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RELIGION: A MISSING COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

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PKSOI PAPER

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FOREWORD

Thomas Matyok's monograph on religion dares us as military planners and conflict analysts to think more deeply about religion. Since religion can be a major driver of both peace and violence, Prof. Matyok argues we need to do better in recognizing how religious factors play out in shaping human motivations and aspirations in conflict situations.

Prof. Matyok's contention is a new idea for U.S. professional military education but draws on older intellectual currents. The eighteenth century French philosophe Voltaire believed that France began slipping down a dangerous slope of repression and intolerance after Louis the XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. (This Edict issued by Henry IV in 1598 granted Protestants substantial rights in a nation considered to be basically Catholic.) The revocation not only drove a Protestant exodus and stoked up the hostility of Protestant nations bordering France but set in motion wider forces of social intolerance that eventually spilled over into the French Revolution and beyond. When Louis XVI restored Protestant civil rights and freedom to worship in 1787, his act was widely seen as "too little, too late." French society decisively overthrew the monarchical regime two years later for that and many other grievances.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes echoes down as an historical warning today. Most national leaders and peace keepers seem convinced that religious tolerance and inter-faith respect are now key to maintaining religion's trajectory towards peace. The creation of an autonomous region in Mindanao, Philippines appears to be one institutionalized answer to the creation of more space and tolerance for religious di-

versity and more peaceful competition in secular and sacred spaces.

Prof. Matyok's work also speaks to Samuel Huntington's assertion that the fundamental source of conflict in the twenty-first century will not be primarily ideological or economic but cultural. The heart of cultural systems is religion, and Huntington, so far, appears right that inter-religious tensions increasingly dominate conflict situations in the world, and the fault lines between religious groups can form potential battle lines.

While Prof. Matyok's monograph cautions us not to be binary (either/or) in our thinking about religion, many commentators are just that: "if you are not with us, you are against us." Former Prime Minister Tony Blair is a case in point. He recently argued that Islamist ideology "is exclusivist in nature. It is a society of a fixed polity, governed by religious doctrines that are not changeable but which are, of their essence, unchangeable." In other words, Blair feels Islamic extremism rejects the principles of religious freedom and open, rule based economies.

It may be better to look at the problem in the terms that Prof. Matyok proposes in his monograph. He suggests we try to determine the criteria used to determine what is fanatical and what is tolerable, and within what range. By helping to find common ground among conflict groups, peacekeepers may make more progress. As Prof. Matyok observes Field Manual 3-07 is too simplistic and we need to sharpen our conflict lens in understanding emerging conflict situations.

Finally, Prof. Matyok's monograph is essentially a call to refine the Army War College curriculum. He believes that the development of the strategic thinkers of tomorrow demands greater religious literacy. Prof. Matyok challenges us to consider four changes:

- Embed education regarding religion and religious actors into PME core curricula.
- Designate a visiting scholar position for the study of religion at the Army War College.
- Integrate religion as a dimension of analysis throughout all coursework.
- Establish a permanent position at the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute for a scholar expert in the sub-field of religion as an aspect of peacebuilding and stability.

The time is overdue for these changes. The dearth of religious analysis in contemporary war-fighting curriculum is a blind-spot that can quickly become a strategic bias. As Prof. Matyok writes below, "The circumstances of modern conflict demand that military leaders become knowledgeable of not only the divisive, but also the many positive, roles religion and religious actors can play in conflict prevention and resolution. Leaders will need a literacy that allows them to engage religious leaders as counterparts in PSO, and they will need to develop an ability to work with and through religious institutions."

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Dr. Matyók has been interviewed for radio and television regarding international conflicts and national security issues. He has negotiated significant international agreements and has been recognized for his abilities by the United States Coast Guard and United States Army as well as national and international human rights organizations. He has presented and testified to industry and government officials regarding cross-cultural conflict and slavery in the transnational merchant marine. His current research interests are peace design, global citizenship, missing war narratives, institutions of peace, and the academic preparation of international conflict workers.

Religion: A Missing Component of Professional Military Education

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Introduction.

There is little reason to romanticize religion and the potential roles it can play in peacebuilding. The historic record is clear. Religion has often been animated to justify the worst kinds of horrors. In the United States alone, Jim Crow preachers employed religious rhetoric to keep segregation in place. Osama Bin Laden used religion to justify mass murder, and preachers such as Jerry Falwell routinely suggested the link between terrorism waged against Americans and God's wrath for a society wandering away from Christian values.[1]

A tendency exists to view religion as primarily divisive[2] leaving little space for the accommodation of competing narratives. Religion is neither good *nor* evil. Religious actors are complex human beings with competing interests. Binary thinking rarely results in a *deep analysis*[3] of the issues at hand.

An emphasis on the divisive and violent aspects of religion provides only part of the story. Missed are the ongoing peacebuilding activities of religious organizations and individuals occurring at multiple tracks of engagement; interpersonal, community, national, and regional.[4] As professionals engaged in the many activities of peacebuilding, it is essential that military authorities arrive at a nuanced understanding of the

religions and religious actors operating in conflict affected areas as well as those influencing peace operations from outside. And, this understanding must take into account the overall complexity of religious faith and practice present in people's daily lives.

Hostilities involving religion are at a six-year high.[5] On a global scale, religious groups and actors are increasingly present in the public square; while some pursue peace, others foster violence. Contrary to the promise of the secularization thesis,[6] religion is not in decline, it is growing, primarily throughout the Global South, and its influence in society is broad and deep; especially as it regards conflict and violence. And, during the past century the influence of religion, primarily Christianity and Islam, on politics is at its highest point.[7] Society has become post-secular.[8] No longer is the secularization of modern society a *fait accompli*. The secularization thesis that proposed the passing of religion as societies modernized has proved incorrect. The need to ensure successful and sustainable Peace and Stability Operations (PSO) compels military leaders to be knowledgeable of religion and its multifaceted presence in conflict, as driver of conflict and facilitator of peace.

The secular and sacred share the same public sphere. It is essential that both be accounted for when conducting peace and stability operations. To orient on one to the exclusion of the other is to know only part of the story.

In *Peace On Earth: The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict Studies,* I asked: Why in the academy have we mostly ignored studying the role of religion in contributing to the development of peace and the nonviolent transformation of conflict? I suggest the same question holds true in Army Professional Military Education (PME).

It is not about seeking simple answers, defining religion as good or bad. Nor is the mantra-like claim, no matter how inaccurate it may be, that the principle of *Separation of Church and State* restricts military actors in engaging with religious players helpful. The goal of strategic and operational military leaders ought to be to achieve an in-depth and multidimensional understanding of the many constructive roles religious actors play, and can perform, in peacebuilding, and arrive at ways of positively interacting with religious institutions as a counterpart to state PSO processes.

I am not suggesting that religion as a positive peacebuilding force be accepted uncritically, nor am I suggesting that all religious actors move toward achieving a just and sustainable peace in constructive ways. History and current events certainly prove otherwise. I do propose, however, that when religion is absent from the analysis of conflict, it is questionable if inclusive and sustainable peace can be arrived at.[9] All said, though, it is relevant to remember that in a macro sense, "Religion maintains a trajectory toward peace."[10]

In this paper, I propose that the study of religion, as a principle of PSO, be included in PME at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The near complete absence of religion as a core academic subject in PME curricula is shortsighted and ignores the growing presence of religion, and its potential as a driver of peace as well as violence. Post-9/11, a substantial degree of focus has landed on the divisive aspects of religion, ignoring the many potentially positive roles religion and religious actors can play in PSO. Clearly, individuals can cynically employ religion to advance their political, economic, and social goals.[11] Others have focused on the disruptive and conflict-ridden as-

pects of religion. It is not my goal to contribute to the narrative that calls for non-engagement with religion. I suggest just the opposite. Though the points I make in this paper can be applied at all PME levels, I will restrict the focus of my paper to the need for correcting the failure to teach about the role of religion in society, including in conflict, in-depth, at the strategic and operational levels.

Presently, there is an apparent disconnect between how the U.S. Army perceives religion and the ways in which military officers are schooled. Simplistic narratives dominate. The absence of an in-depth discussion of religion and religious actors in Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07 is itself problematic, and points to a shallow understanding of religion and its potential role as driver of both peace and violence. Sociocultural considerations provide a framework used, presumably, to account for religion in a conflict. Field Manual 3-07 captures the overly simplistic manner with which many military leaders are exposed to religion and the ways in which it is discussed, as one factor of many and co-equal. We need to do better.

In doing better, one of the questions we should ask ourselves is what type and amount of religious passion are we willing to accept? Are Bishop Desmond Tutu and Pope Francis I religious fanatics? The Dali Lama? Are their forms of extremism acceptable? Simplistic accounts of religion, and religious actors, are rarely useful when developed, critical, and nuanced understandings of conflicts with religious dimensions are required; nor, is the absence of religion from the PSO discourse beneficial.

As resources decline within a post-Afghanistan and Iraq context, and the public's appetite for responding to conflicts outside of the U.S. dissipates, the strategic

focus is moving away from conflict resolution, writ large, toward conflict prevention. Conflict prevention is less costly in lives and treasure than interventions that seek to address on-going violence that can develop into intractable conflict. And, before leaving office, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel suggested that the U.S. is moving away from long-term stability operations.[12] Successful conflict prevention will require all hands.

Army leaders intuitively understand they cannot go it alone when engaging in modern conflicts. An interagency focus guides conflict analysis and intervention. Whole-of-Government approaches to addressing conflict are seemingly too narrow. We now speak of Whole-of-Nation and Whole-of-Society approaches in an attempt to capture what is needed in response to the *wicked problems*[13] we confront. Wicked problems have no clear solutions.[14] Chaos, ambiguity, and contradiction are standard elements of conflict. For many, addressing the chaos, and constructing an holistic worldview, is the domain of religion.

Military professionals will benefit positively from an education focus aiding them to develop a literacy allowing them to understand and speak to religiously informed conflicts. Looking at the past 50 years, it is difficult to think of a conflict in which the military was engaged where an understanding of religion, and its impacts on conflict, would not have been useful.

The U.S. Army is well suited to advance the integration of the study of religion within a professional military education curriculum. Certainly, DoD Directive 5100.01 states that "The Army is the Nation's principal land force". . . responsible for the preparation of land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war and military operations short of war. Integration

of religion into the Army War College curriculum can be the first step. Change in curricula can then cascade through the military education structure. Initial steps should include:

1. Incorporating religion as a specific aspect of study within professional military education.
2. Development of religious literacy among military leaders at tactical, operational, and strategic levels.
3. Addressing the potential peacebuilding aspects of religion in peace and stability operations.

It is well accepted in management and leadership circles that the *good* is the enemy of the *great*. And so it seems with the Army's approach to the study of religion. Religion as an aspect of study within culture, writ-large, is at best, good; however it falls far short of the best approach. The best approach is the recognition of religion and PSO as a discrete field of study and practice, one that cannot be trivialized within checklists.

Desired are strategic thinkers able to grasp the complexities of modern conflicts that possess religious undercurrents. Learned individuals who are more than trained functionaries are essential. Max Boot notes how "a decade of war exposed the flaws of experienced, highly credentialed civilians" and "equally experienced and equally credentialed military officers."[15] Arguably, an awareness of religion and its presence within society would have contributed to a deeper understanding of conflict *in situ*.

Contributing to the complexity of modern conflict is the presence of religion and religious leaders. Arguably, "*religions* are among the most potent forces in the world today."[16] In Army and Joint publications,

religion often receives a cursory nod, at best. When discussed, religion is frequently reduced to one aspect of culture and treated as a cultural phenomenon. Religion is a distinct dimension of analysis. While religion can influence culture, and culture can influence religion, the two are separate.

Considering the acknowledgment by military leadership that today's complex conflicts require interagency, Whole-of-Society responses, why the marginalization of religion? Moreover, why is religion viewed primarily as a driver of conflict, not as a partner in peacebuilding and conflict prevention?

I begin with several assumptions:

- that religion is present in the world and that it will continue,
- U.S. foreign policy does not strategically engage religious organizations and actors as peacebuilding partners, and
- military professionals are inadequately prepared and lack the religious literacy necessary to advance U.S. Peace and Stability Operations in religiously informed environments.

As Miroslav Volf observes, "given the continued numerical growth of religions worldwide and their increasingly public role, religions will remain a significant force in the years to come."[17] Just as there can be wrong answers, there can be wrong questions. The issue is not where is religion present; it is where is religion absent in a world that has never been secular?[18] Simply put, religion is the X-factor.[19]

My purpose in putting this paper forward is to contribute to the emerging body of research, and a developing narrative within the military, regarding the proper role of religion in U.S. foreign policy, and

specifically, if and where religion fits into military tactical, operational, and strategic thinking. My research is guided by the following questions: Does Army PME support development of religious literacy? What is the proper role of religious education in PME? How can religious literacy positively contribute to peace and stability operations?

My intention is not to provide an exhaustive review of the role of religion in military thinking; rather, it is to propose the need for military professionals to develop a religious literacy that will allow leaders to engage religious actors positively in peace and stability operations. Religious literacy should be integrated into PME as a core competency. Important to point out here is that religious literacy does not mean belief; rather, it is the knowledge of others' sacred beliefs and how religion interacts with other dynamics of society that allows for meaningful discussion and collaboration. Religious literacy can contribute to PSO by translating religious and secular beliefs and narratives in such a way that all parties can engage in consensus driven peacebuilding.

Throughout I discuss the enduring global presence of religion, address religion as an aspect of military tactical, operational, and strategic thinking, examine the presence and depth of religion-centered instruction in PME, and lastly make recommendations for expanding the study of religion in PME.

Conflict and Religion.

Writing in the March 2014 issue of the Association of the United States Army News, General Ray Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, notes that military officers need to be developed faster than in the past, and

more specifically, they must understand the *religious* environments within which they will operate. In the world today, conflicts possess a religious dimension.

Conflict and religion are historically linked. And, that link is more complex than generally recognized. Unfortunately, the focus of military conflict analysis often falls on the divisive nature of religion ignoring its constructive attributes. Historical accounts of religiously based violence abound, as do examples of peace processes that flow from inspired religious actors and religious institutions. Religiously inspired conflict resolution is a growing, though still small, sub-field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). The marginal nature of religion in PACS itself is curious, considering how the field of study and practice grew out of the peace churches. As the PACS field continues to define itself, religion will continue to present itself as a vital dimension of study and practice. And, religion will continue to inform our understanding of conflict, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution. The understanding of PACS vis-à-vis conflict and violence can be used to inform military awareness of the many roles played by religion in intractable conflicts.

To better understand how religion informs conflict prevention and resolution it is useful to arrive at a common understanding of conflict. The word, conflict, is so often used, to describe so much, it can often communicate very little.

Conflict is the natural resource needed for social change. Conflict is neither positive nor negative, it simply is. The regular friction of social life manifests itself as conflict at different levels; interpersonal, community, national, regional. From a western perspective, conflict is the condition that invites intervention.

Western-centric approaches to conflict are highly focused on transformation and resolution, both of which are reactive. In the Pan-Western world, conflict is accepted as a natural condition.

Conflict work occurs in the space between *what is* and *what can be*.[20] It is the creation of a context where those in conflict can do *their* work in resolving *their* issues. Conflict workers employ both elicitive and prescriptive practices in preventing and resolving conflict. It is in the transitions that conflict workers conduct the majority of their efforts.

It is not possible to view conflict outside of the boundaries created by negative and positive peace. Negative peace is the absence of direct violence, while positive peace is the absence of direct violence *and* the presence of justice. Very often, conflict resolution work ceases once a negative peace has been achieved. Direct violence can end by establishing a cease-fire; however, a respite from direct violence does not necessarily translate into justice. Violence that is moved below the social surface, and moved into a latent state, will very often resurface.[21] Positive peace requires that institutions of peace be in place to move from negative to positive. Religion and religious actors can contribute to this in substantive, unique ways.

Religion is not the Third-Rail

Religion is front-and-center in many of today's conflicts, and "religious loyalties matter profoundly."[22] The multiple roles played by religion and religious actors are not easily classified as good or evil. Realistically, the presence of religion in conflict slides along a scale between both poles. Clearly, "When religion is not taken into account (as per a failure in mili-

tary intelligence), the character of conflict is invariably misunderstood."[23]

Former secretary of State Madeleine Albright notes that there are few spaces within the academic discipline of International Relations where diplomats can develop a "sophisticated understanding" of religion and its influence on world affairs.[24] She further notes that religion does not disappear from the world stage merely as a result of our ignoring it.[25] Religion cannot simply be wished away. In today's world, an understanding of religion is "essential"[26] for successful peacebuilding.

In many instances, religion provides the only social structure in fragile states, as well as failed ones. Religious leaders may be the only individuals with credibility among a failed population. And, religious institutions may be the only ones in place through which civil society can continue functioning.

As states fail, so can moral and ethical practices. Failing and failed states can be places of cultural, structural, and direct violence. Corruption often replaces governance. Examples are too numerous to list; Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Congo are but a few exemplars of states unable to provide for the human security of its citizens. Religion can keep morality and a sense of justice alive.[27] Religion has within it the capacity to reintroduce the moral dimension into conflicts that have transitioned to violence. Clausewitz notes, moral elements "constitute the spirit that permeates war as a whole, and at an early stage they establish a close affinity with the will that moves and leads the whole mass of force, practically merging with it, since the will is itself a moral quantity."[28]

Religious actors can, and should, be engaged as coequals alongside others in the peacebuilding process.

The peace-centered nature of religion can be used to compliment a conflict prevention and conflict resolution strategy.

In order to associate with religious actors and organizations, military leaders will need to develop a clear understanding of religion as a social structure, independent of the state. Leaders are needed who possess a well developed understanding of religion and how it makes politics possible through creation of an ethical foundation. Religion keeps critique of the state alive.

National leadership must provide clear guidance regarding the engagement of religion and religious actors. Interpretations of the Establishment Clause are abundant and ambiguous. Uninformed assumptions about the Establishment Clause should not be used, and abused, to restrict engagement of religion and religious actors unnecessarily. The absence of a clearly communicated understanding of the boundaries set in place by the Establishment Clause vis-à-vis PSO leaves leaders in the field struggling to understand the degree to which they can engage religious actors.

Few subjects have the potential for igniting human passions the way religion can. Religion provides much of the world's population with an holistic worldview that is not easily replaced through artificial, pseudo-communities; religious beliefs form the core of many people's lives. Leaders must appreciate the fundamental nature of religion in people's lives.

Religious literacy has been identified as the missing aspect of statecraft.[29] Arguably, religious literacy is also absent from military strategic thinking. At best, the study of religion and its potential role as partner in PSO is pushed to the margins of Professional Mili-

tary Education (PME). Most often the topic is simply absent in PME.

Peacebuilding Counterpart

In a post-secular world, the metaphor that communicates a *wall of separation* between church and state may no longer be useful. More meaningful may be the metaphor that suggests the *twin tolerations*. [30]

Religion and state "depend on a constructive coexistence"[31] in order to address peacebuilding challenges. State and religion share a common concern, an emphasis on *the good.* Since Plato's *Republic*, Western scholars have searched for the most appropriate way to govern ourselves. Secular and sacred focus on the same question using different language, "What is the good?" Religious literacy enables peacebuilding actors operating from a secular context be able to comprehend religious language in this common search.[32]

Religion and Violence

Religion is easily and often connected to violence. Viewing religion as one- dimensional can lead to shallow thinking and poor analysis. If a thesis is wrong, the answer will be wrong. My experience teaching conflict analysis and resolution in undergraduate and graduate studies programs leads me to suggest that students readily throw religion forward as the cause of many conflicts. Critical thinking is absent. They quickly follow with a recommendation that religion should be eliminated in order to eliminate conflict; an unlikely proposition.

Global Religious Growth

It is well known that in polite company it is rarely a good idea to discuss politics and religion. Advice aside, politics and religion continue to animate much of the global scene. And, as R. Scott Appleby points out in *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, not everyone believes in separating religion from public life. The West makes up less than one-sixth of the world's population. It is an arrogance for Western actors to presume that religion is marginal to people's lives, or that western leaders know what is best for the other five-sixths of the populace. More than 85% of the world's population, approximately 5.8 billion adults and children, believe in some sort of religion.[33] Following Odierno's observation, it is necessary to understand the global religious environment and its continuing growth.[34] Not to do so will leave a significant hole in our understanding of a world growing more, not less, religious.[35] Clearly, "religions continue to play an important role even in liberal societies."[36]

Religion today is being defied by the Global South. An increasing number of conflicts occupy the space along the 10th Parallel where 700 million Muslims and 1.2 billion Christians often collide like tectonic plates.[37]

Religion Endures

The discourse regarding state and religion often swings between two poles, one advocating for religion as a legitimate aspect of statecraft, the other opposing the presence of religion in politics in any manifestation. Rarely is religion engaged positively to address the wicked problems that face us today.[38] As a way

of making space for secular state actors, religious actors are frequently relegated to the margins of military and civilian intervention efforts, and increasingly, secular non-state actors that possess the resources to advance their interests, irrespective of local needs, are contributing to the marginalization of religious actors. Prescriptive approaches to conflict resolution dominate, and guide secular non-state approaches taken by secular foundations.

But, religion remains ever-present, and rarely does anyone seriously suggest its imminent demise.[39] So beneficial is religion to human evolution, contemporary research advances the view that it may be a part of human DNA. Religion provides a mythology and moral grounding that benefits society, and societies with strong moral development were privileged over those without such a foundation. Privilege, over time, became part of human DNA, and individuals and societies with religion evolved, those without it did not.[40] From a peacebuilding perspective, "democracy depends on moral stances which stem from prepolitical sources,"[41] and religion shares in the domain of the prepolitical.

Religious Illiteracy

The phenomenon of *religious illiteracy* permeates western diplomatic, development, and military thinking and policy. As an *essential element*, religion needs to be included in peacebuilding and stability narratives.[42] Successful PSO interventions will require leaders at all levels – strategic, operational, and tactical – which possess a degree of religious literacy congruent with their role in a conflict's analysis and transformation. Religious actors and institutions are often

present at all levels of a conflict – interpersonal, tribal and community, national, and regional. An ability to engage positively with religious leaders is crucial to mission success. State actors engaged in PSO can build upon the peace trajectory of religions. However, this is rarely the current line of approach used by military leaders.

In 2009, the United States Institute of Peace and the United States Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute published *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction*. The purpose of the text is to fill the gaps that exist among civilian agencies of the U.S. government regarding PSO. The manual is meant to serve as PSO *doctrine* for civilians. Astonishingly, there is no mention of religion anywhere in the volume. ADP 3-07 (31 August 2012) *Stability* does not discuss religion or religious actors as part of stability operations. ADRP 3-07 (31 August 2012), *Stability*, incorporates one paragraph addressing religion. It notes that religion is a significant characteristic of many governments and that it cannot be easily discounted; however, apparently not important enough to address in any detail. ATP 3-07.5 (August 2012), *Stability Techniques* makes no mention of religion though it discusses NGOs and humanitarian organizations.

Why Religious Actors as Counterparts?

Religious actors are not constrained by state policy and national constituencies.[43] Track One actors engaged in peacebuilding initiatives can mesh the Track Two and Three activities of religious leaders and organizations that are embedded in local communities and who are integral players in society.[44] A conflict resolution approach that works across all Tracks simultane-

ously may provide the best chance for success. Formal Track One provides governmental initiatives to peace development, Track II ensures non-governmental approaches to peacebuilding are present, and Track III makes certain that grassroots and indigenous voices are heard. This can be viewed as a counterpart activity. Religious leaders are often able to operate where the military cannot. Track One actors need to approach religious actors as counterparts, not subordinates. A recognition of religious leaders status as co-equal with the state is required.

Eric Patterson posits that a "secular bias" permeates U.S. foreign policy.[45] For Patterson, U.S. foreign policy actors fall far short of developing a religious literacy. This observation can also be applied to professional military officers, commissioned and non-commissioned. "There is almost no formal preparation for U.S. military officers in their professional military education" regarding religion and religious phenomena.[46] Patterson calls on universities to invest in developing religious literacy through research and coursework. Military PME curricula planners would do well to invest, as well.

Regardless of the increasing presence of religion in modern conflict, "There is a paucity of religious education available to prospective or current military commanders across the board. As a consequence, U.S. military commanders in the field are essentially 'winging it'."[47]

Following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, over a 400-year period, the influence of religion in world affairs declined. That decline appears to have been arrested, and we are viewing an increase in the impact of religion on global concerns. Secularization is not re-

sulting in less religion; the effect appears to be just the opposite. Religion is on the rise, globally.[48]

Religion fills the social service gaps left by failed and failing states. When governments no longer maintain the capacity to govern, the only institutions available to address a population's human needs are religious.

The many roles played by religion are complex and cannot be captured in simplistic descriptions. A focus on religion as a mono-causal factor of conflict and violence detracts from the identification of other possible, secular causes.[49] The goal is to move away from religious versus secular thinking[50] to an acceptance and management of the secular and sacred sharing the same public space. The developing field of religious peacebuilding continues to be "challenged by secular biases."[51] The sacred remains ambivalent; it is our responsibility to animate it as a partner for conflict prevention and resolution.[52] Linking religion to PSO is a new approach to peacebuilding.

U.S. Army View of Religion in Peace and Stability Operations

Shortly after arriving at the U.S Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute as a Visiting Research Professor, a senior commissioned officer asked me about my research and areas of academic focus. I explained to him that over the past several years, I have been engaged in research and teaching of the role of religion in peacebuilding; specifically, the positive roles that religious actors can play in addressing conflict in fragile states. The officer listened to my overview of activities, and then politely asked, "Do we need that expertise here?" My predecessor told me

that military officers and Department of the Army civilians asked her the same question when she arrived.

This seems an odd question considering the presence religion played, and continues to play, in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as emerging and on-going intractable conflicts. What seemed so clearly plain to me, the need for religious literacy on the part of the United States' military elite, was going to take some selling. I decided to start by looking at current thinking regarding the role military education in developing religious literacy among the professional military.

Religion in PME.

Recently, professional Military Education curricula at the service colleges have received increasing focus.[53] It is suggested that Army War College (AWC) curricula has not kept pace with a rapidly changing global space. It is well understood that Armies are prepared to fight the last war, not future ones. And, if past experience is anything, future wars will very likely possess a significant religious component.

A recent survey of the Army War College curricula suggests the peripheral role of religion in PME. It appears little different at other War Colleges, too. The formation of a religious literacy, and an understanding of the multiple potential roles of religion and religious actors in conflict, is not viewed as core competencies. By offering electives in religion and conflict there is a measure of recognition on the part of curriculum developers regarding the need to better understand the role of religion in PSO. It is worth noting that this recognition is very recent. At the Army War College, electives focusing specifically on religion and peace and stability operations, as well as conflict and

violence, have been offered only during the past three years. Previous courses have included religion as a variable, but not as a specific unit of analysis. This recognition needs to be exploited, however. Embedded inside religions is the potential for partnership with PSO actors.

Student end-of-course evaluation comments regarding the need for the study of religion at the Army War College are telling. One student who participated in a recent class on religion and conflict stated that the "course should be part of the core curriculum! Too often we (the Army) shy away from studying and understanding the role of religion in conflict and violence…. we treat religion as an afterthought." Another notes how the absence of instruction focusing on the role of religion in conflict "is a weak area for many working in the DoD and the interagency." One student wrote that the study of religion and conflict is "truly relevant to strategic studies and should be incorporated in to the broader (Army War College) course material."[54]

Religious Literacy Cannot Be Outsourced

Over the past decade, the role of the military chaplain has evolved beyond its traditional focus of ministering to military personnel and their families to that of advisor and agent regarding local religions, religious leaders, and faith-based institutions.[55] However, not all chaplains are prepared to meet the new demands placed on them; some are ill-qualified to assume the role of expert advisor of religions outside of their home faith tradition.[56] Military chaplain leadership recognizes that "military chaplains are the only ones trained to effectively communicate across religious boundaries,"[57] and that is precisely the issue.

Are chaplains the best choice, or the only choice? Can religious literacy be outsourced? Engagement with religious actors cannot be the sole domain of chaplains.

The transitioning of chaplains away from their traditional role of ministering to the troops and their families will not be easy, and political considerations will exacerbate making chaplains *religious advisors*. And, chaplains lack an in-depth training in religions that limits their usefulness as expert advisors.[58] Possibly relying on chaplains to assume the role of subject matter experts regarding pan-religious issues is little more than pushing the problem aside with a quick, but inadequate, fix. Also, assigning the role of religious literacy subject matter expert to chaplains takes them away from their ministry role, and that is their job.

Coupled to a lack of education regarding other faith traditions is the "increasingly evangelical composition of the American chaplain corps" and chaplains maintaining their right to evangelize and proselytize among non-military populations[59]; irrespective of DoD policy. Chaplains are not interchangeable. Not all chaplains have identical views regarding ecumenism.

Existing approaches to Religious Leader Engagement (RLE) suggest an acceptance by military leaders that religions are interchangeable. This is not the case. Engagement with religious actors and institutions is a critical task of military leaders and not something that can be pushed off on just anyone. Military leaders require an understanding of religion and its presence in the public domain.

Recommendations

Certainly, curriculum development is a challenging activity. Not all subjects can be accommodated in a core curriculum. The decision regarding what gets left out of the core curriculum is never easy. But difficulty in deciding what is most important should not keep us from making tough decisions. Simply because a subject has always been a part of the core curriculum should not afford it privileged status. Change is constant, and curricula should be flexible enough to address a constantly changing global context. The wicked problems we face require practitioners who are multi-literate, and one of the most critical literacies is religion.

One-way of adjusting a curriculum to include the study of religion an its impact in peacebuilding is to employ an approach that diffuses it throughout existing classes. Integrating the investigation of religion into standing classes should be resisted. State and religion are the primary peacebuilding actor. Placing the study of religion within the state suggests a power-over relationship that does not exist in a separation of church and state or twin tolerations paradigm. In the first, the state should act as a neutral, not from a position of authority over. In the second place, the state should accept a position that tolerates the presence of religion in the public square as co-equal.

The following recommendations are advanced as ways of enhancing the AWC curriculum as a way of developing and enhancing religious literacy among leaders at the strategic and operational levels.

- *Embed education regarding religion and religious actors into PME core curricula*. Education regarding the importance of religion to people's lives, and the many roles it plays in modern conflicts,

cannot be relegated to peripheral status. Arguably, no single dimension of human activity has the potential for good and evil as religion does. To ignore or marginalize its latent potential leaves a gaping hole in a military officer's professional education and preparedness for dealing with an increasingly religious world.

- *Designate a visiting scholar position for the study of religion at the U.S. Army War College*. This individual will research religion as part of the core curriculum. As a rotating position, this will work to ensure a connection between the AWC and scholarship pursued at civilian institutions of higher learning. It will also have the benefit of continuing to renew the curriculum through continuing research. This individual will also teach in the core curriculum.
- *Integrate religion as a dimension of analysis in coursework*. Considerations of religious factors should be included in all coursework. Not an appendage or afterthought, religion should be addressed as co-equal in PSO. It should not be addressed as an aspect of culture, writ large.
- *Establish a permanent position at the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute* for a scholar expert in the sub-field of religion as an aspect of peacebuilding and stability.

In implementing these recommendations, curriculum developers should avoid the easy approach of delegating all things religious to chaplains. Religious literacy is a competency that cannot be delegated. Military leaders must demonstrate their understanding of the other through their personal knowledge of others' worldviews mediated through religion.

Conclusion

The absence of religion as a core subject within a contemporary war-fighting curriculum leaves our military personnel ill-equipped for a complex world. A quick scan of any newspaper, on any day, clearly communicates the escalating presence of religion in the public square. The circumstances of modern conflict demand that military leaders become knowledgeable of not only the divisive, but also the many positive, roles religion and religious actors can play in conflict prevention and resolution. Leaders will need a literacy that allows them to understand how religion can interact with conflict, to engage religious leaders as counterparts in PSO, and they will need to develop an ability to work with and through religious institutions. Mission success, and human lives, depend on leader religious literacy.

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