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Discussing the Discipline

The Birth of “Religion and International Relations”: Questions of Scale

Nicholas Adams^{*◊}

The field religion and international relations (IR) has been established over the last twenty years within the discipline of IR. It marks a new (largely twenty-first century) set of interdisciplinary engagements, bringing together political science and the sociology of religion. “Religion and IR” and “religious studies” continue to conduct their business independently, in different conferences, journals, and book series, but their interests increasingly overlap. This enquiry interprets religion and IR as a “turn to the local.” This is displayed in its concern with events at the local level that have significance that travels up the scale of levels of analysis to events that have international significance. The turn to the local offers compelling arguments for shifting the focus in IR away from states and on to relations between local, national, and international actors. Engaging here with influential works in religion and IR published over the last fifteen years, I argue that it is the turn to the local that offers the most scope for collaboration between scholars of religion and IR and scholars in religious studies.

THE STUDY OF RELIGION has over the last twenty years undergone one of its periodic realignments. It is now a central concern in departments of politics, and especially in research centers whose focus is religion

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and conflict, religion and peace, religion and international governance, and other pairings of this kind. There is a new disciplinary settlement, or series of settlements, in which the study of religion is often located outside departments of religion.¹ In the present article, I make four principal arguments about this development. First, these disciplinary settlements largely proceed independently of each other, although there are a few scholars who cross the borders. Second, those who established religion and international relations (IR) saw it primarily as a consequence of the failure of theories of secularization, especially in light of three decisive cases: the Iranian Revolution, the end of the Cold War, and 9/11. Third, this development is more pertinently a wider correction of the disciplinary tendency in IR towards premature generalization: “religion and IR” corrects this through a turn to the local. Fourth, closer collaboration between scholars of religion interested in politics and political scientists interested in religion depends substantially on this turn to the local. The purpose of this article is to enable scholars of religion to see more clearly that their concerns with local particularities are valuable to their colleagues in political science but also a hazard: discussions that remain focused only on the local are of limited interest to a discipline concerned with policy.

The core argument developed here is that the turn to the local sets the conditions for more fruitful avenues for dialogue between religion and IR and religious studies because of the scale at which investigations take place. These avenues might enable a flow of intellectual traffic on three related issues in religion and IR: (1) complementing a reliance on the sociology of religion with a turn to the anthropology of religion, and especially local fieldwork; (2) treating the work of historians and sociologists as disputable evidence rather than facts; and (3) considering the effects of rival theoretical approaches in historiography and the study of religion. These are potential areas where scholars in theology and religious studies may have something useful to contribute and that might enrich work in both disciplines.

POLITICS IN RELIGION AND RELIGION IN POLITICS

Alongside departments of theology, of religion, and of theology and religion, religion has always appeared as a topic in other disciplines: in history, in politics, in sociology, in philosophy, and in many others. The two disciplinary groups addressed here—scholars of religion and IR and scholars of religious studies—have rather different perspectives, however, especially in relation to the perceived pace of their disciplines. The study

¹I owe the language of settlements to the anthropologist Timothy Jenkins (1999).

of religions is often an engagement with ancient texts and practices, even if their interpretations are contemporary and constantly mutating. There are classic studies that repay renewed study in each generation. Twenty years is not long for a discipline whose objects span thousands of years and whose methodological debates span over a hundred. By contrast, for scholars of religion and IR, even ten years constitutes a long-term view and something published twenty years ago is of largely historical interest. This is in part because the purpose of religion and IR is to grasp contemporary issues and to speak into a fast-moving world of intervention, strategy, and policy. This study concerns materials from as early as 2003; some of them are considered by scholars of religion and IR, and perhaps especially by early-career scholars, to be no longer relevant to the discipline on account of their advanced age. This is significant for those who wish to grasp areas of potential interdisciplinary engagement: the most fruitful terrain for such engagements will very likely be contemporary and policy oriented.

The birth of religion and IR as a sub-discipline is a significant development for religious studies. This article considers the relationship between the fields of religion and IR and the study of religion. This enquiry is inspired in part by a programmatic claim made by Ron Hassner, a leading scholar of religion and IR, nearly ten years ago: "The gulf separating the disciplines of international relations and religious studies need not be exaggerated. The emerging social constructivist movement, in particular, has opened avenues for dialogue between these two areas of study" (Hassner 2011, 6).

A range of work in religion and IR is considered here with a focus on a central issue in that developing dialogue: the scale at which description of religion is set. This is investigated to identify areas of proximity and distance and to discover where the possibilities for generative dialogue might lie.

The field of religion and IR looks, at first sight, to be an interdisciplinary engagement between the study of religion and the study of IR, but to a significant extent this is not so. Religion and IR is a sub-discipline of IR rather than the study of religion, and this is reflected in the journals to which its scholars typically contribute. It is also worth noting that whereas the International Studies Association has a section on religion, the American Academy of Religion does not have a section on IR. It does have a section on religion and development, which has significant input from IR scholars. It also has a religion and politics unit, but its personnel are distinct from those who compose the subfield of religion and IR, and its focus is more on religious

discourse in the public sphere than on global politics; it also has a political theology unit, whose focus is “the political” as a topic in theology. There are research centers, larger and smaller, in religion and politics in several US universities, including Boston University, Georgetown, Northwestern, the University of Virginia, and Yale’s MacMillan Center. (Harvard’s Belfer Center does not currently have a religion-related initiative). There are graduate programs in religion and politics in major US universities that connect scholars of religion with political scientists. Some, such as the Institute on Culture, Religion & World Affairs at Boston University, and Northwestern, are housed within politics (collaborating with scholars of religion); others, such as the International Conflict Resolution Program at Columbia, Princeton, and the Religion, Politics, and Conflict program at the University of Virginia, are located within religion (engaging political scientists), while others still (e.g., Georgetown’s Berkley Center) have a dedicated research and teaching unit. There are also political science programs (e.g., IR at UC Berkeley, the Fletcher School at Tufts) where religious issues are taught by political scientists and not by scholars of religion. The focus on religion is often simultaneously a focus on conflict or violence, and the focus on conflict or violence is often simultaneously a focus on Islam. Collaborations between scholars of religion and political scientists are hosted in various ways in particular institutions. However, it appears that scholars of religion who engage politics and scholars of politics who engage religion encounter each other neither in their large disciplinary conferences (although there are many small-scale conferences on particular themes) nor for the most part in the journals in which these scholars share their work (which are largely distinct, although there are exceptions). This picture is mobile and fast-changing.

Reasons for taking an interest in religion have changed beyond recognition over the last 200 years. From Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in the 1820s to Rudolf Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy* ([1917] 1923) and Mircea Eliade’s *The Sacred and the Profane* (1961), the focus was comparison, and especially the idea that a study of other religious traditions could shed light on one’s own “primitive” history. Its question was: How is human reason embodied in such diverse expressions? Religion and IR reflects a fundamental shift. The central topic is not variety but violence. Its question is: How can the violence of religion be understood and mitigated? Many interdisciplinary alliances are forged between political science and religious studies on the basis of this shift from variety to violence. The turn to the local is explored here as an alternative framework of shared commitments.

Religion and IR is about twenty years old. The section of the International Studies Association devoted to religion and IR hosts sessions at its annual meeting and awards annual prizes for recent work in the field.² Those working in religion and IR publish in journals devoted to peace and conflict studies (including *Journal of Peace Research* [1964–] and *Conflict Management and Peace Science* [1973–]), to international security (including *International Security* [1976–]), to IR as a whole (including *International Studies Review* [1957–] and *Review of International Studies* [1975–]), to sociology (including *Social Research* [1934–] and *Sociology of Religion* [1973–]), and more recently the relatively small number of journals devoted to religion and IR (*Review of Faith and International Affairs* [2003–] and *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* [2015–2018]) and the newly established *Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and Politics* [2019–]). There are at least three publishers' book series devoted to the field: Palgrave Macmillian's "Culture and Religion in International Relations" (seventeen titles 2002–2014; lead editor Yosef Lapid), "Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics" (thirty-five titles 2011–present; lead editor Jeffrey Haynes), and "Religion and Conflict" from Cornell University Press (no titles yet; series editor Ron Hassner).³ It is a firmly established and growing field of inquiry.

The focus here is theoretical, that is, on the kinds of questions to which religion and IR scholarship is a set of answers. Several representative works are considered here: Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler's *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (2004); Scott Thomas's *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (2005); Jeffrey Haynes's *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion* (2013); Ron Hassner's *War on Sacred Grounds* (2009); Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Samuel Shah's *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (2011); Nukhet Sandal and Jonathan Fox's *Religion in International Relations Theory* (2013); and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's *Beyond Religious Freedom* (2015). I choose these because they are widely read, influential works that develop a sustained argument about the role of religion in IR by authors who continue to shape current research. There are in addition several influential essay collections: *Religion and International Relations: The Return from Exile* (2003), edited by Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos; *Religion and International Relations Theory* (2011), edited

²<https://www.isanet.org/ISA/Sections/REL> (accessed November 10, 2020). The three awards are for best graduate student paper, the religion and IR book award, and religion and international studies distinguished scholar award.

³<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14946>; <https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Studies-in-Religion-and-Politics/book-series/RSRP>; <https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/series/religion-and-conflict/> (accessed November 10, 2020).

by Jack Snyder; *Religion, Identity and Global Governance* (2011), edited by Patrick James; and *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (2012), edited by Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft.

The scholars considered here ask the question: What is the role of religion in political action worldwide? Their answers are focused on establishing the importance of religion for IR. This was and remains a necessary task given that “the main canonical works of international relations . . . hardly mention religion” (Snyder 2011, 1) and given what Haynes calls “the deep-rooted, secular stubbornness of Western social sciences [that refuse] to take religion seriously” (2013, 51). There is a contrast between what Haynes calls the accumulation of studies that demonstrate the importance of religion for IR and the failure of “mainstream” IR thinking to integrate religion as a significant category (2013, 52). This is easily corroborated by perusing any university library’s shelves devoted to IR. There are typically multiple copies of many different “introduction to international relations” volumes: few of them explore the questions that occupy scholars of religion, including those interested in politics; few of them discuss religion, religious actors, or religious institutions; some (but not many) have an index entry related to religion.

Why does mainstream IR neglect religion? Nearly every scholar in religion and IR has an answer to this question. Jeffrey Haynes offers a succinct and representative assessment:

The main reason that IR theory has little to say about religion is because of the background, history and development of the discipline of IR. . . . for hundreds of years, international relations, especially in the West, has been both state-focused and secular in outlook. In recent centuries, very few states—especially in the secular West—have had an organising ideology that regards religion as more significant than secular—that is, non-religious—principles, such as liberal democracy, capitalism, or communism. (2013, 51)

The three conditions for inattention to religion in IR are (1) a focus on the state, (2) a secular outlook, and (3) alternative organizing principles such as democracy, capitalism, and communism.⁴ In other words, most phenomena that can be described in religious terms can also be described in other terms (something that many devout Christian theologians would also affirm, incidentally), and this obstructs acknowledgement for the need to add what looks like a redundant extra term.

⁴We must leave to one side Max Weber’s proposal that capitalism and religion are not so easily separated: Weber [1920] 2011.

Haynes's three conditions for ignoring religion (the state, secularism, alternative principles) are unsurprising: they match and very likely arise from three recurring features of religion and IR scholarship. As a body of scholarship, it marks a turn from the state to local actors, from secularism to the study of religion, and it treats organizing principles as non-reductive and non-exclusive (i.e., religion is not reducible to any of them, and religion can and must be added to them).

It is worth noting that this secular outlook in IR is almost entirely implicit. There is no articulated theory of secularization to be found in the discipline of IR: it is taken for granted, and religion as a topic or concern simply fails to appear for the most part.⁵

Haynes is also typical in his organization of the discussion. He introduces emblematic events that force a consideration of religion (these form the main focus of the next section). He attempts to specify what makes something "religious", he confronts the ill effects of "secularization theory" on IR, he offers an alternative to an exclusive focus on the state, and he commends the benefits that accompany the addition of religion to the intellectual toolkit of IR analysis. We will defer to another occasion a discussion of how religion is defined in this field.

Three events in particular recur as emblematic in the religion and IR literature. These are the Iranian revolution of 1979, the Polish Solidarity Movement and its role in the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, and the 2011 9/11 attacks in the United States. They are rehearsed by scholars in religion and IR to demonstrate the obvious need to take religion seriously if key events in IR are to be intelligible.

THREE TEST CASES: THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION, THE END OF THE COLD WAR, AND 9/11

The Iranian Revolution is cast in a variety of ways. It is among "the watershed events that began to convince political scientists of religion's importance" (Fox and Sandler 2004, 19); "an important point for seeing a re-insertion of religion into international relations" (Haynes 2013, 55). It is a "vivid example" of religion being ignored or marginalized in the field of IR (Thomas 2005, 2) or of the "dogma" that "religion was not relevant" among those who "did not think that religion mattered" (Fox and Sandler 2004, 134; Toft et al. 2011, 12).; It made "more obvious" the existing importance of religion in IR (Fox and Sandler 2004, 134). It is an example of religion "surging with new political force" (Toft et al. 2011, 13).; It likely

⁵I am grateful to Jonathan Fox for drawing attention to this feature of the wider literature.

played a role in reassessing theories of modernization (Fox and Sandler 2004, 19). It was a challenge to those used to reducing religious changes to class conflicts (Toft et al. 2011, 16). Its religiosity, once acknowledged, led some to suppose that “Iran may not be a rational state” with which one can reason or negotiate (Toft in Snyder 2011, 126) or that it was merely a reaction against forced “modernization” (Thomas 2005, 3). It is an example of a religious conflict crossing borders (Fox and Sandler 2004, 71). It marked a rise in prominence of the idea of martyrdom, identifying a point where religion and violence meet (Toft in Shah et al. 2012, 130). Finally it marks for neorealists in IR an instructive case of a country establishing an “exclusive religious stance bound up with open hostility to US dominance” (Sandal and Fox 2013, 76).

The general theme, with variations, is that before 1978–1979, the outlook of political theorists and foreign policy makers was resolutely secular and indeed secularist; the Iranian Revolution took these folk by surprise—they were unable to anticipate it—and their failure to do justice to it as an IR phenomenon reveals the necessity of taking religion seriously in IR.

Stephen Chan offers a minority report on this framing of the Iran Revolution. He is critical of tendencies to cast Iran as an exotic, different, religious state, and insists that one pay attention to conflicting cultural forces and contested self-understandings, both “clerical” (more than religious) and popular. As evidence of such contestations, he introduces Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) and Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel *Persepolis* (2000). Like those who have studied the French and Russian revolutions, he notices the sharp difference between the enthusiasms of the early days and the disappointments as power structures reassert themselves. Chan calls attention to the difference between the first 100 days of the revolution (famously covered by Michel Foucault for *Corriere della Sera* and *le Nouvel Observateur*) and the later clerical triumph, which, in a systematic and oppressive fashion, reshaped and reinterpreted the everyday religious impulses that had led to the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. For Chan, it is a travesty to use the same term *religion* to describe both periods of revolution and both forms of political action. Local categories, especially those developed by Iranian writers (including writers of fiction), need to be taken seriously. This will mean treating the indigenous secularist and clerical tendencies as, alike, Iranian (Chan 2017, 106–7, 111).⁶ Chan’s account is significant for this discussion because it displays a turn to the local without making religion the significant

⁶Space does not permit rehearsing here his tragi-comical “four rules” that guide incompetent IR theory: Chan 2017, 109–10.

term, while also not reducing religion to other factors. Instead, he accommodates religious and political actions within categories of everyday life, and in this he resembles some theologically informed social anthropology (e.g., [Jenkins 1999](#)).

The role of religion in the ending of the Cold War is a contested matter. Its religious significance is highlighted through consideration of how the Solidarity Movement in Poland developed as a Roman Catholic phenomenon; it is cast in terms of the clash of civilizations; it is interpreted as part of a "religious offensive." "Religion played a triple-vectored role" ([Thomas 2005](#), 5, drawing on [Osa 1997](#) and [Jelen and Wilcox 1998](#)): it mitigated the alienation of individuals through community; it pushed against totalizing forces by being resistant to assimilation; it resisted sovietizing forces by being an alternative principle of organization and *mentalité*. It is noted that the central administration of the Roman Catholic Church directly assisted the national church in Poland: "The willingness of Pope John Paul II to condemn this political system provided needed legitimacy to challenge these systems and eventually led to their downfall" (Toft in [Snyder 2011](#), 52, 117). "The demise of communism in Eastern Europe was clearly influenced by the Catholic Church . . . it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the Catholic Church is among the actors that rendered the Eastern European states 'sovereign' . . . This was achieved by providing an anchor of legitimacy both within the inside and outside of the state" ([Sandal and Fox 2013](#), 83–84). Elizabeth Shakman Hurd casts the matter from a US perspective as part of an explicit "religious offensive" by the US State Department from the 1950s onward. "Both Truman and Eisenhower sought to strengthen US diplomatic ties with the Vatican to work together to oppose communism" ([Hurd 2015](#), 68–69). This account rehearses arguments from William Inboden's *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960*, which describes religion as "both cause and instrument" in the Cold War ([Inboden 2008](#), 2). Unlike Iran and 9/11, other IR commentators do not accord the end of the Cold War the same religious significance. For some it plays no part at all (e.g., [Haynes 2013](#)). Fox and Sandler imply that the Cold War marked a non-religious theater for IR, whereas the end of the Cold War marks a religious turn to civilizations that are religiously conceived. The end of the Cold War itself is not considered something requiring attention to religion ([Fox and Sandler 2004](#), 119; but cf. [Sandal and Fox 2013](#) above).

The shift outlined by Samuel Huntington in the early 1990s, from East-West conflict to conflict between civilizations, prompts questions for IR scholars (and not only those concerned with religion) about what a civilization might be. Such questions are far more hospitable to

considerations of religion, which is more plausibly a dimension of a civilization than of “the East” or “the West.” They are arguably conceived religiously by Huntington himself (Fox and Sandler 2004, 6, 115–35). The end of the Cold War is thus doubly religious: analysis calls for attention to Catholicism in Poland and for attention to the potentially religious category of civilization. (The reception of Huntington’s clash thesis among scholars of religion and IR would make an interesting study in its own right.) Fox and Sandler offer a typically wan assessment, reflecting both the possibilities and the disappointments for scholars of religion and IR: “He brought religion into international politics even if he did not call it by its real name” (Fox and Sandler 2004, 133).

Structurally, the Polish case is exceptionally interesting for IR analysis. A transnational institution (the Roman Catholic Church) decisively influences local actors (the Solidarity Movement), which sets in motion a chain of effects that travel rapidly up the scale to maximal international significance (the collapse of the Soviet Bloc). It is not surprising that this case should baffle IR interpretative frameworks that privilege the state: none of these actors is a state. This does not by itself make the case for taking religion seriously: there are “realist” analyses of the end of the Cold War that do not (e.g., Wohlforth 1994, which treats Solidarity without considering the Roman Catholic Church). That case, for religion, is made variously: the influence of the Catholic Church in Poland (Thomas 2005, Toft in Snyder 2011), the influence of the Huntington frame (Sandal and Fox 2013), and the US religious offensive (Hurd 2015). Scholars of religion and IR highlight the role of religion as evidence that religion is a necessary analytical category.

Linz and Stepan offer a minority report and pose the question: What was special about Poland that forced the ruling Communist Party to share power with a democratic opposition (Linz and Stepan 1996, 258)? The answer favored by Thomas, Toft, and Sandal and Fox is that the influence of the Roman Catholic Church was preeminent in creating forms of resistance. Linz and Stepan offer an alternative explanation, that is, that the decisive factor was the abnormally monocultural nation, under peculiar and unique conditions, that Poland had become:

The extermination of Poland’s Jews, the expulsion of the ethnic Germans, and the incorporation of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian populations into the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II left the overwhelming majority of Polish citizens ethnically Polish and Roman Catholic. This was the first true nation-state in Polish history. (1996, 258)

This by no means downplays the significance of religion. Linz and Stepan suggest that Roman Catholicism was beloved in Poland precisely

because it compensated for a lack of nationhood in its former periods of domination by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. But it suggests that what looks like a religious dimension is also a matter of violently produced yet somewhat accidental ethnic and linguistic purity. The religious dimension can be interpreted as an effect of larger forces. For example, the sudden loss of Jewish, German, Byelorussian, and Ukrainian communities. This complicates the case for privileging religion as an explanatory factor for the end of the Cold War. None of the religion and IR discussions that consider the Polish case engage Linz and Stepan on this question. This is not to suggest that one must decide between affirming the role of the Catholic Church and affirming the role of ethnic monoculture. They are surely linked. The monoculture amplified the role of the church, and the church amplified the power of the Solidarity Movement, leading to a domino effect. It is to query whether religion is the most convincing framing concept for this nexus of forces. If one connects the analysis of Linz and Stepan, which repeats earlier and more detailed analysis by Suzanne Hruby (1982/83, 318), with the historical account of Inboden, one has a set of national conditions in Poland (the monoculture) that intersect with a set of national conditions in the United States (the religious offensive), in which the Roman Catholic Church plays an unwitting catalytic more than causative role. Hurd describes it as an agent of American state interests explicitly arrayed against the Soviet Bloc. This surely merits discussion because it complicates the claim that the end of the Cold War exemplifies in a straightforward way the turn to religion.

The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are less ambiguous for scholars of religion and IR. One of the repeated diagnoses made by scholars of religion and IR is that the refusal to take religion seriously was in part influenced by an unwarranted geographical focus on the West, where religious concerns were allegedly marginal. The 2001 attacks brought the effects of religious actors not just geographically closer but, for scholars based in the West, dramatically "here." Fox and Sandler 2004; Thomas 2005; Hassner 2011; and Shah et al. 2012 open with it. It "made religion difficult to ignore." It is "the event that has, perhaps, caused international Western relations scholars to begin to reassess their tendency to overlook religion" because it took place in "the heart of the West" (Fox and Sandler 2004, 16, 21). "Suddenly, religion was back on the international relations agenda and the world had changed in a flash" (Haynes 2013, 5). "Seemingly without warning, faith had transgressed the neat boundaries that organized the thinking and planning of our best and brightest policy makers, policy analysts, and scholars" (Shah et al. 2012, 1). The crumbling of the assumption that religion was only ever internal

to states “gathered decisive momentum after 9/11 as experts turned to religion” (Hurd 2015, 23). It was misconstrued as a “nihilist” act making negotiation fruitless (Thomas 2005, 10, making the same point about 9/11 as Toft made above about Iran). Thomas takes a further, complementary approach. Rather than make a direct claim that 9/11 has provoked re-assessment, he rehearses three popular but failing strategies for explaining religion away: (1) claiming that incomplete modernization is responsible for one last backward and doomed rear-guard action against progress; (2) economic inequality foments violent envy; and (3) it is merely violent extremism like other violent extremisms. Thomas answers these crisply: non-Western cultures may not desire modernization; foreign aid is unlikely to turn Islamists into liberals; if it is nihilism, it cannot be understood, only stopped. The turn to religion is the offer of understanding with, it is implied, a tool for sensible policy-making by eliminating a dangerous blind spot (2005, 9–13). 9/11 and the Iranian Revolution are “two of the most convulsive events for American foreign policy during the past generation” (Toft et al. 2011, 3).

From this brief set of sketches, one can readily identify two linked phenomena that are said to generate enquiry into religion and IR. The first are key events (Iran 1979; Soviet Union 1989; September 11, 2001) that cannot be adequately interpreted, it is persuasively claimed, without taking into account its religious aspects. The second are the challenges to what is variously called secularization theory, the secularization hypothesis, or just secularism. The first is a matter of the punctiliar and the dramatic: significant events on the world stage that are sudden, momentous, and baffling (until one takes religion seriously). The second is a matter of the gradual and the low-key: different theorists at different times call into question parts of the secular theoretical apparatus that sustain their work in such a way that this apparatus is slowly undermined (even if this is not recognized immediately).

There is, however, another difference, and this stimulates the hypothesis offered in this article. The key events are local. They happen in particular places: Tehran, Gdańsk, and New York; these are focal points for larger forces that operate across national borders. They are resistant to generalization. The events each call for an interpretive framework that is attentive to local particularities. The challenges to secularization theory are more various and generate a different set of theoretical concerns: these (surely rightly) call into question the basis for the secularization claims themselves and show this basis to be historically weak and the claims open to challenge. Scholars in religion and IR do rehearse challenges to secularization theory for the benefit of those who might not be familiar with the

relevant literature, but this is not their core business. That core business is the repair of the errors that arise in IR when religion is ignored.

The plea and the case for paying greater attention to religion is accompanied not only by salient examples (Iran 1979, Poland 1989, USA 2001) but also by consideration of whether this constitutes a major or minor change to IR theory. Most studies that are (at least in part) written for graduate students in IR offer an account of how the turn to religion relates to such theory. IR theory is as complex as any theoretical domain, and there are multiple systems of classification for it. The species of the genus IR are arranged in various ways: realism, liberalism, constructivism, and "others" (Snyder 2011; Kaufman 2018); Marxism, realism, liberalism, international society, international political economy (Jackson and Sørensen 2015); realism, Christian realism, English School, Liberalism, Neo-Marxism, constructivism (Thomas 2005); realism, neorealism, neoliberalism, English School, constructivism (Sandal and Fox 2013); realism, idealism, constructivism, and "others" (Weber 2013); liberalism, realism, neorealism and neoliberalism, English School, constructivism, Marxism, critical theory, feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, Green international theory (Daddow 2013), and so forth.

The root question for those advocating religion and IR as a focus of study is: Does the turn to religion require a fundamental shift in IR theory? A fundamental shift means not only adding a new variable, religion, to other variables such as economy, military, government, power, property, gender, class, et cetera, but changing the whole in which all those variable parts are configured. There is for the most part consensus in the religion and IR literature on this question. The turn to religion is largely a proposal to add religion to the catalog of variables, and although this doubtless means an adjustment to the whole, it is not taken to require a fundamental shift. There are many variations on this theme: "The best way to account for [religion's] impact is to integrate it into existing international relations theory" (Fox and Sandler 2004, 166–67); "Bringing culture and religion back into the study of international relations requires a number of changes in the theories of international relations, some of which have been taking place for some time" (Thomas 2005, 68–69); "Religion shapes processes that are close to the core of existing international relations paradigms that have the state as their basic unit. Consequently, it will be worthwhile to consider how religion can be integrated into these existing paradigms without violating their essential assumptions" (Snyder 2011, 6); and "For IR theory religion is not a 'game changer,' although its various manifestations . . . can at times and in relation to certain issues be significant" (Haynes 2013, 50). There are many others of this kind.

The repeated message is that religion can be integrated into existing approaches. In other words, it does not require a fundamental revision of those approaches.

This is politic for a field that is not yet mainstream. Any announcement of a paradigm shift in IR theory threatens to consign religion and IR to irrelevance for two reasons. The first is that a proposal for wholesale reconfiguration is much easier to ignore, and more likely to be ignored, than a proposal that can be negotiated within an existing pattern of inquiry. The second is that there is no identifiable stable paradigm in IR. New approaches to its theoretical ecology are being proposed all the time, and these tend to be added to its tail rather than absorbed into its body, as the classification by Daddow above shows. Green international theory might be thought so significant as to rewrite the entire DNA of IR, given the importance of climate change to world politics, but in fact it appears in Daddow's scheme as just another interest, like feminism or postcolonialism. It is probably not the ardent hope of scholars of religion and IR that religion be timidly added to the already trailing tail of IR theory. The intention is to integrate attention to religion into the core of IR theory.

There are two minority reports that challenge this consensus. Petito and Hatzopoulos (in a relatively early conspectus of religion and IR) suggest that "religion has the potential to revolutionize IR theory. . . . the return from religion from the (Westphalian) exile brings with it the promise to emancipate IR from its own theoretical captivities" (Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003, 3). Petito and Hatzopoulos assume that religion and IR is to a significant extent a set of proposals consonant with the English School of IR theory (with explicit appeal to Hedley Bull). This would be a hazardous approach today, after a period of fifteen years: the current crop of introductions to IR may neglect religion, but many of them also do not consider the English School worth mentioning. To tie the fortunes of religion and IR to the fate of the English School might well be to hinder the wider discussion. Scott Thomas complicates his claims rehearsed above. Although he suggests that to turn to religion is to surf an existing wave in IR theory rather than to make new waves, he also urges his reader to take seriously a possibility foreshadowed more than a decade before the birth of religion and IR in Robert Wuthnow's relatively early article "Understanding Religion and Politics" (1991). In this influential short piece, Wuthnow proposes several interrelated repairs to existing approaches to the study of religion in relation to politics. These include a refusal of over-generalized theories and an embrace of more differentiated approaches. Among over-generalized theories, Wuthnow names

modernization theory (associated with Peter Berger), world-system theory (associated with Immanuel Wallerstein), and critical theory (associated with Jürgen Habermas). The more differentiated approaches are not rolled up into a single theory but adumbrated as dimensions requiring attention. These include a shift from prediction to interpretation, from cause to meaning, from the theorist's perspective to the actor's perspective, from dramatic historical breaks to differentiated continuities and discontinuities, from a sweeping temporal frame that deals in centuries to a concern with changes over the span of a few years, from narratives of religious decline to accounts of religious adaptation, from a privileging of the state to taking local institutions and actors seriously. Taken together, this means acknowledging that relations between religious institutions and the wider societies in which they are located are constantly renegotiated rather than static. That means in turn that they require attentive local investigation and are likely to prove resistant to confident explanation in general terms (Wuthnow 1991).

It can be readily discerned, even from this drastic abbreviation, that Wuthnow's concerns lay a pattern that some subsequent scholars in religion and IR follow quite closely, even if this is not explicitly acknowledged. (They also describe rather closely the approach taken by Robert Orsi's study *The Madonna of 115th Street* (1985), discussed in and influential for Hurd [2015], although Wuthnow does not refer to it.) Thomas draws the obvious conclusion: "A more challenging possibility . . . is that our concept of what theory is, and what it is supposed to do in international relations needs to be revised to better account for the impact of culture and religion on international affairs" (Thomas 2005, 73).

This proposal arguably makes Thomas's suggestion (along with that of Petito and Hatzopoulos) a minority report. The suggestion that fundamental theoretical revision may be required is one that, for the most part, scholars of religion and IR seem to avoid or downplay for the reasons suggested above. Wuthnow's proposals, which could have constituted a kind of manifesto for religion and IR, are for the most part not engaged explicitly. They trace a path not taken, or not yet taken.

The question is nonetheless one of replacement of something if not the replacement of existing IR theory by an alternative. It is rather the replacement of secularization theory (or rather, in IR, the dominance of implicit secular assumptions) by a turn to religion in IR theory. That raises a further question: How deep in the existing IR theoretical approaches are commitments to the views articulated in secularization theory (the idea that increasing modernization is accompanied by or causes decline in religion)? IR does not explicitly endorse or rehearse any kind of theory

in relation to the secular; religion simply fails to appear as a concern. The approach typically taken by the early scholars of religion and IR is to stress that the assumptions and claims of secularization theory are already collapsing under the weight of their own contradictions together with a deluge of data and pertinent cases. The turn to religion should be attractive to IR theorists, the argument goes, because secularization theory in IR is not core to the discipline.

This leads to some uncomfortable contrary tendencies. The advocates for religion and IR say two things. First, the effects of secularization theory (or at least its unexamined assumptions) on IR are deep and disastrous, producing false analyses and creating dangerous blind spots. Second, those assumptions are shallow and eroded, easily relinquished, and in any case on their last legs. If the turn to religion is a matter of examining previously unexamined assumptions, the cost of taking religion seriously is arguably low, and religion can be readily absorbed into all the existing approaches to IR theory, perhaps even Marxism. That makes religion and IR a relatively painless cure for the disease of lazy secular assumptions. There is, however, an alternative framing for these concerns. The turn to religion is arguably not the replacement of lazy secular assumptions by theories that now talk about religion. The turn to religion is more substantially the replacement of theories that focus on states by theories that focus on local particularities, including those of religious life. This is surely far more costly. It is a stretch to consider it only a minor theoretical adjustment. The deeper question is then whether or to what extent existing “mainstream” IR theories can accommodate a turn to the local.

THE TURN TO THE LOCAL

At key points in the various cases made for the importance of religion, the issue of locality comes to the fore. Fox and Sandler identify linkage politics (i.e., the linkage between domestic and international politics) as a significant site for identifying the significance of religion (Fox and Sandler 2004, 5). “Consequently [for Samuel Huntington] religion is growing stronger as a local and more authentic basis for legitimacy” at every level of analysis (Fox and Sandler 2004, 118).

The turn to the local here names three tendencies: a shift from a focus on the actions of states to the actions of members of states (local actors); a concern with the influence of civil society bodies on national governments (local institutions); and a focus on relations between religious traditions within a state or a nation (local inter-religious encounters).

The fundamental point is made succinctly by Scott Thomas: "Realism has been able to marginalize religion because it focuses on states and the interaction between states in international society" (Thomas 2005, 55–56, echoed in Haynes 2013, 10). Religion is of course not the only casualty of this focus on states. It just as obviously marginalizes the significance of multinational cartels, international banks, or cross-border crime (if these are different things). Thomas sees the resurgence of religion as, in part, a turn to non-state actors, of which group religious actors make up a significant part.

The turn to religion is in part a challenge to the tendency in IR to generalize quickly from particular cases to inform as wide a range of possible phenomena as possible or, even more problematically, not to generalize from cases at all but to fit them into a procrustean frame established *a priori*. This frame is typically the frame of governmental policy, in which the guiding categories change very slowly. Why then should scholars of religion and IR not simply make a turn to the local and, without reservations, embrace in IR the locally attentive approaches taken by scholars of religion?

This line of reasoning is anticipated and critiqued in advance by Ron Hassner, who distinguishes between broad, deep, and thick considerations of religion and IR. In this taxonomy, broad approaches tend to generalize by reducing religion to something else (economics, politics, etc.), whereas deep approaches focus on local particularities but refuse to generalize much, if at all. Thick approaches are a happy medium: attentive to local details but willing "to generalize from particular religious movements, regions, or instances to arrive at broader conclusions for international relations" (Hassner 2011, 37). This reflects parallel debates among historians and anthropologists that go back at least to David Hume and his interpreters about reasoning from cases and the scope of generalization. Hassner maps this terrain of debate on to the IR concept of "levels of analysis," which broadly differentiates individual, state, and international focal points. This furnishes a tool to show that broad approaches correlate with international focus and deep approaches correlate with more individual (or at least local) focus. It also suggests a cure: "What is lacking is [thick religion] that combines an international relations focus with an interpretivist methodology" (Hassner 2011, 47). This cure thus involves "bridging" levels of analysis and methods.

Hassner suggests that a thick approach can generalize from particulars by subjecting them to a matrix of general terms, namely theology, hierarchy, iconography, ceremony, and belief. This matrix in turn is composed of even more general elements, namely tenets, texts, rules, rank, authority,

symbols, myths, images, and rituals. The core proposal is that scholars of religion and IR should deploy this matrix to produce analyses that trace seemingly non-religious international effects back to local religious causes. Hassner modestly identifies studies by Mark Juergensmeyer and Daniel Philpott as exemplary thick approaches, but these have their own methodological agendas; he could more persuasively have commended his own *War on Sacred Grounds* (Hassner 2009).

War on Sacred Grounds deserves serious attention from scholars of religion. It is attentive to local particularities and argues from two cases requiring approaches that are both historical and to an extent anthropological: the Israeli capture of the Temple Mount on June 7, 1967, and the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in November 1979 by armed followers of Juhayman al-Utaybi. It offers significantly more local detail in relation to the two cases than is typically given in IR analyses. In exemplary fashion, the study lays out authority structures, the religious beliefs of the main actors, and the history of the sites as understood within the relevant religious traditions. The Jerusalem case is framed with discussion of relevant rabbinical rulings past and then-present. The Mecca case is cast against a background of the authority of the ulema in Saudi Arabia. The two cases are studies of successful conflict management, and the roles of rabbis and the ulema are central to that successful management, that is, the deescalation of violence. This forms the main substance of Hassner's analysis. The final paragraphs of each case explicitly make the link to the higher level of analysis, that is, their international impact. In the Jerusalem case, the publication in 1991 of *The Temple Mount Book* by Rabbi Schlomo Goren became what Hassner calls "the theological manifesto of the extremist Temple Mount movements," which in turn laid the grounds for a call in 2007 by leading Israeli rabbis for Jews to fill the Temple Mount with prayer, thus unravelling the peaceful settlement of 1967 and setting the scene for renewed conflict between Jews and Muslims in the Holy City and beyond (Hassner 2009, 133). In the Mecca case, the reliance of the Saudi Royal family on religious support (which led to retaking the mosque) "resulted in regime concessions to the ulema on the religious front and a Wahabi revival in Saudi Arabia" (Hassner 2009, 150). This, in turn, set the stage for the ideology of transnational terror movements. Both cases clearly exemplify the virtues articulated in Hassner's programmatic article produced around the same time: the importance of paying attention to local and international factors simultaneously and showing how causation travels up and down the levels of analysis.

This concern with local actors, local institutions, and local inter-religious encounter complicates the three test cases of the Iranian

Revolution, the end of the Cold War, and the 9/11 attacks. All three require analysis of something other than state actors, but they do not all display the same local dynamics. The Iranian Revolution is the easier case to make as there are identifiable local actors and institutions whose interests are expressed as forces with national effects. By contrast, the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 attacks present puzzling features. The Roman Catholic Church is a transnational organization whose members are organized into local dioceses. Its churches are certainly local institutions, but they are also non-state actors by virtue of their obedience to Rome, expressed in their governance according to Canon Law—hardly a local legal code. Al Qaeda is a transnational organization whose members operate within a network. Its agents act locally, but they often travel large distances to achieve their aims—this, too, is not only a matter of local political forces. Just as the concept of levels of analysis in IR requires a consideration of transnational networks as well as the triad of individual, national, and international, so the turn to religion in IR requires attention to transnational networks as well as a focus on local particularity.

However, a willingness to consider local religious institutions as participants in broader networks needs to be differentiated from a tendency to cast local events merely as the effects of wider forces. Hurd's suggestion, cited above, that the events of 1989 were part of a religious offensive by the US State Department is an interesting example. It broadens one's understanding of US foreign policy, but it directs attention away from local Polish action. The meaningfulness to Poles of their actions does not enter the frame; indeed it is excluded from such a view because the main actors in the drama are US officials, and locally particular Polish actions are recast as actions by the Catholic Church, conceived as an entity based in the Vatican with which the US government can engage diplomatically. Poles recede quickly from view. The scholars whose work is reviewed here have an opportunity to consider Solidarity as a theater of local concerns, transporting the reader to Gdańsk as it were, but this is not a path they take. They generally move rather quickly to talk of The Catholic Church rather than local actors. This serves as a reminder that attempts to do justice to religion are under constant pressure of redescription in more familiar (and less local) IR terms. It is worth resisting this pressure given that whenever external forces and institutions are invoked, there is a danger that local actors and their reasons drop out of the picture.

The promise of religion and IR is an account of the end of the Cold War in which the role of Solidarity in Poland might be understood simultaneously as local actions by local communities with local reasons and as expressions of transnational networks with interests that may be

independent of (and even in conflict with) the interests of local actors. Such a turn to the local acknowledges its entanglement with forces that may not be visible in the locality.

SHARED CONCERNS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

At least two fundamental questions may constitute possible stimuli for further research and discussion for scholars of religion and scholars of religion and IR. First, if the turn to religion is in the field of IR more plausibly cast as a turn to the local, to what extent is religion a name for “local concerns”? That is, must religion name a set of hard-to-define (or worse, easy-to-define) “religious” affairs, or can it function as a way of identifying particular kinds of local practices, including practices of negotiation? Hassner seems to point in this direction. It is striking that the main terms of his religious matrix are hierarchy, iconography, ceremony, and belief. These arguably guide all human action from birth to death: they are for the most part local, and they are not exclusively religious, however that is defined. This may be a fruitful line of enquiry, but my account remains incomplete. As discussed above, religion names transnational networks as well as local particularities. The turn to religion may appropriately be understood to be a turn to the local, but locality must also be understood as the theater of action for transnational networks.

As previously discussed, for Haynes and many others, religion is not reducible to other terms (democracy, capitalism, communism, but also culture, civilization, tradition) and must be added to them. Two things follow from the review undertaken here. First, the argument against reduction is separable from the argument for addition. Second, the former is stronger than the latter. Is religion a term that must be added because it names an extra thing? Or is it a term that to a significant extent names a turn to the local that is also resistant to reductive habits of thinking? This second possibility is not an extra thing, an extra phenomenon that requires description; it is rather a shift in the scale at which attention is directed. This is not a question that has received much attention in religion and IR. It deserves serious consideration.

The transformation of IR into a discipline able to give proper consideration to local particularities might be mirrored by developments within religious studies. For such study, religion is often a local matter, that is, the disciplinary focus is in part on communities, rituals, and texts. Religious actors are typically conceived as local actors. Our enquiry has, however, indicated obstacles to operating only at this local scale. Religion is also a matter of transnational legal codes such as Roman Catholic Canon Law

and of transnational networks like the Anglican Church or Al Qaeda. These concerns, which form a central part of religion and IR, might encourage scholars within religious studies to see what normally appear to them as local concerns as also expressions of such transnational networks. This double transformation can benefit both sets of disciplinary expertise so long as pressures towards reduction are resisted. Local concerns are not merely effects of transnational agency.

Second, if the turn to the local is in part a turn to historical and anthropological inquiry, what models of such inquiry are most fruitful? There are, after all, rival models in the disciplines of history and anthropology, with well-worn debates in both (and other) disciplines.

With respect to history and historiography, [Thomas \(2005\)](#) and [Hurd \(2015\)](#) can be taken as exemplary. Thomas draws on Lord Acton, Sydney Ahlstrom, John Bossy, Klaus Bußmann, Herbert Butterfield, John Patrick Diggins, Eamon Duffy, J. N. Figgis, Mack Holt, Albert Hourani, Philip Jenkins, Darell Jodock, Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, Erik Ringmar, Heinz Schilling, Alec Vidler, Heather Warren, and others. Hurd draws on the work of historians such as Jonathan Herzog, William Inboden, Seth Jacobs, Matthew Frye Jacobson, Benjamin Kaplan, Ussama Makdisi, Robert Orsi, Tisa Wenger, and others. It is interesting to note that these lists do not overlap despite there being overlap in the phenomena under consideration (such as the Cold War). Sampling only these two influential studies (and there are many others), one can make a good case that the turn to the local is in significant part accompanied by a turn to history in the sense of integrating studies by historians into IR analysis. However, although historians' work is consulted, not all (probably a minority) appear in the indexes, which perhaps suggests something about the ambivalent importance accorded them, or at least about their anticipated importance for those who consult the index, and rarely are their theoretical reflections discussed (Orsi is the exception, for Hurd, and is discussed in detail). Thomas and Hurd tend to treat historical studies as what lawyers would call "findings of fact" rather than evidence whose interpretation is disputed, and debates over rival conceptions of historiography do not appear. This is in part an effect of the kinds of readership, and accompanying rhetoric intended to persuade them, for which these studies are intended. It may, however, limit the scope of what historical enquiry can offer religion and IR.

With respect to anthropology, the findings are perhaps more encouraging. There is a lively subfield, anthropology of religion, and it is beginning to appear significant for the field of religion and IR. Hassner's category of thick religion is an explicit nod to Geertz's eponymous 1973

essay (Hassner 2009). Thomas places Durkheim as a significant figure in the study of religion as well as discussing Ernest Gellner (Thomas 2005, 49–50, 203, 231). Hurd discusses Talal Asad (Hurd 2015, 57ff.). This discussion has as its focus the birth of religion and IR. This work for the most part mirrors what Jonathan Agensky says of traditional IR, namely that anthropological work has limited visibility in it (2017, 736). In some more recent work there is a more positive assessment. Erin Wilson acknowledges that such engagement often takes place at the margins of IR (2019, 143) but also that work by Talal Assad and Saba Mahmood has been foundational for some scholars who consider religion within IR as a discipline (Wilson 2019, 144). Claims of this kind are valuable. Wilson indicates that IR scholars are influenced by Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* and Mahmood's discussion of the Egyptian Islamic revival. These studies have as their aim not only understanding particular communities but also correcting the imposition of questionable, often alien categories onto the subjects whose actions are interpreted (Asad 1993; Mahmood 2001). Whether this will develop into more frequent and intense use of fieldwork reports in local contexts remains to be seen. One can consider again the cases of Iran and Poland. Ali Bulookbashi offers a historical review of anthropology in Iran, which includes material from the mid to late 1970s. By his reckoning, there were sixty foreign investigators doing fieldwork in Iran between 1973 and 1977 alone (Bulookbashi 2009, 27). Such fieldwork, some of which has a focus on social organization in particular regions or questions of religious and political leadership, plays no role in the IR accounts of the Iranian Revolution. More recent sociological work, such as Vali Nasr's *The Shia Revival* (2006), is much more influential, especially for Hassner (2011, 45). The anthropologist C. M. Hahn undertook fieldwork in the Polish village of Wisłok in the late 1970s, which he published as a full-length monograph in 1985. It contains detailed local history, accounts of changes of political administration of the region, and, in a central chapter, a discussion of local religious settlements with a focus on the role of the Roman Catholic Church. This describes local life of a kind that displays the impressive adaptability of a religious institution to changing, and often repressive, political circumstances. It explains, in some detail, how the local church enables large gatherings of people who would not otherwise meet together in public (Hahn 1985, 111–12). This kind of ethnographic account, which has significant explanatory and interpretive value, is also absent from IR theorists' explanations of the Polish case.

It is an interesting and perhaps urgent question why the sociology more than the anthropology of religion is recognized by those working in

IR given the centrality of "the local" as a guiding category. Weber, Bellah, Withnow, Bruce, and Davie are cited frequently, fieldwork studies very rarely. Part of it may be Hassner's "deep" problem; part may be the lively interest in questions of secularization and the post-secular in the sociology of religion. This lack of engagement has further theoretical implications. Just as in the field of history there are rival historiographic approaches (e.g., Cambridge School, critical historiography, Marxist historiography, consensus history, new social history, and many others), so there are rival approaches to social anthropology (often associated with figures, including Durkheim, Weber, Parsons, Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski, Morgan, and Boas) with rival assessments of the importance of fieldwork, structure, and newer categories like lived or everyday religion. The limited engagement with anthropology, of whatever kind, means not only that fieldwork plays a diminished role but also that these debates about method (and indeed about scale) are not available to those working on questions of religion and IR. This is a loss, because the field of religion and IR, with its obvious concern with questions of scale (how to relate the local to the global, how to interpret phenomena that travel up the scale such as Wahhabist ideology or those that travel down the scale such as state control of religious endowments) would quickly acquire additional, and in some cases more sophisticated, tools of analysis.

Some general observations can be made. The field of religion and IR draws on work in the study of religion and in history but for the most part not in anthropology. Within the fields it draws on, namely religion and history, it does not engage theoretical debates (about how to study religion or how to do historiography) but tends to treat those fields' products as facts. It perhaps displays some signs of impatience with the resistance to generalization shown by the "deep" concerns of the disciplines on which it depends, and this is because of the thick imperative within IR to connect local concerns with those higher up the levels of analysis. The very notion of levels of analysis is specific to the field of IR; it is not a native tool for scholars of religion or historians. Religion and IR thus compensates for this resistance to generalization by subjecting the materials of the study of religion or history to a matrix (this varies by scholar but is typically present in some version) that permits travel up and down the levels of analysis. Understanding these discipline-specific imperatives is vital if there is to be meaningful traffic along what Hassner calls avenues for dialogue between the different disciplines concerned with religion.

The relatively new sub-field of religion and IR is an opportunity and a puzzle for scholars of religion. The contributions to religion and IR considered here try to do six linked things:

- (1) Replace secularization theory with the study of religion while
- (2) keeping IR theoretical models intact but
- (3) energetically noting the failures and blind spots caused by ignoring religion, alongside
- (4) explaining what led to the failure to take religion seriously and
- (5) repairing these failures by making local agents and institutions significant for
- (6) generalized explanations of international phenomena.

The role of the study of religion for this chain of purposes is not clearly defined. The study of religion and the study of religion and IR have some overlap in the journals in which work is published, but they have for the most part been significantly discrete both with respect to journals and scholarly congresses. The scale at which the different disciplines work—the level of analysis—is also differentiated, with scholars of religion failing for the most part to produce what one might call generalizable data, owing to what Hassner calls their deep styles of description. The current distance between the fields of religion and IR and religious studies is, however, not due to an all-encompassing refusal by scholars of religion and IR to engage work at the local scale. If IR scholars did indeed refuse to work at this scale, that would be an end of the matter. However, the significance of work by historians for IR scholars of religion robustly contradicts such an explanation. The turn to religion is quite explicitly, I have argued, a turn to the local in nearly every case considered here. The mystery is why that turn to the local embraces the work of historians more than that of scholars of religion (Thomas 2005 is the exception here), and the sociology of religion more than anthropology. These questions merit further investigation. That investigation is surely best conducted as a shared venture across disciplines.

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