and values as the result of intense social experience. So too can sanctity be attached to similar and proximate objects by association (Durkheim, 2001: 237-242).

Vanguard theory places emphasis on the power of a value or set of values which comes to be globalised (Buzan, 2004: 222). So too, it implies a significant role for the originators or exponents of this value. In the same way, Durkheim’s contagion is spread by virtue of the emotional energy attached to a particular object or objects. Just as Buzan puts Europe in the ‘vanguard role’ for the development of interstate society, as a result of the spread of ‘sovereignty’, something which originated at the Peace of Westphalia, so I would suggest the United States is the lead actor in the propagation of security, a value which has been sanctified by association, and which has spread via proximity across the Western world. Of course, just as Durkheim recognised rational forces are also at work – albeit the result of prior non-rational orientations – we must accept that contagiousness is not the only way sacred values are spread. So, whether palatable or not, the spread of our sacred values by force or coercion remains not only possible but likely because ‘the key to solidarism is what values are shared, not how/why they are shared, which will always be a mix of coercion, calculation and belief’ (Buzan, 2004: 153).
An emerging theme in the study of security – and international relations more widely – is the exposure of its Western-centrism and attempts to overcome it by introducing non-Western experiences and categories to existing frameworks (Bilgin, 2010). Burke argues for a re-calibration of freedom and security and their removal from ‘ontological correspondence with the West’ (Burke, 2007:234). However, Bilgin (2010: 617) argues sensibly that ‘there is a need to go beyond adding and stirring’ to recognise the constitutive significance of Western-centrism for security. We are, thus, not called upon to dismiss security entirely as an unhelpful trope, but nor can we remove it from its contextual heritage. Instead, we must simply dispense with any notion of the neutrality, universality and secularity of security as it is practiced by the West and to recognise that the ‘provision’ of security – through military support, capacity building and even development – also entails transmission.

At the outset of this project, I sought to overcome what I identified as an intellectual predisposition to make the categories religion and security inimical by positing some positive correlation between religion and security. What has instead emerged is a more complex relationship. First of all, close analysis of security has revealed important (but largely neglected) insights about our own actions and motivations. Secondly, security, in all of its ambiguity, has emerged as a prism which helps us to generate new insights about the nature of religion as it exists and functions, creating a new set of challenges for academic enquiry and for policy making.

All of this means that security practitioners need to be versed in more than substantive accounts of religion and must be attentive to the assumptions at the heart of their own decision making. This sort of reflexivity might lead us to the conclusion that what lies ‘between’ religion and security is modernity. Modernity not only created the categories of ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ but othered them from one another. And it is only as a result of distinctly post-modern discourse – characterised by uncertainty, the perception of risk and the breakdown of polarities – that the significance of modernity in creating and disciplining the relationship of religion and security in the West has been revealed.
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