

Scholarship on the Intersection of Religion and Politics

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Abstract

Faith in spiritual being was a result of many fears, considered as evil working against human beings. Religion became a source to fight this evil, and therefore, it existed throughout the human history, though there were periods where it was thought to be losing its vigour. With the passage of time different judgments developed over the debates regarding religion and politics. Religion was linked with civilization by many scholars or, in other words, was explained and identified based on its followers' milieu despite the fact that one civilization had followers from different faiths. In addition, civilizations are differentiated by history, language, culture, tradition and religion. The process of globalization, on the one hand, increased the interaction among different civilizations and, on the other, intensified the differences and commonalities among them. The study explores whether religion and politics have direct bearing on each other and whether they influence individual and state behaviour or not.

Key Words: Religion, Politics, Secularism, Modernism, Crusades, Islam.

There have been debates about the role and compatibility of religion and politics among the students and scholars of international relations as to whether religion shapes politics and political views or politics is the driving force behind religion. The answer to these inquiries may provide insight to our own times while viewing the historical parallels with caution. suggestions

To begin with, we have to identify the meaning of both the terms for a better understanding of their relationship and the influence that they have on each other. Karaman notes that, 'Religion is thought to be present since time immemorial as an aspect of human value and having functional value. Hence, one must seek to bring out its exceptional traits despite problems in defining religion.'¹

Viewed in the above perspective, we have to find out the *exceptional traits* that religion possesses and then observe the impact that they may have on human psyche. Religion has been symmetrical with human species; therefore, in history there was no human group that was deficient in religion. Infact, religion is older than history itself but many scholars of modern times believe that it was fading away.²

Another definition of religion is 'belief in a super natural being or beings and more especially in a God (who controls the universe and is worshipped and obeyed. Effect of such belief on mental attitude are; (a) the sense of obligation (in some religions, group obligation rather than individual) and (b) personal devotion (as in Christianity)'.³ All individuals, belonging to any faith, believe in a super natural being and to some extent have a sense of

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obligation and devotion to their religion. The question that needs to be sorted out is: how do these affect an individual's inter-personal or inter-societal relationship?

Religion came into existence as a tool against evil. When human beings first experienced death, they sought a spiritual being - god, to counter it. When belief became widespread but evil like famine, suffering, wars, and death etc., continued, the believers invoked an opposing force - the Satan. Thus, religion generates belief that bad things keep happening in life even though gods are doing the best. The Satan also influences human beings making them and nations its agents causing social and economic conflicts. This divisive influence can be seen throughout the history, both in wars between nations and class/sects conflict inside nations. Historically, once religion is institutionalized and established, its hierarchy links itself with ruling class and works in their behalf. The nations at war believe that they are on the side of god fighting evil, and that belief then turns wars into crusades.⁴

Taking into consideration the second term, politics stands for the science and art of government; political affairs or life; (as pl.) political principles.⁵ This definition of politics gives an idea that it has to do with all individuals involved in political affairs. If politics is all about political affairs then, does it have anything to do with religion or religious beliefs or not and what is the connection between the two?

Dr. John Senamu, Arch Bishop of York, explains the linkage between the two terms. He explained politics as the word derived from the Greek for polis – the City, for the place where life was lived and public business was done. Explaining the relationship, he further elucidated that the religion and politics do mix as religion helps politics to rediscover our duties and responsibilities to one another.⁶ The query to be addressed here is how religion facilitates politics in rediscovering an individual's duties and responsibilities and how that is interpreted by the followers of any faith, who, then describes the impact that religion and politics have on each other.

On the other hand, Thorleif argues, 'religious and political systems have different aspects to be considered and different circumstances in time and space to take into account. Therefore, the different aspects of relationship between religion and politics may depend on the content and level of the various religious and political systems and their socio-cultural context.'⁷ Accordingly, the different aspects of both religion and politics at different times and locations may also help in determining the relationship between the two.

By the same token, Giesen and Suber (2005) have explained the above statement as, 'the distinction between religion and politics has entered a focal position in intellectual circles. Interestingly, the proponents of secularization and de-secularization theorists, on the concept of religion, differ with each other. Since the beginnings of modernity, secular theorists believe that religion and politics have been constantly disconnected, not only at the institutional and social structural level but also in the domain of culture and worldview. Politics and religion are specified separate spheres and different logics and the mixing is regarded as a departure from accurate modernity.'⁸

Moreover, there existed a view that religion have a prominent role in international politics but policy makers and political thinkers assumed that rationality and modernity will push religion out of political sphere using laws, coercion and public opinion.⁹ Indeed, the *Era of Modernity*¹⁰ caused disconnection between religion and politics in western societies but the Church confronted this era. The church did so because one of the characteristics of modernity is freedom of religious expression and religious pluralism. It was an attempt by

group of scholars and church officials to reinterpret Christian doctrine in term of scientific thought of 19th century. Pope Pius X called these attempts as modernism in 1907.¹¹

For this reason, there has always been opposition to modernism, secularism, and enlightenment by all *organized religions*¹² around the world at different periods. In addition, the religious groups, having influence on the hearts and minds of politicians to influence policy making, have lost their grounds because of secular thoughts in public mind.¹³ Nonetheless, over the past several decades, faith has played a growing role in human affairs, regardless of the quick spread of modernization. For example, incidents like Iranian revolution in 1979, the Catholic Church's role in the third waves of democratization and 9/11 showed that religion has become an important global force.¹⁴

The point often overlooked is that economic and social changes are separating people from the longstanding local identities, which as a result are weakening nation states that were a source of identity. However, religion is one of the factors filling this gap in the shape of fundamentalist movements that are present in all faiths such as Western Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Cold War started and wiped away the Iron Curtain but the ideological division of Europe was changed into cultural division of Europe, between Western Christianity, on the one hand, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam, on the other.¹⁵

However, de-secularization spread with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 when Huntington in his theory of '*Clash of Civilization*', stressed that Christianity is a successful source for liberalization and democracy. This over shadowed the vision of a forthcoming '*Golden Era*' of peace and prosperity. As a result, war atrocities were committed in Burundi and Rwanda by Hutu and Tutsi, in former Yugoslavia by orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnians, in Sri Lanka by Buddhist Singhalese and Hindu Tamils, in Northern Ireland by Protestants and Catholics, in Israel by Jews and Muslims and in Kashmir by Muslims and Hindus.¹⁶

Although this may be true, however, Roukes (2002) contemplates that religions are not ideologies yet many contain ideological features effecting spiritual and secular life when believers of a religion apply their beliefs to secular political objectives.¹⁷ The rise of fundamentalist movements and their followers among most of the great civilizations became a matter of concern for de-secularization theorists. These movements resulted as a justification against modernity, because of the ensuing factors like, modern individualism, ethical relativism, and commercialization in modern society, which brought anomie and perplexity. Therefore, traditional form of religion would takeover modernity once again.¹⁸

Another key point is that religious belief influences human and their behaviour leading to social and economic conflict, which results, into wars among nation states. States go to war for their survival or attainment of their goals. The nature of conflicts and wars could be different but belief plays a crucial role be it religious, economic, or political.¹⁹ In the light of primitive period study, human sought self-survival with the help of spiritual being to fight the evil of the time. Later on, with the emergence of nation states, survival and power enhancement brought nation (with similar ideologies) together against the opponents. The religious conflicts merged with ideological conflicts as was the case in the nineteenth century when after the Second World War, the world divided into capitalist and communist blocs.

With the above statement in mind, it is important to realize that religion and politics deal with (socio-political) matters related to religious, political, and other interest groups who

are concerned with these issues. Therefore, the political institutions having their own interests would legitimate their interest in religious terms irrespective of the fact whether these relate to religious values or fulfill the needs of the religious population or not. Likewise, the secular organizations would validate their behaviour but differently.

Under these circumstances, the fact thus is that participation in political arena has, to some extent, influence on religion. Similarly, participation by religious groups in politics creates religious elites for maximizing the power of political leaders belonging to the particular religious group.²⁰ For the same reason, Malik (2006) also notes that, for political interests a hegemonic use of religion and moral virtue are present for quite sometime.²¹

Religious groups may in their capacity attempt to influence policy matters by making their claims legitimized on religious grounds. In addition, these religious groups achieve their objectives through the influence that they may have on the population and the political support that they construct and thus assert themselves. Henceforth, not only history of religion is old but also its connection with politics. The connection, however, differs in time and space. Taking into account the three Abrahamic religions, Jews, Christians, and Muslim worship the same God yet have fought many wars against each other. One thing common in these three religions is that they stress the government obligation to protect individuals from sinning. For instance, both Muslims and Jews do not eat pork, Catholic Church opposes abortion, and hence Muslim and Jewish restaurants do not serve pork and Catholics oppose legalizing abortion.²²

Similarly, religion influences political culture and helps shape individual thinking.²³ Thereupon, an important issue is how religion, viewed as an aspect of culture, influences political culture and public policy, and how political culture and public policy influence religion. The argument put forward is thus, religion has been made an essential element in influencing political behaviour of state. Hence, the followers of any faith would accept a verdict if they believed that it was coming from God or was in the Holy Scripture. Accordingly, they become a source of carrying that agenda further for the achievement of their particular objectives. To put it differently, Edward Mortimer (1982) also assumes that God determines political events and He acts through human beings.²⁴

Historical Connection between Religion and Politics:

To assess the relationship between religion and politics in various perspectives, there are many examples where there is visible connectivity between the two. The roots of the sturdy relationship can be traced back to treaty of Westphalia and even before.

Throughout the history, religion and politics have been mixed and utilized to have an impact on society. Secularists and their opponent groups have their own interpretation of the necessity of this interconnection in states. Nevertheless, various quarters have expressed the separation of religion and state. However, those who promote the separation of religion and state, are said to be anti-religious themselves. At the same time, where there are religious groups in majority, it is the minority religions that fear discrimination by the dominant group that express separation of religion and state.²⁵

In contrast, scholars like Saxton are of the view that religion is destructive because it divides humanity into "Us" versus the "Evil Empire" and that belief in religion promotes the illusion that it will save the humanity from evil which is not so. He, therefore, suggests that the survival of human requires learning to live without religion.²⁶ Despite the arguments that religion should not dominate politics and politics has not controlled religion, both seem to

have intermixed. Both political and religious elites have worked together to further their respective causes, which could presumably be the achievement of power/authority, whenever and wherever it was required.

Another view of this relationship is that political conflicts that divide different faith groups can grow into religious conflict while religious conflicts can change into political conflicts.²⁷ For example, the conflict between Protestant and Catholic faith developed into a political conflict between England and Ireland. These and similar instances indicate that religion has played a major role in national and international politics and it will continue to do so because of the fact that religion has remained a source of conflict as well as peace. Unarguably, however, there remains an interest of political participation by religious elite as a requirement to correct the evil in the society with the support of political elite.

No doubt, there is an increase in religious affiliation and political involvement of religious leaders, as can be seen in the polls from across the world. It is also believed that religion has bolstered as well as undermined stable governments. If, on the one other hand, it has advanced political reforms and human rights then, on the hand, it has induced irrationality, persecution, extremism and terrorism.²⁸ Hence, the debate continues that both are dependent on each other to gain power.

Islam and Crusades:

This section of the study overviews the historical connection between religion and politics as to how wars were fought in the name of religion to gain political power. At the end of the Middle Ages (1440), Western thoughts were controlled and confined to monasteries by the church. Moreover, during that era, corruption was rife and the Pope was more interested in politics than religious affairs. In that scenario, there revived liberal intellectual thinking, known as Renaissance, in the city of Florence which later spread to Northern Europe and England.²⁹

Nevertheless, the most visible aspect of religio-political connection was that of the Islamic march towards the Western World, when one religion stood against the other. One of the permanent features of Middle Ages was the conflict between Christian and Muslim powers. By going back to the history of Islam, we ascertain that Islam spread into Fertile Crescent and beyond in 7th century. Few decades after the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslims conquered Near East, the whole of North Africa, Spain and entered France. They conquered Sicily and, two hundreds years later, captured parts of Southern Italy.³⁰ When Jerusalem was captured, the era saw religion as a source of conflict amongst Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

When Muslims captured Jerusalem, Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade on November 25, 1095, at the council of Clermont, advising the knights of the Europe to unite against the Muslims for the liberation of Jerusalem.³¹ The Crusaders in eleventh and thirteenth century were temporarily successful in bringing Christianity and Christian rule to Jerusalem.³²

During the First Crusade, the Eastern³³ and Western³⁴ Churches, having psychological differences started a struggle for superiority over each other. In the West, the Roman Empire was destroyed, however, Byzantium or Rome in the East remained unscathed. Pope Urban II spoke of wars of liberation, which had extended the power of Western Church to the Muslim territories of Spain and Sicily. When emperor Alexius Comnenus I of Byzantium asked Pope for military assistance, the Pope saw an opportunity in it for

expanding the power of Western Church. The First Crusade was important to the West in becoming a great world power but their first victims became Jews because Crusaders blamed them for Crucifixion of Christ and loosing the Holy land. Later on, however, they turned against the Muslims. Europe, after 1095, completely became a different place and the process of Christianization begun afterwards. This is because, the Crusading is directly associated to the present day conflict in the Middle East.³⁵

As can be seen, it is unlikely that centuries old military reciprocity between the West and Islam will decline but rather it could become more bitter and hostile. Both sides see this interaction as the clash of civilization as M. J. Akbar examines that the West's next conflict is certainly going to come from the Muslim world.³⁶ Other criticisms focus on the probability that after the end of communism, the West would seek a new enemy on which to use its modern technology. Shireen Hunter (1998) and Dr. Mansoor Umar Khan put it in this way that Islam is going to be the next enemy of the West after the fall of Communism.³⁷ By and large, it is interesting to note that few scholars term this conflict as not between Islam and the West but between the fundamentalists in Muslim, Christian, Jews and modern world.³⁸

Considering all the arguments, the conflict between Israeli Jews and Arab Muslims in the Middle East persists even today dividing the world into West and Islam where the West is united against the followers of Islam but there is no unity between and among Muslim Ummah. For instance, Palestine that is the land of three Abrahamic religions has witnessed bloodshed on its soil since centuries, and at present, has become a theatre of war for religions where peace is nowhere to be seen despite international community intercessions.

Consequently, as Viorst (2003) notes that the war between Israel and Palestinians is causing regional instability and a hurdle to any hope of reconciliation between the West and Islam.³⁹ Hence, the quagmire of bloodshed in the name of religion and religious identity continues and it is not limited to one place at present.

Conflict within Religion:

Not only the conflict between one and the other religion is causing friction among states but also different sects and denominations in the same religion are creating rifts within and outside a state. At times religious groups, within a country, resort to violent means in case of non-compliance by the governments. Religious conflicts and wars are one side of the coin but over the past half century, with the growth and strength of religious belief, sectarian hostilities have also increased. Saxton suggests that, creeds and denominations have multiplied which are divided internally as well as externally over denominational loyalty against unity and cooperation of different churches. Great surges of passion have, sometimes, stimulated religious believers which, as a result, have destroyed sectarian and doctrinal separations.⁴⁰

These religious differences came to surface at different times in history among which the struggle between Protestant and Catholic faiths in Christianity is one. From 1618 until 1648, many Western European countries saw the bloody Thirty Years Wars based on religious antagonism between Protestant and Catholic faiths.⁴¹ According to Zakauallah (2004), the Protestant Reformation created a split in Christianity, which was united under the Catholic Church in Western Europe. He further elucidates that the struggle for political power led to wars in sixteenth century in which Protestants and Catholics killed each other and the persecution of Protestants led to their mass migration from Europe to America.⁴²

the role of religion in US, James Bryce, an intellectual of the British Liberal Party, remarked in 1880 that clergymen were the first influential citizens in the US. They not only had authority in churches but also emphasized on the moral reformation of the society. They slowly enlarged their sphere of influence beyond their churches. Therefore, American religiosity was too vigorous a force to be kept within its limits. The US foreign policy was never beyond the reach of religious influence.⁴³ Alexis de Tocqueville recognized the role of religion in shaping American culture thus:

“This civilization is the result...of two distinct ingredients, which anywhere else have often ended in war but Americans have succeeded somehow to meld together in wondrous harmony; namely the spirit of religion and the spirit of liberty”⁴⁴

The Protestant Reformation was a major movement in the sixteenth century against the Roman Catholic Church to reform its beliefs and practices. With the Protestant Reformation Movement, the supremacy of ecclesiastical pope came to an end and the Protestant churches were established. The Reformation completely changed the medieval way of life in Western Europe.⁴⁵ The Thirty Years' war ended on October 24, 1648 by a series of treaties known as Peace of Westphalia. It readjusted the religious and political affairs of Europe and completely recognized the sovereignty and independence of each state of the Holy Roman Empire making it almost powerless.⁴⁶ Till date, this difference remains and has given rise to many denominations in the Catholicism and Protestantism.

Similarly, in Islam, the history of division between Muslim into two sects - Sunni and Shia, dates back to the era of Hazrat Abu Bakr, the companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The term Shia stems from *Shi'atu Ali*, Arabic for 'partisans of Ali' who believe that Hazrat Ali, the Prophet's (PBHM) cousin and son in law and his descendants are part of divine order. Sunni, means the followers of the *Sunna* or way in Arabic of the Prophet (PBUH), were against the political succession based on Prophet's bloodline. Hazrat Abu Bakr's selection as caliph was rejected by Shias when he became the first caliph instead of Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib,. Hazrat Ali became the caliph in 656 AD and was assassinated after five years. The caliphate was passed on to Umayyad dynasty in Damascus and later Abbasids in Baghdad. Shias rejected their authority and in 680 the second Umayyad caliph killed the son of Hazrat Ali and his companions in Karbala, Iraq. Henceforth, Karbala became the defining moral story for Shias.⁴⁷

The Shia and Sunni sects have created a gap between many Muslim states and followers of a particular sect in one country have gained foreign sympathies for inequities against them. For example, any discrimination against Shia community in Pakistan or Iraq etc., becomes a matter of concern for Iran. Moreover, Saudi Arabia will also strive to set up her style of Islam (Wahabism) in the rest of Muslim world. Saudi Arabia and Iran have deployed considerable resources to proxy battles, for example, in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen where stakes are highest. This religious divide has fed fuel to the fire with a revival of conflicts in the Middle East and Muslim countries, which threatens to alter the map of the Middle East. It also spurred violence and has widened the gaps in a number of tense Gulf States. In addition, the growing sectarian clashes have ignited a revival of Jihadi networks,⁴⁸ like Al-Qaeda and its official branch in Syria, Jabhat al Nusra (JN) and ISIS that poses a threat beyond the region.

Considering all these events, politicians as well as states to attain political ends have misused this kind of schism, again in the name of religion. Since centuries, individuals in power as well as those having religious authority have manipulated religion. In the past, religion was mixed with authority to pursue the state/individuals' interest and at present, it has been blended with politics again for the same purpose. Malik (2006) notes that;

“Political and territorial disputes such as in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya and Kashmir have taken shape into new religio-ideological dispensation reviving the old memories among Muslims of the Crusades, expulsions, inquisitions, colonization, and events in which have revived Orientalist attitudes with dire consequences.”⁴⁹

In the same manner, the role of religious communities as international agents for promotion and cooperation of peace, moral and religious values and protection of human rights cannot be disregarded. For example, social scientists Brine Grim and Roger Finke suggest that religious freedom is linked to the wellbeing of societies.⁵⁰ Contrary to secularists' views, religious thoughts and actors can strengthen and expand ordered liberty. History shows that for the survival of democracy religious freedom is important. The social science data also shows the co-relation between religious freedom and social, economic and political goods.⁵¹

With this intention, it is believed that religious groups all over the world have used modern methods to convert people.⁵² There are certain fundamentalist Christian organizations that want to have a direct influence on US Foreign Policy by passing a law that would make Congress responsible for protecting Christians world wide. Michael A. Sells writes;

“The influence of Jacques Ellul and Bat Ye'or has extended beyond Serbian nationalists and their sympathizers in French-speaking Europe to North America. Their writings have become central to what might be called the "Global Persecution of Christian Awareness Movement", an attempt by the religious right in the U.S. to make the protection of Christians and Christian evangelization around the world a congressional mandated aspect of U.S. foreign policy. Through such efforts the Christian Awareness Movement works assiduously to supplement the traditional right with an equally developed anti-Muslim position.”⁵³

There are examples of division of several states because of religious based conflicts that resulted in the deaths of countless people. In the Imperial Era religious communities (especially Protestant and Catholic) along with missionary work, influenced the foreign population politically, culturally and economically. Indian Sub- Continent is one of the examples, which was divided into the states of Pakistan and India based on religious divide.⁵⁴ Both Hindus and Muslims fought against British Empire to defend their religious identity by achieving independence from colonial rule. The state of Pakistan was created to protect Indian Muslims from the intolerance of Hindu majority as well as to create a truly Islamic state.⁵⁵

In this regard, Pakistan and Israel have strong similarity. Israel was created on May 12, 1948 on the basis of an ideology, that is, a state for Jewish people. Jewish lobby inside America played its role in support of Israeli Jews and influenced President Harry S. Truman to recognize Israel within eleven minutes of the declaration of independence.⁵⁶ The support shown by Truman was probably based on the thinking that existed in US since its

independence as American think themselves to be a redeemer nation. It has been called as Manifest Destiny in reference to westward expansion through which the early settlers tamed the frontiers and Christianized heathen savages.⁵⁷

With regard to religion's role in Pakistan's politics, some scholars argue that since Pakistan's inception, Islam has been the cementing force creating a national identity in a state, which, otherwise, stands divided along ethnic, provincial, cultural, religious, class, and linguistic lines.⁵⁸ The opinion of few is based on the view that Islam was imposed to hold together an artificially constructed nation of feuding ethnic groups.⁵⁹

Furthermore, religion causes and exacerbates conflicts within a country. For example, Yugoslavia was disintegrated along religious lines. In addition, in Bosnia-Herzegovina Catholic Croats, Muslim Albanians, and eastern Serbs were divided into fractionalized groups. The cultural division between Serbs and Muslim Albanians in Kosovo province and between Macedonian and Albanian Muslims in Macedonia is again result of religious differences.⁶⁰

Religion during the Great Wars:

During the First and Second World wars, churches all over the world struggled for the victory of their respective countries.⁶¹ No church questioned or criticized the decision by Truman, of bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁶² Despite Catholic Church teaching of Just War theory in thirteenth century, the Church supported Allied powers entering World War II, and took strong anti-communist stance during Cold war. Additionally, Pope Pius XII in 1949 excommunicated those Catholics who supported Communism.⁶³

Religion was in the forefront even during Cold War when, under Pope John Paul II, the Capitalist bloc was able to defeat Communism. Pope Paul II shared President Ronald Reagan's view that Communism was a great evil. He spoke of united Europe when Reagan asked Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down Berlin wall.⁶⁴ It is believed and reported that Pope John Paul II altered the course of Cold War in Eastern Europe during 1976, because he had personal friendship with President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski. A hot line between Vatican and White House was established with his help. Brzezinski also proposed persuading militant Islam to crush communism in Asia and the Middle East.

Religion played an important role during Cold War when Pakistan became a front line state in war against Communism. While most scholars argue that Objectives Resolution gave birth to Military-Mullah nexus, however, it was strengthened during the Cold War with the support of US, China, Arab countries and Europe by extending help to Pakistan in containing Soviet Union. Hence religious extremism in Pakistan is mostly traced back to General Zia. The Mujahedeen from Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Sin Kiang and other part of the world came to Afghanistan during Taliban rule but after 9/11 came to FATA, are operative in the central Punjab.⁶⁵ However, Anatol argues that military is tied to Pakistan's security vis-à-vis India and not to the dreams of Islamic radical's 'Universal Muslim Ummah'.⁶⁶

The Shia - Sunni clashes also increased during Zia era. Attacks on Shia mosques and killing of a large number of Shia Muslims resulted in tension between Iran and Pakistan and harmed the fifty years good relationship..⁶⁷ The Zia elements still carry out their agenda of interfering in the government machinery, one way or the other.⁶⁸

The US regarded Pakistan as a fellow monotheist that would willingly support fight against Communism and, therefore, the US welcomed Pakistan's position to stand with the West

in their crusade against Communism. It was, thus, her Islamic character that made Pakistan to offer her resistance against Communism. In this partnership, the secular Muslims who led Pakistan through the early decades of Cold War tried to give their pronouncement and policies a properly Islamic shape without surrendering themselves entirely to theological statecraft.⁶⁹ Still, Pakistani leaders praised US insistence on standing against 'evil' and pledged to support the Capitalist world against Soviet Communism. Nonetheless, this religious weapon turned against America hence creating Al Qaeda that is committed to destroy the West.⁷⁰

Religion and religious issues have increasingly moved into political and public life around the globe. Instead of using religion as a tool for peace and stability, it has been used for political and economic purposes also. Confrontational religious issues are creating an environment of intolerance that leads to conflicts among nations. At the beginning of the 21st century, the world has entered into a new phase of the struggle for global hegemony, this time again focusing on issues of religion and civilization.⁷¹

The age-old conflict of Christians, Jews, and the Muslims still persists in the Middle East. The past and existing conflicts in the Middle East and the present dilemmas, which are unreasonably attributed to Islam, are the result of Pope Urban's first Crusade and the attempts of Western Europe and its church to establish themselves after the dark ages. The Holy Wars were a response to human sufferings and it was the First Crusade that led to the revival of the spirit of Jihad that had stood abandoned until the invasion by European Christians.⁷²

When religion and political identity become intertwined, the followers of a religion may take a number of political actions. Firstly, try to insert their religious values and laws into the laws of their country. Secondly, certain individuals may also wish to politically support the causes of their co-religionists living in other countries or regions. Another view of this relationship is that political conflicts, that divide different faith groups, can grow into religious conflict while religious conflicts can change into political conflicts.⁷³

Many scholars claim that religion at global level has been used for the pursuit of power politics. It is in this scenario that Koechler argues, 'In this globalized world, for the pursuit of power politics, based on the notion of 'national interest', issues of cultural or civilizational identity, particularly the use of religion should be avoided. These may intensify conflict of interests which otherwise could be controlled reasonably. Therefore, intellectuals should not give weight to the '*Clash of Civilizations*' which has been nurtured among the less informed. The civilizational legitimization of mainly economic 'clash of interests' may give to an otherwise clearly defined, though undesirable conflict, a 'metaphysical' aspect the dynamics of which may be hard to confine to the original set of conflicts. Therefore, the real danger is in the propagation of the '*Clash of Civilizations*.'⁷⁴

Conclusion:

Religion has played an important role in politics around the globe and throughout the history the relationship between both have been mixed and utilized to have an impact on society. There were attempts by secularists, from time to time, to separate religion from politics and reduce it to a private matter for each individual and that it should not influence politics. However, these attempts were challenged on the basis that religion offers more appropriate set of rules for establishing moral norms in society and, hence, government.

The theory of 'Clash of Civilizations' has also given a new direction to policy makers in the West that religions and ideologies other than Christianity are a threat to global peace and security. The history of the acrimonious relationship among the three Abrahamic religions and the recently published works in the West have developed a passionate argument in the West, which contributes a lot to anti-Muslim sentiment. Islamophobia found in the West and how Western media, academia and intellectuals have misrepresented the Islamic History in Europe have thereby, established a perception that peaceful co-existence between Islam and the West is impossible. In the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, a new wave of anti-Islam sentiment got established in the West, which not only created tension between the West on one hand and the Muslim on the other but also gave rise to non-state actors to instrumentalise religion for their own interest and agenda.

"To conclude, religious belief has always had its way within a state with regard to domestic policies and in relations with other countries. Religion has been manipulated both by political and religious elites for their own interests. This manipulation forms an alliance between political and religious elites for gaining moral support, legitimacy and credibility. This political use of religion by religious and political elites, besides terrorism and sectarianism, has affected international relations."

Endnotes:

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- ⁸ Bernhard Giesen, & Daniel Suber. (ed). (2005). *Politics and Religion: An Introduction. Religion and Politics: Cultural Perspective*. Boston. Brill, p.2
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