Introduction

This book takes as its subject the discourse on religion in international relations (IR). The study of religion in IR is now as prominent as it was once neglected. Propelled by ‘a cottage industry of religion-and-world-affairs conferences, hearings, publications, media coverage, and foundation grants’ (Hoover, 2006, p. 1) a wave of IR analysis now seems concerned with how – not whether – research should proceed apace. The research agenda has thus moved beyond the mere ‘discovery’ of religion in international affairs and can be more thoroughly understood in the context of a new religionism generated by a broad spectrum of scholars who assume that religious actors and interests exist as normal rather than exotic elements in world politics. The imperative to reconsider IR concepts and methodology on the subject of religion is also strengthened at an empirical level, summarized by Jonathan Fox thus:

A fuller picture of the world’s religious economy would show secularization – the reduction of religion’s influence in society – occurring in some parts of the religious economy, and sacralization – the increase of religion’s influence in society – occurring in other parts. (Fox, 2008, p. 7)

Making sense of such a picture is challenging because, as the noted sociologist of religion Peter Berger succinctly attests, ‘the relation between religion and modernity is rather complicated’ (Berger, 1999, p. 3). It is here that IR potentially comes into its own by situating the study of religion in the analysis of global structures and interests. As Vendulka Kubalkova notes, the international context within which the worldwide resurgence of religion takes place is the primary domain of IR expertise (Kubalkova, 2000, p. 675). The new frontiers of religion research in IR will therefore be found in attempts to further analyze the perceived ‘religious turn’ in world politics without pushing the analysis of political religion in toto toward either secular or sacral poles.

A roundtable discussion at the 2006 International Studies Association (ISA) Convention addressed the topic ‘Religion and the Study of International Relations’ via two questions: ‘Where do we go from here?’ and ‘Why does it matter?’ (ISA, 2006, pp. 224–5). Formulating a new research agenda around such questions is difficult because the resurgence
of religion in contemporary world politics presents a conceptual and methodological challenge to the secular-modern foundations of IR itself (Keddie, 2003). The first question – Where do we go from here? – must be answered at the conceptual level, heeding John Madeley’s call for the development of ‘alternative systems of amicable accommodation’ between secular theorists and religionists as ‘an urgent political priority [and] a standing challenge to political science’ (Madeley, 2003, p.xxii). The second question – Why does it matter? – must be engaged at the level of methodology, a challenge succinctly problematized by Elizabeth Shakman Hurd: ‘Conventional understandings of international relations . . . exclude from the start the possibility that religion could be a fundamental organizing force in the international system’ (Hurd, 2008, p. 1, emphasis added). These new frontiers in the discipline emphasize the point that to continue ‘bringing religion in’ to IR will require more than simply ‘adding religion’ to existing discourses of the discipline (S.M. Thomas, 2005, p. 76).

APPROACHING THE STUDY OF RELIGION

As social scientific discussions of religion are highly contested, it is important to establish some parameters for the present study. Jeffrey Haynes offers a useful three-fold starting definition of religion as follows:

... religion is to do with: the idea of transcendence, that is, it relates to supernatural realities; with sacredness, that is, as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and with ultimacy, that is, it relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence. (Haynes, 2006, p. 223, emphasis in original)

One important addition to make to the emphasis on language and practice is the role of the social group as a constituent element in religious faith itself, thus emphasizing what Scott Thomas calls a ‘social definition of religion . . . as a “community of believers” rather than as a “body of beliefs”’ (S.M. Thomas, 2005, p. 24). With these introductory elements of religion now in mind, further complexities and distinctions need to be recognized.

Moving beyond generalized starting definitions of religion is difficult to achieve. An analogy from early Christian history may help to illustrate this point further. Isidore of Seville, Catholic saint from the sixth and seventh centuries, once wrote that if anyone told you he had read all the works of Augustine he was a liar (Brown, 1972, p. 25). It was a warning against the pretension to have captured Augustinian thought; not just to have read the 117 known works of this giant of late antiquity, but to know his mind. A modern Isidore might suggest it wiser to frame any treatment of Augustine
within specific referents such as history, philosophy, theology, ethics or politics, all fields in which Augustinian thought remain to some degree influential. That Augustine Bishop of Hippo was a religious figure symbolizes the challenge facing any analysis of ‘religion’ across the myriad fields in which it can be studied. ‘Which Augustine?’ becomes ‘which religion?’, and ‘which religion?’ becomes ‘which tradition?’ and ‘whose tradition practised in which place?’ and ‘from which sources?’ and ‘on behalf of whom?’ and so on. These distinctions, which echo an Augustinian view about the complexity of political society itself, are important for developing nuanced conceptualizations of ‘religion’ which are of potential value to those who participate in any political enterprise with, or as, religious actors. From both a conceptual and applied vantage any pretension to have captured ‘religion’ is thus countered by the imperative to engage with mere parts of it, acknowledging as Derrida once did that to read religion is ‘an experience that leaves nothing intact’ (Derrida, 1995, p. 120).

One conceptual approach that helps bring some order and control to the study of religion can be found in the distinction between what Lawrence Hinman has called the ‘impartial’ and ‘particular’ characteristics of moral beliefs (Hinman, 1998, pp. 14–19). Utilizing this distinction religion can be attributed with both impartial or generic characteristics common to all faiths, and particular or specific characteristics unique to some faiths and not to others (see Hinman, 1998, pp. 76–119). Hence, for IR scholars such as John Esposito and Michael Watson “religion” is taken to denote the major faiths considered as “world religions”, namely having today a world-wide presence and open to any human beings’ within a research agenda concerned with both ‘a generic focus on religion and specifically, of individual world faiths’ (Esposito and Watson, 2000, pp. 2, 17–37). Carsten Bagge Lausten and Ole Waever’s definition of religion also contains particular and impartial characteristics:

Religion deals with the constitution of being through acts of faith . . . Religion is a fundamental discourse answering questions like why being, why law, why existence? It is difficult not to pose such questions. Answers to such questions have the character of transcendental justification, and do as such anchor being (and societies). (Lausten and Waever, 2000, p. 738)

Answers to ‘why?’ (and indeed ‘why not?’) questions diverge greatly between religions (that is, particularity). Yet the enacting of the answers to such questions in the political sphere often produces a continuity of response (that is, impartiality) as particular religions are aligned and realigned with others by political interests and ideology. Haynes identifies three approaches to religion useful for the purpose of social investigation:
1) from the perspective of a body of ideas and outlooks – that is, as theology and ethical code; 2) as a type of formal organization – that is, the ecclesiastical ‘church’, or 3) as a social group – that is, religious groups or movements. (Haynes, 2007a, p. 12)

Each of these approaches arguably has impartial and particular dimensions. Ideas and outlooks differ yet common ground between such differences is often found. At the edge of particularity lies fundamentalism that is ‘to a greater or lesser degree, intolerant of differences and disagreements’ (Hinman, 1998, p. 113). At the edge of impartiality lies an ecumenism characterized by a pluralism of belief and an understanding of particular traditions as fallible (Hinman, 1998, p. 113).

From the perspective of formal organization religious polity is both particular and universal. Whilst distinct ritual traditions may shape the institutional forms of religion in particular ways, mainstream institutions each share the seemingly universal organizational challenges of maintaining stable internal and external relations of power. Yet important distinctions between religions can be made against the latter criterion, notably in relation to differences in the political milieu that organized religion must operate within. Jonathan Fox’s important study of religion and the state attempts to develop a scale of ‘government involvement in religion (GIR)’ in the period 1990–2002 that is ‘based on state behaviour rather than just on whether the state has an official religion’ (Fox, 2008, p. 42). At the institutional level, the study ‘showed measurable differences in official [state] support between religious traditions’ (2008, p. 67) and a significant increase in the level of religious discrimination (2008, pp. 69–71).

Third, at the level of the social group religion becomes closely linked to cultural practice of a formal and informal nature. The distinction between religious groups that embody dominant social values and religious movements that contest those values becomes important. The impartiality of religion can be potentially observed via the unifying effect of each position: groups of difference band together to protect common social values or to protest at the affront to those values. Particularity can equally be observed: the effect of cultural traditions to differentiate between religious groups, and also in the different nomenclatures and ritual responses religious groups bring to the social discourse in particular contexts. Yet this emphasis on the multiple socialities of religion returns us to the difficulty of a universal definition of ‘religion’. As the anthropologist Talal Asad has argued, ‘not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition [of religion] is itself the historical product of discursive processes’ (Asad, 1993, p. 29). This is a perennial tension that should not be lost and is one that confronts and
implicates policy-makers dealing with religious actors and interests at multiple levels of politics.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND ARGUMENTS

The aim of this book is to build on the established foundations of IR studies in religion to develop a new approach to the study of religion in IR at both the conceptual and methodological levels. Conceptually, I propose a new analytical approach that ‘amicably accommodates’ (after Madeley, 2003, p. xxii) the concomitant realities of secularization and sacralization in contemporary world politics (after Fox, 2008, p. 7). Methodologically, this new approach is operationalized as an ‘organizing force’ (after Hurd, 2008, p. 1) via the study of religion within the IR subfield of international development. More specifically, it is applied to a case study of interactions between the World Bank and faith institutions and communities.

I understand a discourse to comprise both normative and empirical elements and therefore grant equal legitimacy to the values that theorists hold and the data that theorists observe (Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p. 35; Pollins, 2007). The epistemological moorings of the book may therefore be described as ‘interpretivist’ but not without a recognition that external facts can and do influence the constructions of social theory (see Wendt, 1999, p. 90). Further discussions on religion and epistemology will tend to be bound by IR scholarship. This is employed as a mechanism of control and in recognition that the present book builds upon well-established foundations in the field.

The aim of the book is achieved via four objectives: to develop a new structure in the study of world politics; to pose a new question for religion research in IR; to construct a new model for differentiating religion in IR contexts; and to gain new insights into the impacts of religion in international development.

(a) A New Structure

In Chapter 1 I shall argue that there are three distinct discourses of religion inscribed upon the general discourse of IR. The secular discourse subordinates religious actors and agendas to more dominant structures and ideologies of world politics. By contrast, the sacral discourse holds religion to be the primary element in political belief and structure, thereby shaping the direction and impacts of world politics. The distinction between these discourses is effectively summarized by Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler: ‘while religion is sometimes a tool used by other forces, it
also has an independent influence’ (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p. 178). Added to the secular and sacral discourses is a third, the integrated discourse of religion in IR. In the integrated discourse the secular and sacral discourses of IR are mutually constitutive, informing and in turn being formed by the opposite approach. Ultimately, the mutual constitution of secular and sacral elements of world politics represented by the integrated discourse of IR necessitates the construction of a new analytical structure that I have simply called the religious structure of IR. Such an approach amicably accommodates co-existing evidence for secularization and sacralization.

(b) A New Question

Having established a new structure within which to consider the question of religion in world politics a new line of enquiry is proposed that drives the study further. I shall argue that scholars must begin with the question ‘Where is religion?’ in relation to the secular and sacral interests that shape world politics before asking ‘What is religion?’ in relation to value-driven debates such as tradition versus modernity or peace versus violence. The reflex toward the latter question is strong and stems from a long-held (and often very reasonable) secularist intention to ‘contain’ the negative effects of religion in the political domain. Yet posing a new question that first situates religion in world affairs allows the potential to differentiate religious elements in the international system without being constrained by prior assumptions. Religious actors and interests can be found in different places, aligned with different interests, and it is important to know why this is. Such an approach is designed to challenge a deeply rooted modernist tendency in social science that assumes to know a priori where the elements of religion are and what normative functions they carry. As Richard Roberts suggests, ‘the sociological imagination as classically deployed undercuts religious and theological pretensions’ (Roberts, 2002, p. 191). As a corrective to this, the extent and limits of religion will be rightly comprehended only when IR scholars situate religion within the dynamics of world politics before analysing religion in normative terms.

(c) A New Model

The new structure and new question help to construct a new model for analysing religion in IR that I have named the dynamics of religion model. What is a model and why is it important for the present study? Hugh Ward usefully defines social-scientific models as ‘simplified representations of reality [that] force us to attend to what we want to explain, what is central to explaining phenomena we are interested in and what can be
left out of the model as peripheral or unimportant’ (Ward, (1995) [2002], p. 69). Whilst models in political science are popular with rational choice methodologies that proceed by ‘applying logic and mathematics to a set of assumptions’ (Ward, (1995) [2002], p. 69), they are also employed in fields less formed by positivist epistemologies. For instance, in religious studies John Elliott defines a social model as follows:

An abstract selective representation of the relationships among social phenomena used to conceptualise, analyze, and interpret patterns of social relations, and to compare and contrast one system of social relations with another. Models are heuristic constructs that operationalize particular theories and that range in scope and complexity according to the phenomena to be analyzed. (Elliott, 1993, p. 132)

Rabbi and political theorist Jonathan Sacks offers a more discursive insight when he writes ‘sometimes it is helpful to simplify, to draw a diagram rather than a map, in order to understand what may be at stake in a social transition’ (Sacks, 1997, p. 55). This view neatly summarizes the rationale behind my construction of a model to simplify and differentiate the complex elements of religion that exist in the international system. Important qualitative questions arise from such an approach. Do social patterns and policy discourses on specific phenomena in world politics coalesce around secular theories (ones that reduce or relativize the priority of religion) in ways that are different to sacral theories (ones that attribute religion with primary agency)? Might, in turn, these patterns and policy discourses be ordered differently if we changed the phenomena we are studying? In this book the dynamics of religion model is developed by reading the phenomena of IR through the lens of the religious structure of world politics. The model differentiates the elements of religion at work in the international system and also situates those elements in relation to the dominant agendas of world politics by noting where religious actors are included in discourses of power and where they are excluded from those discourses.

(d) New Insights

In this book the dynamics of religion model is applied to a study of international development. Concomitant with the resurgence of religion in world politics is an emerging focus on religion in development studies. Where is religion situated in the theory and practice of development today? New insights are gained in response to this question when the divergent schools of development are situated within the religious structure of IR. Building on this, the case study considers the impact of religious agency
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upon the policy and practice of the World Bank, the largest multilateral development institution in world politics. The World Bank is defined in secular-sacral terms, and World Bank partnerships with religious actors in development are differentiated using the dynamics of religion model. Such an approach offers a select view of religious actors in relation to the World Bank and by inference to the global development agenda. Importantly, the model also highlights where and upon what basis religious actors and interests are included in the global development agenda and where they are excluded. I argue that without the new insights into religion in development provided by the application of the dynamics of religion model, analysis of one of the most important issues to emerge in the field of development policy and practice cannot adequately progress.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK

This book arguably makes three distinct contributions to the study of religion in IR and development. First, it creates a new way of thinking about religion in IR. In doing so, this study answers the conceptual and methodological challenges in religion research that I have previously identified. These challenges are answered by placing a new question – ‘Where is religion?’ – at the centre of the research agenda, and by developing policy based on the ‘spatial’ differentiations of religious actors and interests within the religious structure proposed. The conceptual and methodological approaches so described do not exist in any introductory textbook of IR nor in any specialized consideration of IR and religion.

Second, this book creates new ways of thinking about religion and development and specifically a new perspective on religion and the World Bank. At the conclusion of their important study on religion and IR, Fox and Sandler suggest a core unresolved question in the field is as follows: ‘How do you make a concrete study of a topic that is often ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations? In more social scientific terms, how do you put together hard data on an inherently soft topic?’ (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p. 179) I answer this question by operationalizing the heuristic model through the study on religion and development. In this way the ambiguities of religion are grounded in the specific discourse of development and in the concrete institutional setting of the World Bank. What do we ‘see’ that we otherwise would not see by situating the World Bank in a religious analytical structure? Where is religion situated in the policy domain of the World Bank? By determining where religion ‘is’ can we begin to assess the impacts of religion upon the ideology of the World Bank? The present book attempts to answer these sort of questions. Of equal importance, it
seeks to present a methodology than can be applied to many other subfields of IR beyond development.

A third contribution to knowledge is the case study of engagements with religion by the World Bank. Though a handful of studies have considered this topic the present book advances the research agenda in three ways: First, the research applies the analytical model to differentiate the distinct dynamics of religion at play to initially influence the World Bank on the question of religion, offering insights into the diverse nature of those influences. Second, the model is applied to critically differentiate the dynamics of religion between three pilot partnerships by the World Bank with religious actors in development, and to critically differentiate within an important fourth partnership involving a semi-autonomous non-government organization (NGO) known as the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). Third, the study of the World Bank and faith institutions concludes with an analysis of the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion toward religious actors in the global development agenda and the conceptual and instrumental consequences for policy that ensue from these dynamics. Such a perspective is at the frontier of new thinking about religion and development and has not emerged in the specific forms presented here.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The opening two chapters establish the conceptual and methodological foundations of the study. The remaining chapters apply these concepts and methods to the study of religion in international development. A synopsis of each chapter follows.

Chapter 1 advances the research agenda by identifying three discourses on religion in IR. The first is simply identified as ‘the secular discourse’ and is the oldest and most dominant discourse on religion in the field. In the secular discourse religion is understood as a subordinate element to other more prominent factors in world politics. The second discourse is identified simply as ‘the sacral discourse’ in which religion is understood as a primary element that shapes the dynamics of world politics. A third discourse is named as ‘the integrated discourse’ in which religion is understood as a primary element that shapes the dynamics of world politics. A third discourse is named as ‘the integrated discourse’ and represents an emerging consensus on religion study in the field. In the integrated discourse on religion in IR, secular and sacral discourses are identified as mutually constitutive elements of political events and analysis. As the description suggests the integrated discourse links secular and sacral emphases together.

In Chapter 2 the binding effect of the integrated discourse is utilized in the construction of a simple analytical framework I have called the dynamics of religion model. The integration of the discourses of religion
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is examined from conceptual perspectives drawn from IR scholarship on religion, broader principles of epistemology in IR and the philosophical consideration of secularism itself. The interlinkages between secular, integrated and sacral dynamics of religion create the religious structure of world politics against which the dynamics of religion model can be applied. The model is completed when specific themes of world politics are situated within and throughout the religious structure. This approach not only differentiates the elements of religion on a given issue in international affairs, Chapter 2 also attempts to reveal where the elements of religion may lie in relation to the prevailing centres of power. The remaining chapters attempt to highlight both characteristics of religion in the theory and practice of international development.

The analysis of religion and international development occurs at three levels: discourse, institutions and policy. At the level of discourse Chapter 3 identifies the domain of international development as an appropriate sphere to further explore the contours of religion in world politics. The chapter models the ‘orthodox’ and ‘critical’ schools of development theory against the dimensions of religion model. For instance, the dynamics of religion are of secondary importance within orthodox development approaches that prioritize state power and economic measures. However, changes in the orthodox discourse of development have also seen an increased engagement with religious development organizations, at times creating an integrated dynamic between secular and sacral interests. Similarly, the dynamics of religion are of secondary importance within critical approaches that critique perceived asymmetries of power within mainstream development practice. Yet the agency of religious actors in contesting and reshaping development priorities reveals a more integrated dynamic of religion within the critical development tradition. Employed in these ways, the dynamics of religion model reorders the discourse of development. For example, it reorders the consensus on development according to the criterion of religious agency. Development approaches hitherto considered oppositional in orientation become realigned according to whether they hold religion to be a secondary, integrated or primary element in development. For instance, orthodox and critical approaches are now linked by the secular subordination of religion in some instances, and by partnerships that attempt to integrate secular and sacral religious dynamics in others. In many respects, deep cultural engagements in development that grant primary agency of religion in development remain outside different expressions of the orthodox-critical consensus. This realignment of consensus raises the possibility that differences within schools of development toward religion are important and undervalued areas of policy analysis. Applied in these sorts of ways, the dynamics of
religion becomes an organizing force highlighting the differentiated nature of religion in the theory and practice of development. Situating religion throughout the development discourse increases our capacity to analyze specific contexts of religion and development.

At the level of institutions Chapter 4 focuses on the engagement with religious development actors by the World Bank Group (WBG). The WBG is defined primarily as an institutional arena of contestation between competing ideologies of development. The WBG plays a central role in negotiating and setting the global development agenda and is thus an important object of analysis. The dynamics of religion model is first applied to perceive the agency of religion in four phases of the WBG’s evolution. This analysis identifies a shift from the strong subordination of religion in the early phases of the WBG to an engagement with religious actors in advocacy networks opposed to WBG policy, and finally to an engagement with religious actors and interests leading to ‘faith and development’ dialogues and policy partnerships. More specifically, the model helps to discern the dynamics of religion that entered the institutional domain of the WBG, differentiating secular, integrated and sacral interests at work between the 1980s and the early years of the presidency of James Wolfensohn in the mid-1990s. Secular dynamics over this period include engagements with religion modelled by other international organizations and Wolfensohn’s instrumental rationale to engage religious actors in development. Integrated dynamics include the role that religious groups played in effective campaigns to influence development policy on the environment and the authority attributed to religious leaders and services in the findings of the WBG study Voices of the Poor. Sacral dynamics influencing WBG policy toward religion include a regular religion and ethics forum among WBG staff begun in 1981 called the Friday Morning Group and the Jubilee 2000 debt advocacy campaign. The dynamics of religion model is then employed to situate the secular, integrated and sacral dynamics of religion influencing WBG policy toward religion, and to highlight those elements that are external (and potentially disruptive) to WBG policy, from those that are internal (and potentially co-optive) to WBG policy. Applications such as these help to discern the relative agency of secular and sacral dynamics of religion upon the WBG’s introductory phase in dealing with religious actors and interests. This initial modelling acts as a foundation for closer analyzes of the dynamics of religion in the policy formation process.

At the policy level, the dynamics of religion model is applied in Chapter 5 to describe and critically analyze partnerships between the WBG and faith institutions that emerged in the period 1998–2005. The study initially compares WBG partnerships with three faith institutions – the Fes
Festival of Sacred Music, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Community of Sant’Egidio. Between 2001 and 2006, the Fes festival hosted the Fes Colloquium, a forum jointly sponsored by the WBG designed for participants to engage in direct dialogue on the contentions between globalization and culture. The study employs the dynamics of religion model to describe this initiative as a harmonious partnership within the ideological sphere of the WBG where the agency of religion is secondary to other dynamics. The WBG entered into a formal dialogue with the WCC in February 2003. The dialogues that ensued were characterized by deeply rooted differences in approaches to development between the participants. The present study employs the dynamics of religion model to describe the dialogue as a conflictual partnership where both participants are attempting to integrate the dynamics of religion, but from different ideological positions. Thus, situating religion in different places within the structure of international development reinforces an oppositional dynamic that places significant obstacles in the way of partnership. The Community of Sant’Egidio is a noted actor in the area of conflict mediation and health services delivery. Using Sant’Egidio’s established roots in Mozambique, the WBG established a pilot effort in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Sant’Egidio joined the Treatment Acceleration Program (TAP) funded by the International Development Association (IDA), as part of its operation of ten day hospitals in Mozambique. However the partnership in the TAP is contrasted with a breakdown in negotiations over Sant’Egidio’s participation in the IDA-funded Multi-country AIDS Projects (MAP), the main WBG strategic plan for addressing HIV/AIDS. The model is employed to observe two dynamics at work. The first represents an integrated secular-sacral approach toward HIV/AIDS patient care that builds capacity through the TAP. The second de-links the partners over the issue of prevention on religious grounds, highlighting the agency of sacral views in the service delivery of faith institutions. Only the TAP initiative can be considered a partnership. The model highlights in different ways that partnerships between religious actors and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the WBG require integration between secular and sacral ideologies toward agreed development goals, the attainment of which can be difficult.

A modest case study in Chapter 6 attempts to differentiate the dynamics of religion in a unique partnership between the WBG and the WFDD in the period 1998–2005. The WFDD is a semi-autonomous faith-based organization (FBO) founded in 1998 following high-level networking between WBG officials and religious leaders. As such, the WBG-WFDD embodies direct policy dynamics of the WBG faith and development initiative of the Wolfensohn presidency. The dynamics of religion model
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highlights in specific ways the divergent elements of religion that shape the partnership and the policy formation process. The study describes and analyzes the life cycle of the WBG-WFDD partnership according to three phases: integration, contestation and disintegration. In summary, the original rationale of the WBG-WFDD partnership was to combine WBG expertise with WFDD access to grass-roots development contexts through the actions of faith communities. However the momentum of the early phase of the partnership is significantly impeded when Wolfensohn’s proposal for a more expansive programme was unanimously rejected by the WBG Executive Board in late 2000. This highlights an important distinction between secular and integrated approaches to religious agency within development orthodoxy. WFDD structural and staffing problems ensued although existing reporting work is also consolidated. The work of the WFDD is sacral, producing an invaluable store of case study material on religious development activities and priorities. It is also integrated, using the development practice of faith institutions as a resource for mainstream global development approaches. Yet from 2002 there is a movement toward critical development priorities among the WFDD constituency, creating an ideological division and consolidating concerns among WFDD stakeholders concerning a lack of autonomy from the WBG. Leadership changes at the WFDD and the end of the Wolfensohn era in 2005 lead to the WBG-WFDD partnership being placed in hibernation and undergoing a period of reassessment. Using the dynamics of religion model, the study shows that each phase of the partnership shifted core elements away from the zone of integration toward distinct and eventually compartmentalized positions within the religious structure of world politics. The study therefore highlights the disintegrating dynamics that confront orthodox attempts to engage with religious actors and interests.

Chapter 7 concludes the study of the World Bank and faith institutions by combining the dynamics of religion model with assumptions drawn from the critical development school. A critical development typology classifies religious actors into one of three categories: formalized religious actors based in the ‘global North’, formalized religious actors based in the ‘global South’ and informal religious actors based in the ‘global South’. Formality is measured by organizational capacity on reporting and administration relevant to the reporting demands of agenda-setting institutions such as the WBG. Formality is linked to the commonly used term faith-based organization (FBO). Informality, by contrast, is measured by localized activities of development that lack the capacity of formal reporting and procedures or grant secondary importance to the demands of formality in deference to alternative beliefs and practices. I link this definition of informality to the term faith-community (FC). FBOs and FCs
associated with the WBG are categorized within a critical development typology, highlighting three characteristics. The first is a priority toward formalized organizations. The second is that engagements with religious actors categorized as informal are more problematic for the WBG. The third is that not all formalized Northern FBOs conform to the dictates of the global development agenda, thus highlighting the role religious institutions play in contesting and negotiating the development agenda in the North. Finally, the dynamics of religion model is combined to differentiate FBOs and FCs within the religious structure of international development. It is argued that secularity has a strong linkage to formality, aligning the institutional demands of development orthodoxy to FBOs that operate in a large-scale, centralized – and often monotheistic – milieu. Development partnerships bonded by secular formality are certainly breaking new ground by including religious actors in the extant development agenda. Yet such ventures place significant restrictions on the nature of faith and development partnerships by excluding FCs who cannot – or choose not to – comply to the demands of formality that the development agenda requires. Therefore, FCs are arguably the missing sacral element in the pursuit of a deeper engagement with religious actors in the practice of development. Unless this dynamic of excluding sacral communities from the development agenda can be corrected, the so-called turn to religion in development practice will remain limited.

METHODS AND SOURCES

I shall briefly explain several aspects of the research methodology employed in the book. The first involves the construction and use of an analytical model at the forefront of the research. Once the model is established in Chapter 1 the remaining analysis is structured by that model. Put simply, a model is not an answer to a question but a tool of analysis used in pursuit of an answer. Thus the model constructed and employed in the present research is not designed to reveal what religion is in a singular sense, but rather, where distinct elements of religion can be situated in relation to the dynamics of world politics under examination. Models are also employed to reveal the limitations of research and can point to new, often modified applications. Therefore the present research seeks in no way to provide the final word on religion in IR, but instead, attempts to carry the analysis to a new stage.

The second aspect of methodology concerns the use of sources in conducting the primary study between the WBG and the WFDD. These comprised mainly of documentary resources generated by the WFDD and the
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WBG. Informing my understanding of these sources were insights gained from preliminary discussions with key actors and observations from the field relevant to the WFDD. These discussions were held in February 2005 with Katherine Marshall, former director of the WBG Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics at the WBG offices in Washington, DC. The WBG also granted this researcher visitor status at a forum called the Friday Morning Group. The WFDD was based in the United Kingdom for the period under examination (1998–2005) and several informal discussions were held with WFDD staff and partners, including former directors Michael Taylor and Wendy Tyndale in Birmingham and Oxford, respectively. Despite these illuminating engagements the case study does not conform to the description of ethnography, which is more heavily reliant on ‘extensive field notes’ and ‘relatively long-term relationships with informants’ (Devine, 2002, p. 198). This limitation is partly because a preliminary field study was conducted at a time when the WFDD was classified as being ‘in hibernation’ awaiting decisions that would determine its future (World Bank, 2006). As such, case study research began at the end of the first incarnation of the WFDD (1998–2005). Moreover, in February 2005 the World Bank was nearing the end of the presidency of James Wolfensohn who played a central role in the WFDD initiative. The end of the Wolfensohn era marked a time of operational and missional uncertainty for the WBG. The religion and development initiative was not insulated from this, and indeed its viability was more vulnerable to change than many of the World Bank’s more core operations. Quite understandably, research discussions conducted in the period reflected this caution. In sum, the case study research is informed by documentary-based analysis rather than field work observation, however the latter element provided an essential contextual frame through which to read the documentary record.

The majority of documentary sources for the description and analysis of the WFDD come from the principal partners. Whilst the existence of the WFDD is acknowledged and granted limited commentary in the emerging literature on religion and development (for example, Haynes, 2007b, p. 11; Clarke and Jennings, 2008a, p. 2) very few independent academic sources make reference to the WFDD in any substantive analytical sense (Pallas, 2005; S.M. Thomas, 2005, pp. 225–33; Clarke, 2007). Knowledge about the WFDD, therefore, is attained from WBG sources such as published conference/dialogue proceedings (for example, Marshall and Marsh, 2003; Marshall and Keough, 2005), detailed descriptive works on faith and development (Marshall and Keough, 2004; Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007), speeches (DDVE, n.d.), interviews (for example, Mumford, 2006) and articles addressing the World Bank’s faiths and development programme (for example, Marshall, 2001), World Development Reports
(WDRs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) relevant to the WFDD (see PovertyNet, n.d.). The WFDD is the other source of primary research (WFDD, n.d. b), and includes WFDD Bulletins (for example, WFDD-B1, November 1998; WFDD-B16, March 2005) detailing decisions and programmes from November 1998 until March 2005, four occasional papers (for example, WFDD-OP1, 1998), joint publications (for example, Eade, 2002) and assessment reports.

CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATIONS

Conceptually, the once dominant assumptions of secularization theory have come under sustained attack in the study of religion in world politics. Religious agency, observed through the growing importance of religious actors across a wide range of political contexts, challenges and reconfigures notions of the secular modern (Casanova, 1994; Bhargava, 1998; Berger, 1999; Connolly, 1999; Asad, 2003a). Religion has thus been posing an empirical challenge in the study of world politics for some time, and the discourse has now moved in important ways toward a consensus view that religious factors are an embedded component of many political dynamics in international affairs. Yet to a large degree the study of religious agency in IR has existed within the confines of an instrumental approach, perhaps reflecting what Cox famously described as ‘problem solving’ approaches to the world as it already exists (Cox, 1986). Beyond instrumentalism, could religion be explored at the conceptual level of IR, and would such an approach reconfigure and even disrupt understandings of the existing order of world politics? How might one do this without overemphasizing the importance of religion in a world that remains, in very fundamental ways, ordered by secular not religious influences? The most robust theoretical approaches to these empirical challenges are, it seems to me, incorporative rather than binary. Hence, Taylor’s focus on the ‘modes of secularism’ (Taylor, 1998) and Asad’s emphasis on the adaptive capacity of different notions of the secular modern (Asad, 2003) provided valuable frames for analyzing a growing body of empirical research challenging the assumption that religion was a diminishing concern in contemporary world affairs (Berger, 1999). Could these incorporative capacities be utilized in the construction of new conceptions of the international order or are they limited to observing, albeit in new ways, world politics as it already exists? The evolution of religion research in the field of IR has come to an impasse on this question. The secular moorings of IR have for some time been recognized as inadequate for the task for engaging religion (Wuthnow, 1991; Keohane, 2002; Tickner, 2006) yet these repeated
assertions – as if perpetually caught in a ‘ground-hog day’ moment on the
question of religion – only succeed in returning the discourse to the origi-
nal dilemma of how to deal with religious agency in the modern world.
The conceptual modelling and empirical analysis entailed in this research
are designed to move the debate beyond this impasse, this moment of
perpetual repetition. There are leaders in the field that have begun taking
the discourse forward (for example, S.M. Thomas, 2005; Haynes, 2007a;
Clarke, 2008a; Fox, 2008). The present book seeks to make a unique
contribution to these efforts, strengthening the ground already laid and
cutting new trails into terrain not yet fully explored.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

An inherent ambiguity exists when focusing on the dynamics of religion
in IR. On the one hand, this focus refers to the treatment of religion and
religious-based movements by IR scholars and those associated with a
broader academic and philosophical discourse on religion and world
politics. (Theologians, for instance, may not belong to the former but
have certainly featured as important voices in the latter.) On the other
hand, the phrase also attests to the role that religious actors and interests
play in the political dynamics that IR scholars observe. Each emphasis is a
component of what I mean by the term ‘discourse’ as the critical examina-
tion and interpretation of political dynamics in constant interaction with
the dynamics themselves. The distinction between these components sets
both the scope and the limitations of this study: the dynamics of religion
model is conceptually grounded while the application of the model to
international development connects concepts to identifiable events and
organizations.

This ambiguity also determines the limitations of the book, both in a
negative and positive sense. Negatively, the book is not intended to provide
in-depth analysis of a broad range of religious ideas and religiously based
movements at work in the international realm (or even in international
development). If one is to take seriously the array of religious actors and
interests that animate contemporary international affairs, such an endeav-
our would arguably fill a library of books and certainly not be represented
in a single work. Positively, the analytical approach represented by the
model is applied to a deeper exploration of a single domain of IR (religion
in international development) and to specific subjects within that domain
(WBG and faith institutions). Whilst the model is constructed and applied
once, many other applications would be possible. Thus, while it is hoped
that such an approach progresses an understanding of the dynamics of
religion in a specific field, it also reminds us of how vast the horizon of religion research in world politics is and provokes further enquiry into what other applications of the ideas contained herein might be usefully attempted, either in their current or modified form.

NOTES

1. ‘We are linked to political society by something that somehow escapes our immediate consciousness, by a whole tangled skein of pressures and motives . . . Thus, Augustine will not give us a fully-worked “myth” [of the political]. Instead, he will do something more important when dealing with an intractable reality, he will tell us where it is worthwhile looking; and, in so doing, he will direct very bright beams into crucial areas of the human situation’ (Brown, 1972, p. 27).
3. Friday Morning Group (11 February 2005, 7.45 am–9 am) 18th Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC – Private Dining Room D/E.
4. Discussion with Prof. Michael Taylor (17 February 2005), Department of Theology, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, United Kingdom; discussion with Dr Christien Van Den Anker (14 February 2005), Centre for the Study of Global Ethics, University of Birmingham Prioryfield, 46 Edgbaston Park Road.