

# Andalas Journal of International Studies



**Aulia Amalina**

*Budaya Populer Jepang sebagai Instrumen Diplomasi Jepang dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Komunitas- Komunitas di Indonesia*

**M Faris Alfaridh**

*Ketahanan Energi Rusia dan Kerentanan Pasar Asia Pasifik*

**Mohamad Rosyidin**

*Mengapa Tidak Berperang? Norma Politik Luar Negeri Cina dan Konflik Laut Cina Selatan*

**Reza Kavosh**

*Religious Terrorism*

**Sarah Anabarja**

*Efektivitas Official Development Assistance Jepang terhadap Negara Resepien*

**Tonny Dian Effendi**

*K-Pop and J- Pop Influences to University students in Malang, East Java - Indonesia : A Comparative Public Diplomacy Studies*

**Witri Elvianti**

*The Secrecy and Publicity of Diplomacy : Questions to the theory of Public Diplomacy*

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## **Preface**

We would like to express our gratitude toward God the Almighty for the chances to present the readers our second edition of our first volume. It contains the research manuscripts related to the dynamic issues in security in Asia Pacific and its diplomacy. There are seven articles presented in this edition. On diplomacy issues, the first article was written by Aulia Amalina. She wrote about Japan as one of the states which using its popular culture as diplomacy instrument to achieve its national interest. Its popularity also arise in Indonesia which captivate Indonesian young people's attention. In the end, she found that, the soft power is a significant part of Japan's popular culture diplomacy.

Tony Dian Effendi explains how popular culture in East Asia such as K-Pop and J-Pop influence student university in Malang East Java by using comparative public diplomacy studies. Diplomacy in Asia also arises in organization. By doing research, Sarah Anabarja explores the effectiveness of Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Japan in developing country. In her paper she scrutinizes whether or not the implementation this assistance has effectively reached its target and goals. At the end, from theoretical perspective, Witri Elvianti wrote a paper departed from 9/11 phenomenon entitled The Secrecy and publicity of Diplomacy: Question to the Theory of Public Diplomacy.

From security issues in Asia, we could find some interest articles, such as terrorism issue. Reza Kavosh looks at it's in religion terrorism. He argues that even if some people tend to justify violent acts use religion, nevertheless the basic tenets of most religions are peace and tolerance. Furthermore, Faris Alfadh attempts to explain Russia's energy security until the following decades, and its impact on energy security policy on the Asia-Pacific region. The market vulnerability and inequitable competition among countries in the Asia-Pacific region will increase along with Russia's energy security policy. Mohammad Rosyidin also gives explanation about South China Sea Conflict as one of the most destabilizing factors in Southeast Asia. This article seeks to explain why South China Sea conflict does not lead to war among occupants by using constructivist approach. Finally, all constructive criticism and suggestions are really welcome and highly appreciated so that we can do significant improvement for the upcoming edition. Thank you for the insightful thought and the generosity to care to share the knowledge. The journal is continuing to receive very interesting and high quality manuscripts from all over the world.

**Editorial Team**

**Religious Terrorism**

**Reza Kavosh\***

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**Abstract**

*This article explores religious terrorism, a concept that has received a lot of attention from academics and the international community. It briefly looks at the definitions of terrorism and religious terrorism, in order to give clarity to the rest of the article. The article presents two sides of a debate. One side is that religious terrorism is in fact a unique and separate phenomenon. The other side is that “religious terrorism” is not fundamentally different from terrorism, and rather is a misrepresentative term made up by academics in the West in order to further their political agenda... The authors argue that even if some people to justify violent acts use religion, nevertheless the basic tenets of most religions are peace and tolerance. Religion has the potential to prevent, mediate, and resolve conflict, as well as heal and reconcile after violence has occurred. In order to counter terrorism, religious leaders need to work tirelessly around the world to uphold the peaceful aspects of religion.*

**Key Words:** *religious terrorism, religion, terrorism, violence, peace building*

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\*Field Assistant at UNHCR

## Introduction

Almost all religions have basic values of justice, tolerance, and peace. Yet violence and conflict have come to be associated with religion in some people's minds, from the crusades, inquisitions, and holy wars of the past to contemporary religious conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. Overall, throughout history, millions of innocent people have been killed or injured in the name of religion.

A subset of religious violence that is explored in this paper is religious terrorism. Although the concept is not new, it became widely amplified following the events of 9/11 in 2001. The West claimed this as a case of Islamic terrorism, and since then religious terrorism is most often associated with Islam in international news and politics, even though in reality there are no more Islamist terrorist groups than there are secular, Christian, Jewish, or of other religious denominations.

There is debate among scholars, however, whether the term "religious terrorism" is even valid. Should violent actions against innocent civilians be interpreted as religious acts, based on the word of a few extremists, when it contradicts basic tenets of the religion and the interpretation of the majority of that religion's adherents? Are the motivations really based on religion, or rather on

political and economic factors? This and other questions are discussed in this article.

This article begins with a short overview of the definitions of terrorism and religious terrorism, in order to clarify what exactly is being discussed. It then presents the two sides of the debate on the term "religious terrorism." One side argues that there are certain facets of religion that can lead to or justify the use of violence by extremists, while the other side argues that religious terrorism is not a separate phenomenon. Rather, it is a misleading concept invented by academics in the West, perhaps to suit their own political agenda.

The debate sheds light on the wider issue of religion's role in conflict. However, even if religion is perceived by some to play a part in violent conflict, we can never forget religion's much greater contribution, both actual and potential, to peacebuilding. Religious diplomacy is mentioned as an example of a way in which religion can help to prevent, mediate, and resolve conflict, as well as help in healing and reconciliation in post-conflict situations. In the end, religion can be used for both bad and good, for both conflict and peace.

### **Research Methodology**

The main research methodologies used are review of academic literature, field experience, and interviews. The academic literature reviewed consisted of books, journal articles, reports from international organizations, and news articles. This research method was used in order to understand the current understanding of religious terrorism, related issues, and debates within the field. Field experience came from the authors' many years of working within the areas of peace, religion, and culture. Of note is Reza's experience as Program Director for the World Youth Peace Summit: leading Religious Diplomacy and Related Peace Dialogue initiatives, Assistant Secretary for the conference Global Alliance Against Terrorism for a Just Peace, and Program Manager of Interreligious and Intercultural Projects (cultural center of the Iranian Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand). Viera has attended numerous international conflicts on peace and intercultural dialogue. These experiences formed the backbone of the authors' insights and perspectives on religious terrorism, and it is their opinion that knowledge gained from working within the field is an invaluable addition to the knowledge gained from academic research. Interviews are the third methodology used. Interviews hold a prominent place among the research

methods used in the social sciences. The authors wished to present the personal insights of leaders within the field. In conclusion both primary (field experience and interviews) and secondary (literature review) research is used in this article.

### **Discussion Definition of Terrorism**

While religious conflict has existed since ancient times, the term "terrorism" is much more recent, and the term "religious terrorism" even more recent than that. Terrorism comes from the French "*terrorisme*," which was used to describe the period of intense violence that occurred after the French Revolution in 1789. The revolutionary government that initiated this "Reign of Terror" in order to eliminate viewpoints less radical than theirs, and it was government agents of the Committee of Public Safety and the National Convention that were the first so-called "terrorists." It is interesting to note that the word "terrorism" has, therefore, Western, secular, and government-sponsored roots; quite different from what it is associated with today.

Historically, terrorism has been associated with independence movements. One of the first historical examples of terrorism (though it predates the term itself) is the Zealots of Judea in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. This is "the earliest known organization that exhibited aspects of a

modern terrorist organization.”<sup>1</sup> The Zealots felt they were not free to live out their religious beliefs under the Romans, and therefore committed terrorist acts.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism swept the world off its feet. When people were fighting for the independence of their country, they were often thought of as terrorists by the occupying powers. Later to become the president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat was sentenced to prison for participating in killing a pro-British Minister of Finances. The French also considered Algerian independence fighters. Irish Nationalists from the Catholic North of Ireland have a long and bloody history of fighting for independence from the British, an issue that only recently got resolved. Although these examples often involve religious differences between the occupier and the occupied, nevertheless in these cases terrorism was motivated by nationalism, not religion, and aimed at political leaders and heads of states, rather than at the common people.

The use of terrorism in independence movements is, in fact, the key reason why there is no internationally accepted definition of terrorism. The United Nations has agreed that an

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, “Handbook: a Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century,” U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, No. 1, 2003, 11.

internationally accepted definition is necessary, “for without a consensus of what constitute[s] terrorism, nations [can] not unite against it,”<sup>2</sup> but was unable to agree. The issue became even more relevant in the aftermath of 9/11, when “the USA-UK led military assault, which executed severe bombing and destruction, has made many wonder whether acts to curb terrorism have turned themselves into terrorizing acts.”<sup>3</sup> A universally accepted definition is needed, therefore, if only to prevent the use of terror against terror. What has deadlocked the discussion, however, is that the Organization of Islamic Conference wants the definition of terrorism to exclude “armed struggle against foreign occupation, aggression, colonialism, and hegemony, aimed at liberation and self-determination”<sup>4</sup> Yet the self-determination and liberation struggles of the West (such as the French Revolution and the American War of Independence) are rarely referred to as terrorism.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Agreed definition of term “terrorism” said to be needed for consensus on completing comprehensive convention against it*, (New York: Sixtieth General Assembly, 2005), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Henry S. Wilson, “Terrorism and Religions,” *Bangalore Theological Forum*, Volume 34, Number, (June 2002), 58-74.

<sup>4</sup> Organization of Islamic Cooperation, *OIC Convention to Combat Terrorism*, (Damascus: the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, 2009).



In fact, the definition of terrorism may change according to time, place, and political motives. It was only in 2008 that former South African President and winner of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, Nelson Mandela, was removed from the U.S. terrorism watch list <sup>5</sup>. He and other members of the African National Congress were “on the list because of their fight against South Africa’s apartheid regime... the nation’s system of legalized racial segregation.”<sup>6</sup> Yet today he is recognized as “a symbol of freedom and equality.”<sup>7</sup> In “Critical Terrorism Studies: A new research agenda,” Jackson argues that because terrorism is difficult to define, academics, states, and the media define it whichever way suits them<sup>8</sup>.

Despite there being no universally agreed-upon definition, there have been various definitions put forward by leading scholars and organizations. The Organization of the Islamic Conference defines terrorism as:

Any act of violence or threat thereof notwithstanding its motives

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<sup>5</sup> “Mandela off U.S. terrorism watch list,” (Washington) *CNN*, July 2, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Jackson, “Knowledge, power and politics,” in *Critical Terrorism Studies: A new research Agenda*, ed. Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, (London: Routledge, 2009), 75.

or intentions, perpetrated to carry out an individual or collective criminal plan with the aim of terrorizing people or threatening to harm them or imperiling their lives, honour, freedoms, security, or rights, or exposing the environment or any facility or public or private property to hazards or occupying or seizing them, or endangering a national resource, or international facilities, or threatening the stability, territorial integrity, political unity or sovereignty of independent states. (OIC 1999, 2)

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) definition:

Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.<sup>9</sup>

And perhaps most simply, Walter Laqueur states “Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent

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<sup>9</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “What we Investigate,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, <http://www.fbi.gov/albuquerque/about-us/what-we-investigate> (accessed October 27, 2012).

people are targeted.”<sup>10</sup> Although these definitions are quite similar, nevertheless they are different enough that no one definition has been universally accepted.

### Definition of Religious Terrorism

Religion and terrorism have long been linked. In addition to Zealot mentioned above, thug and assassin are other words used to describe terrorists and their actions. These words come from religious terrorist groups (Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim, respectively) that operated in ancient times<sup>11</sup>. In fact, according to Bruce Hoffman, terrorism has been used by all world religions<sup>12</sup>.

Contemporary terrorism studies, particularly after the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, have dramatically focused on religion as a cause of terrorism. Consequently the term “religious terrorism” is increasingly used, often confirmed using the events of 9/11 as evidence of its validity.

Like terrorism, religious terrorism has no universally agreed-upon definition.

Mark Juergensmeyer defines religious terrorism as:

Public acts of destruction, committed with no clear military objective, that arouse a widespread sense of fear; where the ideology, motivation, or organizational structure of the perpetrators is provided by religion<sup>13</sup>.

Many scholars, however, find it difficult to define religious terrorism separately from terrorism (e.g. David Rapoport, Magnus Ranstorp, and Robert Pape) and question the validity of this term. This is discussed in the following section. At this point it is important to note that outside of the academic discussion about the validity of the term terrorism, there is also a misrepresentation of this term in media and public discourse. Western media focuses on terrorism associated with Islam, while paying significantly little to no attention to terrorism associated with Christian, Jewish, and other religious and secular ideologies. Western media also presents Islamist terrorists as widely supported by Muslim countries, when in fact the vast majority of Muslims condemn acts of violence against civilians. These misinterpretations make the viewer of such media associate Islam with violence,

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 83-84.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>13</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (London: University of California Press, 2003), 5.

which is not true. Furthermore, it makes international attention focus on different interpretations of religion, which is divisive, rather than looking at the similar ideals in religions and focusing on religion's potential for peacebuilding.

### Validity of the Term “Religious Terrorism”

In the empirical studies and theoretical works of many authors, religious beliefs and traditions are distinguished as a primary source for many violent conflicts.<sup>14</sup> Some authors introduce religion as the “fire’s ignition”, and religious differences as “its fuel.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, religious beliefs and traditions are recognized as additional factors in non-religious conflicts.

One may argue that, in reality, religious terrorism is merely a “tool” or “veil” for hidden ethnic or nationalist interests. This raises the question, however, that if this claim is true, then what about the enduring religious component in terrorist and violent acts in so many places including Palestine, India, Lebanon, Japan, and Northern Ireland, among others?

<sup>14</sup> Karl Ernst Nipkov, “Education for peace as a dimension of inter-religious education: Preconditions and outlines,” in *International handbook of inter-religious education*, ed. Kath Engebretson (Victoria, State: Springer, 2010), 642.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Professor Little also questions: “Even if religion is used or manipulated for unknown purposes, why, exactly, is it that religion repeatedly gets used for ethnic and nationalist purposes?”<sup>16</sup>

Hendrick Vroom, a supporter of the term “religious terrorism,” bases his opinion on three assumptions:

1. The very nature of religion i.e., “faith” and “unique truth”: They argue that “claims to unique and exclusive truth lead to intolerance, hatred and thus to conflict. The idea of exclusivity stimulates antithetical behavior between groups of people and this in turn leads to rejection, exclusion and conflict.”<sup>17</sup>

2. The assumption that two or more competing religious groups with opposing ideas have the ability to split society, which may result in violence (example: Hindus and Muslims in the Kashmir conflict).

3. The assumption that there is a threat to the religious identity of the

<sup>16</sup> David Little, “Religious nationalism and human rights,” in *Peacemaking: moral and policy changes for a new world*, ed. Gerard F. Powers, Drew Christiansen, and Robert T. Hennemeyer (Washington D.C.: New World Publication, 1997), 19.

<sup>17</sup> Hendrik M. Vroom, “The nature and origins of religious conflict,” in *Religion, conflict and reconciliation: Multifaith ideals and realities*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 24.

faithful caused by secularization and other threatening forces such as internal dissenters creates aggressive defensiveness. These assumptions show how religion can be perceived to contribute to terrorism and violence.

Another link between religion and terrorism comes from Weber's famous principle that nations have the right to "the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."<sup>18</sup> A common aim of terrorism is to obtain statehood. This often requires having the perceived legitimacy to use force in order to organize and maintain the state. Religion is often the best justification for this use of force. Little elaborates:

In Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, "Yahweh," "Allah," and "God" are all described, among other things, as the supreme political and legal ruler. As "mighty warriors," "just kings," or "righteous judges" they are believed to possess the rightful authority to use force and regulate public affairs, as well as to delegate that right to earthly authorities.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, terrorists may turn to religion to justify their actions as legitimate by "the ultimate judge" – God.

Below are four reasons, taken from a variety of authors, of why religion can serve as

an effective mechanism for terrorism:

1. Framing the conflict: Terrorists often frame their arguments in religious rather than political terms as this presents various advantages. The most significant advantage is the motivation religion gives to individuals to sacrifice themselves for a cause and perceive themselves as participating in something divine.<sup>20</sup>

2. Moral justification: As religion has power in moral justification, it can serve as an excellent resource to morally justify the most violent acts within both individuals and societies. In other words, it can effectively contribute to the "process of moral disengagement, such as moral justification, euphemistic labeling and dehumanization."<sup>21</sup> Self-perception of religious terrorists can be found in the following sentence: "they know they are right, not just politically but morally. They believed God is on their side."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Raphael D. Sagarin, *Natural security: A Darwinian approach to a dangerous world* (London: University of California Press, 2008), 107.

<sup>21</sup> Israela Silberman, "Religious violence, terrorism and peace: A meaning system analysis," in *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 536.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>18</sup> Little, 88.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

3. Spiritual and eternal rewards: Apart from providing a divine dimension and moral legitimacy, religion serves as an extraordinary measure to provide divine and spiritual support for terrorists, claiming that the attackers will reap divine rewards and that the one who sacrifices will receive eternal rewards in the hereafter.<sup>23</sup>

4. Religious symbols, myths, and rituals: Creating group commitment and individual devotion to a common cause is the main challenge for almost all terrorist groups. This is the most significant role of religion in terrorism. Religion can individually motivate and collectively unify diverse individuals under a common banner, using emotional, evocative and highly memorable symbols, myths, and rituals.<sup>24</sup>

Figure 1 below summarizes the ways that religion is used in terrorism:

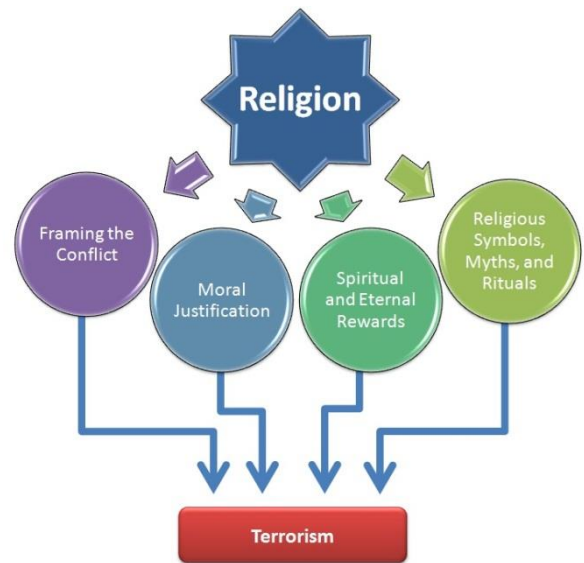


Figure 1: Reasons for which religion can serve as an effective mechanism for terrorism.

Source: Authors' work.

Thus we can see from the work of several authors that certain aspects of religion can be used effectively by terrorists.

### Invalidity of the Term “Religious Terrorism”

The research of many scholars has shown little difference between “terrorism” and “religious terrorism.” They argue that so-called religious terrorism is primarily economic or political. A clear example of such research is Robert Pape, who extensively researched the phenomenon of suicide bombers. By compiling data and analyzing every suicide bombing and attack over a period of 21 years (1980 – 2003), 315 attacks in all, he discovered:

<sup>23</sup> Chris E. Stout, *The psychology of terrorism: programs and practices in response and prevention* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 67.

<sup>24</sup> Sagarin, 107.

There is little connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, or any religion for that matter... Rather, what nearly all suicide terrorist campaigns have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel liberal democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland.<sup>25</sup>

Talal Asad also makes the distinction that while acts of religious terrorism are themselves, as found by Pape, based on strategic rather than religious goals; nevertheless the reason people join the organization is often because of religion. In other words, religion often motivates people to join a terrorist group, but has a much less effect on the goals of the terrorist organization itself. This is a small but important distinction, as it could mean that to be accurate one should say “religious recruitment into terrorist groups” rather than “religious terrorism.”<sup>26</sup>

Mihalffy, in his interview with the authors, states “behind the terrorism there is always some political interest.”<sup>27</sup> Juergensmeyer also agrees with Pape,

Asad, Mihalffy, and other scholars who say that religion is not the main motivation for terrorist actions, even among religious terrorist groups. He writes:

Religion is not innocent. But it does not ordinarily lead to violence. That happens only with the coalescence of a peculiar set of circumstances – political, social, and ideological – when religions becomes fused with violent expressions of social aspirations, personal pride, and movements for political change.<sup>28</sup>

But if it is inaccurate, why does the term “religious terrorism” continue to pervade international politics? Thomas Copeland considers the term an American way of framing the threat<sup>29</sup>. Mihalffy corroborates this viewpoint, saying:

After the collapse of the bilateral system where the USA and the former Soviet Union divided the world, it was necessary to find a new enemy. US policy doesn’t work without enemies. Something has to keep the public in fear in order to force the interests of the oligarchy on the people. September 11, 2000 was the date when the US was implanted with the idea that Islamic terrorism is the general enemy that we all have to fight against.<sup>30</sup>

Assad argues that the benefit of distinguishing terrorism as religious is that

<sup>25</sup> Robert Pape cited in Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 54.

<sup>26</sup> Asad, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Balazs Mihalffy, interview by authors, October 29, 2012. Tehran, Iran, email.

<sup>28</sup> Juergensmeyer, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Crenshaw, 118.

<sup>30</sup> Mihalffy.

it allows a psychological separation between “us” and “them.” This allows us to ignore or even remain oblivious to the terrorist’s true motivations (such as self-determination) and, instead, dismiss them as purely irrational, based on a religious foundation that “we” do not believe in.<sup>31</sup>

It is the authors’ understanding that terrorists misuse religion to accomplish their goals. As Martha Crenshaw states, the concept of religious terrorism is “bound to overestimate the effect of religious beliefs as a cause of terrorism” and thereby lead to a misunderstanding of both terrorism and of religion.<sup>32</sup>

### **Analysis**

It is true that some extremists use religion as an excuse for terrorism. It is even true that some aspects of religion lend themselves well towards terrorism, or at any rate can be interpreted as such. Every religious tradition has its accepted dogma or articles of belief, which may lead to inflexibility and intolerance in the face of other beliefs.

However, it is the belief of the authors that religious terrorism is not fundamentally different from secular terrorism. Secular terrorists also appeal to moral principles and adhere to inflexible, intolerant beliefs. Furthermore, religious terrorists usually have political and

economic justifications, self-determination being the most common. Self-determination is highly valued by almost all nations, and yet it is one of the most common reasons for terrorist acts. Just as this does not lead people to think negatively of political and economic structures, or of autonomous political statehood, in the same way one should not think negatively of religion just because it has been used to justify evil acts.

In his interview, Mihalfy brought up the point that if we start splitting terrorism into categories, then we should have secular terrorism, economic terrorism, political terrorism, terrorism pertaining to each individual country, etc. Then there would be dozens of types of terrorism. Yet, they all share the basic definition: inciting terror and targeting civilians in order to achieve one’s objective. This is the actual problem to fight, rather than Islam or religion, if we wish to live in a more peaceful world.

### **Religion as a Contributor to Peace**

In many parts of the world, religion is an inseparable part of people’s ideas, norms, identity, and culture. As Bishop Richard Randerson answered in his interview, “Religion is the most important feature of any society because it speaks to us of the things that are central to life - God, faith, trust, compassion, people, and

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<sup>31</sup> Asad, 56.

<sup>32</sup> Crenshaw, 118.

our relationship to the Earth.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, religious sentiment is on the rise. From the Southern United States to the Middle East, and especially in formerly communist countries such as the Soviet Union and China, the world is experiencing a resurgence in religion.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it is not possible to really comprehend world events without taking religion into account, and we must seek to understand this vital factor in international politics and political discourse.

Although religion has sometimes been a motivator for violence<sup>35</sup>, it also has and can be a factor in the peacebuilding and reconciliation process. It is important to discuss this other side of religion in order to present a balanced, unbiased view, as discussing only the potentially negative role of religion in society would generate a one-sided image of religion in the mind of the reader.

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Randerson, interview by authors, September 15, 2012. Tehran, Iran, email.

<sup>34</sup> Wilson.

<sup>35</sup> Neil A. Levine, “Religion, conflict and peacebuilding,” USAID, [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/conflict/publications/docs/Religion\\_Conflict\\_and\\_Peacebuilding\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/Religion_Conflict_and_Peacebuilding_Toolkit.pdf) (accessed October 25, 2012).

But how can religion play this positive role? One way is through religious diplomacy. Religious diplomacy has been defined by Brian Cox as “diplomacy that seeks to integrate the dynamics of religious faith with the conduct of international peacemaking and statecraft.”<sup>36</sup> In the authors’ interviews with religious leaders working within this emerging field, the following roles were mentioned: advocacy, mediation, education, conflict transformation and interfaith dialogue.<sup>37</sup> The last is especially important, as bringing together parties across religious and sectarian lines can lead to a better understanding of each other’s perspective. In the words of Haya Rashed Al Khalife, former President of the United Nations General Assembly “promoting a true dialogue among civilizations and religions is perhaps the most important political instrument that we can use to reach out across borders and build bridges of peace and hope.”<sup>38</sup>

In these roles, religions leaders can draw on their respective religious traditions for such skills as dialogue,

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<sup>36</sup> Cox.

<sup>37</sup> Jain, Mihalfy, and Randerson.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, “Statement by H.E. Sheikha Aaya Rashed al Khalifa, President of the United Nations General Assembly, on accepting the Path to Peace Foundation Award”, (New York: United Nations, 2007).



forgiveness, and working in the interest of all humankind rather than of a specific party or state. Because of its great potential in contemporary politics, Dr. Bawa Jain - Secretary General of the World Council of Religious Leaders - said in his interview that religious diplomacy should be put on the international agenda.<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion and Recommendations

For as long as humans have walked the earth, there has been conflict. It cannot be eliminated. Rather, the question is how time, effort, and resources can best be utilized to prevent, defuse, and recover from conflicts.<sup>40</sup> Can religion help towards these goals?

Religion has been implicated in much international conflict, and in religious terrorism especially. However, as this paper showed, it is questionable whether violent acts are truly done *for* religion, or only in the *name* of religion, with economic and political reasons being the main motivations.

Regardless of which side of the debate one agrees with, looking only at the potential of religion to contribute to terrorism and conflict is biased, one-sided, and incomplete. As this paper showed,

religion can also be a valuable actor in peacebuilding and reconciliation. It is the opinion of the authors that we cannot stop terrorists' claims that they are acting in the name of religion. And fighting terror with further terror (as the American counter-terrorism movement has shown) is illogical and ineffective, as well as immoral. Rather, the recommendation is that we counteract terror by working to resolve the true reasons for it. Most terrorists (religious or otherwise) have as their main motivations political self-liberation and economic equality. These are the issues we should be focusing on. Religions of the world should emphasize peace, justice, and equality. Combine this with the fact that most of the world's population is religious, and religion becomes a powerful force towards resolving the true causes of terrorism. Religious diplomacy is just one method with which religion can be utilized to work for peace and justice in international politics. It is only by building a better world that we can eliminate terrorist acts.

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<sup>39</sup> Jain.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson.

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N 21. Ibid., 145.

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