

Religion, international relations, and global security: an analysis

Mohammad Jahangir Alam

Professor, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Rashid Ul Karim Siyam

Master of Arts, Political Science, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Abstract

Needless to say, religion plays an important role in international relations and global security. This is not just a theoretical point. It is therefore essential to thoroughly explore the significant role that religion can play in global security. Sociologically, religion has always had a great impact on our society from the past (McGuire, 1997) that is still relevant in the contemporary world, especially in terms of international relations, religious diplomacy, global security and development. This paper explores the impacts of religion on international relations, including its effects on global security and development, and the influence of religious diplomacy on politically influential nations. The study aims to explore the interconnections between global development, security, diplomacy, and religion. Additionally, it examines the roles of international organizations with religious foundations. Methodologically, this paper employed a textual analysis method, consulting data collected from published journals and books on religion and international affairs, as well as various online and print media sources, videos, and news articles. The paper concludes by discussing how religion is being utilized as a tool for international cooperation.

Keywords: Religion, International Relations, Global Security, Global Development, Diplomacy and Religion

1. Introduction: Impact of religion on international relations and global security

The role of religion in our society was always prevalent from the past in human civilization (McGuire, 1997). In the contemporary globalized world, we cannot ignore its role either, especially in the field of international relations and global security. New world order is being created where religion is taking part actively. Sometimes their engagement is also causing disharmony in society and breaking relations among nations. Therefore, global security is being threatened by the rise of extremist religious groups, although religious diplomacy can be used positively.

In the present world, no doubt, global security is a big issue. A lot of terrorist organizations are threatening the prosperity of nations and also impacting relations between nations. Thus religion nowadays is not only confined to religious praying halls but is being used to leverage one's interest. In contemporary global politics, therefore, right-wing leaders are increasingly using religion to woo their voters in the election which ultimately is being the cause of the emergence of many religious groups engaged in politics.

Although religion is a key factor in international diplomacy, the relation between religion and international relations has not been discussed much. However, the reality is that religion encompasses social, cultural, and economic influence in our society. Indeed, these elements are considered highly important in the arena of international relations and global security. At this point, it should be mentioned that today, countries with similar religious backgrounds are increasingly making treaties and organizing summits. Religion is being used to form international cooperative organizations. Heads of states are keeping religious sites in their protocol to visit while making an official visit to another country.

In the contemporary world, from Europe to Asia, North America, South America, Australia, and Africa, everywhere we can see a rise of religion in determining international policies. A lot of empirical studies have tried to assess the relation between religion and global conflicts since the cold war has ended (Carolyn et al., 2011). Many organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have been formed based solely on the identity of the nations' majority religion. From various studies, it can be found that religion plays a role in understanding the foreign policy of a state (Carolyn et al., 2011).

However, as the main objective of the current paper is to know how religion shapes relations among countries and impacts global security, the following issues such as religion as threat to global security, relation between religion and international relations, co-existence of religion and development, religion and foreign policy, and role of religion in shaping international diplomacy are addressed. In addition, the interconnection of religious diplomacy, global security and development are also taken into consideration. Moreover, this study deals with contemporary international relations and religion by bringing back examples from the history of how religion played a crucial role and what may happen in future too.

2. International cooperation based on religion by international organizations

2.1. Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

To begin with, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also known as OIC is an organization consisting of Muslim countries. This institution is only second to the United Nations in terms of size and has 57 members spread across four continents. Indeed, it is considered as the collective voice of the Muslim world. The main objective of this organization is to give protection and safeguard the interests of its member countries (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2021).

Saudi Arabia's King Faisal at first took the step to have the first Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers which eventually turned into a promise for strengthening ties among fellow Muslim countries and creating a podium for discussing the main topics which affect the Muslim world (Castillo, 2014).

The members of this organization have one thing in common, they all are from Muslim majority countries and Islam plays an important role in the lives of the people of these countries. Thus, this organization is an explicit example of religion being used for international cooperation.

OIC has some specialized bodies under its supervision just like the United Nations. Some of the notable organizations are the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) and Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Castillo, 2014). The notable thing about all these organizations is that they claim to preach the values of Islam. Islam is acting as a connecting thread among the nations for these institutions. The Islamic Development Bank is a claimant of giving loans to its countries without interest and ISESCO promotes educational, scientific, and cultural knowledge among its member nations.

Apart from these institutions, there are many Muslim NGOs that are under the supervision of OIC that assists affected Muslim countries. For example, OIC informed the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) about the dire need for fighting famine in Somalia. Also, OIC is involved as a mouthpiece of Somalia in the international forums (Castillo, 2014). This is how this organization is keeping its feet in the conflict resolving process for its member countries.

As Islam plays an important role in the lives of people in the Muslim world, OIC can have an upper hand in making co-operation among its members. Religion has bound these 57

countries to have shared political vision and international cooperation. In other words, religion is being used as a tool for international cooperation, development and diplomacy through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The inspiration and idea of making such an organization would not be possible without Islam.

2.2. Religion and the United Nations

As we know that the United Nations is the largest international organization in the world that has a dedicated task force namely ‘UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development’ (United Nations Environment Program, 2021). This taskforce engages faith based actors with the 17 SDG Goals of the United Nations. There are a number of activities where religion is directly involved like the HIV/AIDS Program, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Program, Religious Refugees Program and the Human Rights Program. In total, the task force consists of members from 21 United Nations’ programs. This taskforce on Religion and Development has been made to support the works of staff of the UN strategic, sustained and learned engagement of the key partners with the faith based world and supporting collective and respective efforts to attain global development goals (UN IATF Annual Report, 2019). Engaging religious leaders and institutions has become integral to international organizations because communities often trust and listen to these leaders more, addressing existing trust issues among the people. There is a psychological factor as well. People are psychologically more positive towards the religious leaders in a community. In general, religious leaders get the high moral respect particularly in the region of Asia-pacific so that they can often act as a role model to inspire the communities. Moreover, they act as a redressing force on some fundamental issues like gender violence. Thus, it becomes important for the government as well as the non-government sectors to engage with and hear the extreme voices that may have different political views (UN IATF Annual Report, 2019). In the year of 2019, a Memoranda of Understanding had been signed by United Nations

Populations Fund (UNFPA), the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum and Joint Learning Initiative to work together on issues of multi faith focused engagement. It has been seen that faith based organizations have a great impact while working on projects related to HIV/AIDS. The United Nations has a dedicated program namely UN AIDS where faith based organizations are engaged to promote awareness. Another UN organization, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), collaborates with religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and policymakers from countries like Ethiopia, various Arab states, and other developing nations in Africa and Asia to advance development initiatives.

International cooperation is the key to resolve issues involving social and cultural matters. International organizations use religion to leverage and get a fruitful impact on society. Every year the United Nations holds a summit in its headquarters where the leaders of its member states come to discuss and disclose their vision and expectations. Today, religion is also becoming a part of the UN summit as the impacts related to religion are increasing day after day. In this regard, the house speaker of the United States Nancy Pelosi (2021), after the UN summit in 2021, said:

Limiting the severity of climate change is a moral obligation for us to hand this planet over to the next generation in a responsible way. For me, it's a religious thing: I believe this is God's creation, and we have a moral obligation to be good stewards (Pelosi, 2021).

Another influential organization that is International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development known as PARD also works to bring the intergovernmental and the governmental entities closer with faith based organizations and other civil society organizations to foster the SDG goals by engaging diverse faith communities (PARD, n.d). Day after day, international organizations are engaging religion to resolve socio political

issues to leverage international cooperation and development. Large international organizations like the OIC and the United Nations are becoming the platform where the member states are using religion not only as a basis of shared culture but also to propagate their agendas and maintain relationships to gain social and political support. This reflects the socio-political values of religion in contemporary global politics.

2.3. Religion and global security

Global Security is a major concern for our world. In concurrent world politics, religion is becoming even more relevant. Security is now interconnected. Therefore, any threat in a distant part of the world can be a threat to another part especially if it is connected to religion. After 11 September 2001, the United States of America declared war on terror. From that incident, the relationship between global security and religion started to be discussed even more. It has been observed that when the relationship between religion and political power becomes too close, religion is often exploited for political interests (Wolffle & Moorhead, 2014). Religions can be used both in a peaceful way as well as in a destructive way. It depends on how the verses are interpreted (Chatterjee, 1971).

According to some authors, the rebirth of religion in the non-Western world is a revolt against the powers of the West, especially the Westphalian order (Vlas, 2010). When a certain group of people feels that their voices are not being heard properly, they feel discriminated against and often religion takes place to fill up that vacuum. After the incident of the 11th of September in 2001, the issue of politicization of religion has been a central point in the arena of international politics. 9/11 was the event after the relationship between global security and religion came to focus (Vlas, 2010).

It must be taken into consideration that Muslims were coexisting peacefully with people from other faiths for a long time. A religion cannot be described as a security threat

for global peace and development judging by one or two incidents. Other than Islam, the use of religion in creating violence can also be found in other religions. For instance, in Sri Lanka, Buddhists used religion as a tool for their justification of violence against minority Tamil Hindus even though it was mainly an ethnic conflict rather than a religious one (Vlas, 2010). Recently we have seen in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, some radical Buddhist leaders have used violent speech against Rohingya Muslim minorities that has been a cause of refugee influx in neighboring Bangladesh.

In Christianity, there is a concept of 'Just War' that justifies the violence in the name of religion. In Islam, the most feared concept among non-Muslims is Jihad, although Jihad means an inner struggle of an individual against evil and sin (Vlas, 2010). But we cannot identify these religions as a cause of security threat just because of these terms as the interpretation varies. Similarly, in recent Indian politics, we can see a rise of right-wing power that uses Hinduism for political gains. Consequently, the minorities in India are facing security issues although Hinduism does not preach any violence against non-Hindus. In the 21st century, religion has become a security issue throughout the world because of international politics and the misinterpretation of religious verses. As Christianity's holy scriptures are interpreted in various ways by different denominations or institutions, the same is applied to Islam where Osama bin Laden's interpretation is not as same as a moderate Muslim's interpretation. Therefore, it can be argued that the interpretative apparatus of religion makes the difference (Vlas, 2010).

The war on terror which was initiated by the USA had a great impact on religious groups especially on Muslims throughout the world. Because the media had great coverage on this issue, sometimes the wrong message was sent to the masses. As a result, hate speech and violence against Muslims increased many times (Kimball, 2015).

Although many terrorist organizations exploited religion, particularly Islam, to promote their ideology and political gains in the first two decades of the 21st century, the interpretation of those terrorist groups differs from the beliefs of most of the Muslims throughout the world. Nowadays, Nations hold talks on global security which also includes religion as a result of these events.

Sometimes religious elites have an advantageous role in the reconciliation and the conflict (Silvestri, 2016). In the 21st century, digital media are playing a huge role in mitigating the gaps among communities. Everyone including religious preachers of all types can use these platforms to convey their messages to the target audience. Because of the spread and availability of the online digital media namely social media, the hate speech is easily being spread (Corps, 2019). Some examples can be found in the Southeast Asian nation of Myanmar where the minority Rohingyas have been forced by the extremist military and religious authorities and also they are accused of spreading hatred through social media. For example, online social media giant Facebook has been accused of being the medium of spreading hatred towards Rohingya Muslim minorities where some extremist Buddhist monks used the platform to spread hatred (Toh, 2021). It can be highlighted that Buddhism does not preach extremism nor do all Buddhist preachers are violent. There are just a few who are not controlled by the state agencies or anyone and they leverage by using online platforms. Myanmar's Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu is accused of spreading hatred towards Muslim minorities and creating a war like situation in his country against the minorities (TRT World, 2017). This is an example of how religious leaders can preach hate speech and become a reason for security issues.

Similarly, there are examples in the Middle East where Islam has been used as a force to frighten the minorities. The infamous terrorist organization Islamic State of Iraq and Syria popularly known as the ISIS became security threat for almost every country on earth and

they were misinterpreting religious verses to promote terrorism for which ultimately Muslims, in general, had to face extra security procedures and also in some places, after the 9/11, Muslims were being perceived as a security threat as no one could say who is a member of those dangerous terrorist organizations. Consequently, Islamophobia rose in many western countries (Noah, 2021). As a part of the war on terror mission, the United States sent troops to several Muslim majority countries including Afghanistan and Somalia. The convict of the attack on the twin towers, Osama bin Laden was accused of being given shelter by the Afghan Taliban government. The United States attacked Afghanistan to capture Osama bin Laden. So religion was playing a huge role in antagonizing the relationship between the USA and Afghanistan. Later on, the issue became a security threat for entire South Asia. The Jihad announced by the Taliban against the foreign invading forces created a security concern for the neighboring countries like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Moreover, when the Soviets tried to invade Afghanistan, many youths from neighboring Bangladesh, Pakistan and India went to Afghanistan to take part in the so-called Jihad against the Soviets by the Taliban. Similarly, after the Taliban recently got power back, it is reported that many people in Bangladesh rejoiced in the victory (Hasan, 2021). Conflicts, regarding religion, affect the surrounding regional countries as the global securities are interdependent and interconnected. Many countries now share intelligence information to reduce the threat by the terrorists.

Silverstri and FBA (2015) argue that religion can sometimes be used to create divisions among people. Additionally, some political scientists contend that religion can contribute to structural violence both within societies and on the international stage. As religion is a sacred thing in the society, it involves dedicated issues where the sentiments of people are attached. If the violent preachers are not stopped, religious riots can take place easily. Often the cultural violence that arises in societies has a source in religion (Galtung,1969). Religion has the potential to serve as a bridge between cultures if shared

values and similarities are emphasized. The security crisis in global events created by the religiously associated terrorists cannot be seen as a liability of religions as the misinterpretations are done by the miscreants.

Silverstri and FBA (2015) point out that there was a biographical study on the convicted terrorists which showed that no conclusive evidence was found on how religion plays a role in creating a radical profile. The arguments are about how the power-thirsty and opportunistic people take advantage by using the misinterpreted religious language for their own interest, not about how religion leads to violence. Religion can neither be termed as a dangerous element nor the people who follow the faith. Niemi et al. (2019) argue how religion has become associated with the questions of violence and security in Europe but they also state that along with the effects of globalization that creates tension, radicalization is a way of laying out identity politics. However, political leaders throughout the world try to use incidents to promote their own ideology.

While there are many issues for global security, religion can only be a part of the discussion where discourses can be made on how to mitigate the misinterpretation of religion to reduce security threats often created by the extremists associated with religions. At this stage, what we understand, if the correct interpretation of religion, promoting compassion and mutual respect for other beliefs and cultures, is widely spread, the security threat could be reduced by fostering a more cohesive society.

2.4. Religious diplomacy among nations

In a world where the role of religion is increasing day by day, the importance of religion in diplomats is also increasing. Many influential countries are using religion as a soft power to influence other countries. On many occasions, the heads of state are keeping

religious sites in their protocol in a diplomatic visit to strengthen cultural ties and give a message to a certain community.

It is argued that the diplomats of the USA often have difficulties in understanding the role of religion in the public sphere of Muslim majority countries (Keiswetter & Chane, 2013). In countries, especially the non-Westerns, people often feel a cultural connection with the citizens of other countries that have similar belief systems. This was evident during a visit of India's Prime Minister to Nepal, where he visited temples, emphasizing the religious and cultural connections between the two Hindu-majority nations. Similarly, many US presidents are also seen visiting the religious sites in Jerusalem of Israel to promote their relationship and give a message to the masses.

An interesting aspect of the media's role during the Rohingya refugee crisis is that global coverage predominantly labeled it as a potential genocide against Rohingya Muslims, emphasizing the term 'Muslim,' despite reports indicating that Hindu Rohingyas also fled from Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh (Krishnan, 2018).

Here, it should be noted that Muslim majority countries used OIC to raise this issue and also as part of the Muslim 'Ummah' and 'Muslim Brotherhood', the Muslim majority states felt the need for diplomacy among themselves to solve the issue. It can be highlighted that Islam was the basis for this diplomacy. The fact is that if the Rohingyas were not predominantly Muslim, the issue might not have become a focal point for the OIC. Religious diplomacy can be defined as an activity of the state where the religion acts in the foreign policy by the cooperation of the state with religious associations to work for the national interest (Curanovic, 2012).

Countries try to use religion as a tool for making cooperation and strengthening people to people contact. In recent years the state of Turkey has been seen attempting using

Islamic diplomacy to revive its Ottoman legacy. The ruling party of Turkey, the AKP has been using religious diplomacy so that it can establish a religious presence (Fayed, 2021). The president Erdogan of Turkey often uses religious institutions and discourses to legitimize regime policies, mobilizing the Turkish diaspora abroad, for intelligence gathering role, creating new Islamic alliances and playing the refugee card. President Erdogan customarily uses religious discourse so that he can justify his policy regarding international affairs (Fayed, 2021).

Countries like Russia that has Putin as the president also tried to use religion as a tool for influencing other nations. The Russian government often depicts itself as the defender of religious values and tries to export these values or arguments for building alliances with the countries where similar values exist (Mcglynn, 2021). The Russian Orthodox Church has a close contact with the Georgian Orthodox Church working as a back channel for the Russian diplomats although politically both nations have troubled relations. Similarly, Russian Orthodox Church acted as unofficial diplomat by holding dialogue between Moscow Patriarchate and Polish Catholic Church in 2009, also Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has been playing as a mediator and peacemaker in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Curanovic, 2012).

According to Ikromov (2020), the powerful Gulf States' role may be reassessed. The prominent Muslim states like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and the UAE all are in a competition for a specific kind of diplomacy which he terms as the "Mosque Diplomacy." The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has spent almost hundred billion dollars to propagate its *Wahabbist* agenda through building religious institutions and mosques. Similarly, Qatar, Turkey and UAE have tried to influence other Muslim countries mainly in Central Asia to put an impact into the society and culture of that place. The United Arab Emirates known as the

UAE not only funds for building mosques, but it also does economic investments in the Muslim nations to get an upper hand in their internal politics.

Turkey has a powerful directorate for religious affairs which not only funds to build mosques, but also religious educational institutions. It provides scholarships for religious education to gain influence. Similarly, Qatar Charity reports that it has constructed approximately 7,896 mosques around the world (Ikromov, 2020). These incidents show how religion has become a tool for influential nations to propagate their ideology and to make an impact on other nations.

Recently there was religious diplomacy between India and Pakistan through Sikh religion. A corridor named Kartarpur was opened by Pakistan for the Sikh people living in India. This kind of gesture melted down the ice between the rivals of India and Pakistan. Since the last century, politics and religion have become interdependent to each other. Even the top leaders also understand the significance of religious diplomacy for international cooperation. Religion cannot be described as a divisive force rather it accepts people to be diverse if interpreted correctly. Pope Francis' visit to the UAE, along with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi's initiative to build the Abrahamic Family House, reflects the growing acceptance of religious diplomacy (Siddiqui, 2019).

In contemporary global politics, religion has been a tool for the diplomats for gaining political and cultural support. Influential countries practice this religious diplomacy in order to gain their control on their desired state. As religion has a good impact on the culture of a society, it has become a weapon for political leaders to spread their agendas globally. Apart from state officials many back channel organizations based on religion and supported by the state have been formed so that soft power can be flexed by influencing cultures.

2.5. Using religion in global development practice

Although sometimes it is thought that religion may impede the growth of development in societies which is not always true as religion can play a huge role in some societies as a conjunctive force for the development practices. In the trading societies, it can be seen that people enjoy more religious freedom to worship in their own ways (Onimhawa & Ottuh, 2021). Trading societies tend to be more liberal on practicing religion. In the developing countries, religion is subsistent in most of the social and cultural manifesto; therefore, while approaching the masses, religion can be a decisive factor in promoting developmental issues. Many international organizations face critical situations and often fall to complex emergencies in a religiously conservative society especially working with the issues related to women and children. Sometimes blasphemous laws also avert the motion of their activities. Therefore, international organizations and development agencies often seem to cooperate with the religious leaders to avoid issues relating to religious sentiment.

Even though the Western-led global development organizations are mostly secular in nature, since the past decade or so, we can see a ‘turn to religion’ by these global development organizations as well as in the academic study of development studies (Tomalin, 2018). There is an increasing engagement of religious leaders and institutions in the developmental practices throughout the world especially in the global south as it has more religious influence present on its society than the global north. It can be noted that the global south is a developing part of this world where industrialization has not taken place as much as the developed global north.

In recent years, throughout the world, a rise in religious ideologies can be seen with a new paradigm. International organizations like the UN have taken several agendas for global development among which, SDGs are in the spotlight where 17 goals have been set (United

Nations, 2021). To implement the SDGs in the Global South, religion will be a big factor as the societies in the developing countries are comparatively more religiously dominated and the morals often come from religion. The impact of religion in the socio-cultural arena is unavoidable in most of the developing countries.

Religions have always played some key roles in terms of the welfare of the society from ancient times. In earlier societies, religious laws were considered as salient rules in a society to maintain law and order. Similarly, the traditions related to religion played an acting force to shape the understandings of development and support the society for its welfare during the colonial times. The Evangelicals in England were in support of the building of the railway network in British India as it helped grow the cotton industry which ultimately caused the reduction of slavery reliant cotton farms in the USA and also could be used to spread Christianity in India (Tomalin, 2018).

In religiously conservative countries, religion often becomes a focal issue when the development agencies try to implement social schemes for women and children. For example, in Pakistan, the polio vaccination campaign stagnated because of the misinterpretation of religious verses and rumors created by the religious leaders (Asif & Jibran, 2019). Issues like these reflect how misinterpretations of belief systems can become an impediment for global development workers and how it can affect the overall societal development.

Consequently, it is now a phenomenon that international faith based organizations such as the Islamic Relief, Tear Fund and Christian Aid hold talks with the religious leaders and try to engage them to achieve the goals of SDGs and MDGs (Tomalin, 2018). While taking steps for global development, Harry S. Truman, former president of the United States and a pioneering person in starting the global development initiative, once told:

Steadfast in our faith in the Almighty, we will advance toward a world where man's freedom is secure. To that end we will devote our strength, our resources, and our firmness of resolve. With God's help, the future of mankind will be assured in a world of justice, harmony, and peace (Truman, 1949).

From ancient times, religions often were the source of social and political rules in the society. Even today in some countries like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most of its laws have been directly adapted from the Quran, the holy book of Muslims. As a consequence, while working to develop the society, the development practitioners need to cooperate with the policy makers and the policies made by them which may be inspired by religious laws. Sometimes, religion shapes a concluding psychological approach among the people living in a society. As a result, if religion can be used to promote developmental activities, the results can be affirmative and positive. In Bangladesh, the government used Arabic verses to discourage the public from urinating on the walls of important buildings (Khan, 2015). It is important to note that the use of Arabic language alone led the general public to follow the rules, even though they had no connection to Islam. Since Arabic is the language of the Quran, it holds a special sense of respect among Muslims. Therefore, in religiously conservative societies, using religion to promote developmental activities has often proven to be a successful and more approachable strategy. Religion has a great impact on the social psychology of a society. People develop the idea of justification from social and cultural rituals which includes laws and tradition that often import from the sources of religion. As development works are directly related to human society, the values created by religion often become a major factor in implementing any project.

Religious communities are one of the most important actors in the society for providing social service in many parts of the world and it is easier for them to reach social strata and age groups to influence the media and politics (Ohlmann and Stork, 2021).

Therefore, using religion for global development is convenient and often highly fruitful. Global development is a major topic in international diplomacy and sometimes economic diplomacy is given more importance while making diplomatic relationships. Religion has become an instrument by which nations are engaging in developmental works. Many international organizations are watching religion as a force to continue and implement some of the critical developmental projects. Religions do not become an impediment for the developmental growth of humanity if it is engaged in an appropriate way into social work. By integrating religion into the efforts of development partners, it is possible to build a more productive and inclusive society. Indeed, religion and development have no antagonistic relationship; rather religions have the ingredients in themselves by which human society could grow and religions can be used to motivate the society in engaging in projects which include development. In order for the successful implementation of SDGs, diverse communities have to be engaged, therefore, religious leaders and organizations can play a key role and become a part of the SDG discourse (Tomalin, 2018).

3. Conclusion

In sum, the return of religion in the arena of international relations remarks the consideration of a new chapter of diplomacy and predicts a future where religiously associated people and organizations will have a greater impact. If religion can be used in effective diplomacy, many problems our world faces today can be solved. Thus, the use of religion in international relations can be a blessing for humanity if rightly used. At this stage, two points have appeared to be very clear. First, as diplomacy, development and security are tightly interconnected; nations are incorporating these three areas and keeping religion in their international agendas as an instrument by which international cooperation can be accelerated. Second, as religion is increasingly becoming a hot topic for global politics, the impact of religion in international relations is also increasing. Indeed, religion has been an

unavoidable part in the global discourses for security as it is considered a peacebuilding force that can serve as a messenger of peace, prosperity and development. In that case, religious leaders have the ability of acting as the advocates of alliances. In the contemporary world, security has become a big issue for all the peace loving people across the globe. Although the recent activities by some terrorist groups terrorized the minds of innocent people about religions, an all-inclusive approach could solve the security problems the world faces at present. As security and development are interconnected, religion becomes even more relevant in the field of international affairs. There is more scope for the study of international relations and religion. Religious diversity is becoming more common in most of the countries so the policy makers are thinking about the effect of religion on societies even though the state is a secular constitution. More cooperation can lead the world into tranquility and prosperity and more contact among the disciples of different beliefs can create a convincing diversified world. While sometimes religion becomes an issue for cultural division in societies, it has an immense possibility of becoming a uniting force among nations.

Moreover, there is a great impact religion has when it comes to diplomacy especially among nations having similar religious backgrounds. Additionally, the current security situation of our world has forced every nation to keep religion in their international agendas. For development projects, religion is a big factor which can play a key role if it is properly used. Religion has relevance in contemporary global politics and has a great prospect in international affairs as it is not just a decisive factor for many social issues just in the Global South, but also in many secular nations, the importance of religion in policy making is increasing. Therefore, in the future, religion may play an even bigger role in global security, development and diplomacy. There is a possibility of coexistence among religion and the three important parts of international relations namely global security, diplomacy and global development.

References

- Baggs, J. (2020). *Memoirs, Diplomacy, and Implicit Consequences: Religion in U.S. Foreign Affairs* [Unpublished master's thesis]. The Ohio State University.
- Castillo, V. L. (2014). The Organization of Islamic cooperation in contemporary society. *Rivista elettronica de estudios internacionales*.
- Chatterjee, P.B. (1971), *Studies in Comparative Religion*. Das Gupta.
- Curanovic, A. (2012). *The Religious Diplomacy of the Russian Federation* (9782365670272). Ifri.
- Fayed, A. (2021, September 7). "Religious diplomacy" in the service of Turkish foreign policy. *The Arab Wall*. <https://arabwall.com/en/religious-diplomacy-in-the-service-of-turkish-foreign-policy/>
- Guay, J., Gray, S., Geil, M. R., & Inks, L. (n.d.). The Weaponization of Social Media: How Social media can spark violence and what can be done about it. *Mercy Corps*.
- Hassan, A. M. (2021, August 30). *Implications of the Taliban victory for Bangladesh*. The Diplomat – The Diplomat is a current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific, with news and analysis on politics, security, business, technology and life across the region. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/implications-of-the-taliban-victory-for-bangladesh/>
- Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). *Religious diplomacy*. Ελληνική Δημοκρατία - Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/church-diplomacy/>
- Hussein, H. S. (n.d.). *Religion and Terrorism: International Security* [Unpublished master's thesis].
- Ikromov, S. (2020, December 16). Mosque diplomacy in Central Asia: Geopolitics beginning with the mihrab. *Voices On Central Asia*. <https://voicesoncentralasia.org/mosque-diplomacy-in-central-asia-geopolitics-beginning-with-the-mihrab/>
- Jenichen, A. (2019). A transatlantic secular divide? The representation of religion in EU and US foreign policy. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 15(4), 451-469. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orz013>
- Keiswetter, A., & Chane, B. J. (2013). Diplomacy and Religion: Seeking Common Interests and Engagement in a Dynamically Changing and Turbulent World. *U.S.-Islamic World Forum Papers 2013*.

- Khan, M. I. (2015, May 7). *Bangladesh uses Arabic signs as cure to public urination*. Anadolu Agency. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/health/bangladesh-uses-arabic-signs-as-cure-to-public-urination/49729>
- Krishnan, V. (2018, June 30). *Hindu Rohingya refugees also wait for a home*. The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/hindu-rohingya-refugees-also-wait-for-a-home/article24301661.ece>
- Mcglynn, D. J. (2021). *DEFENDER OF THE FAITHS? HOW THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT USES RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY* (978-1-909035-69-0). The Henry Jackson Society.
- McGuire, M.B. (1997). *Religion: The Social Context*. Wadsworth Pub. Co.
- Niemi, P., Kallioniemi, A., & Ghosh, R. (2019). Religion as a human right and a security threat—Investigating young adults’ experiences of religion in Finland. *Religions*, 10(1), 55. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10010055>
- Noah, I. H., & The Columbus Dispatch. (2021, December 20). *Keeping the faith column: Islamophobia has forced American Muslim community to evolve*. The Columbus Dispatch. <https://www.dispatch.com/story/lifestyle/faith/2021/12/20/faith-islamophobia-isis-made-american-muslims-adapt-integrate/6459390001/>
- Onimhawo, J. A., & Ottuh, P. O. (n.d.). Religion And Globalization. *The Arts, Man and Globalization*, 471-479.
- PARD. (n.d.). *Overview work-streams - PaRD international partnership on religion and sustainable development*. PaRD PaRD International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development. <https://www.partner-religion-development.org/work-streams/overview>
- Sandal, N. A., & James, P. (2010). Religion and international relations theory. *European Journal of International Relations*, 17(1), 3-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066110364304>
- Seiple, C., Hoover, D., & Otis, P. (2013). *The Routledge handbook of religion and security*. Routledge.
- Shahzad, A., & Ahmad, J. (2019, May 3). *Monstrous rumors stoke hostility to Pakistan's anti-polio drive*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-polio-idUSKCN1S9051>
- Sharqieh, I. (2012). Can the organization of Islamic cooperation (OIC) resolve conflicts? *Peace and Conflict Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/1082-7307/2012.1139>

- Siddiqui, R. (2019, November 9). *Kartarpur corridor is religious diplomacy at work, a promising new trend around the world*. ThePrint. <https://theprint.in/opinion/kartarpur-corridor-is-religious-diplomacy-at-work-a-promising-new-trend-around-the-world/317509/>
- Silvestri, S. (2016). Religion and Conflict. *GSDRC Professional Development Reading Pack no.30*.
- Silvestri, S., & Mayall, J. (2015). *The role of religion in conflict and Peacebuilding* (978-0-85672-618-7). The British Academy.
- Stork, J., & Ohlmann, P. (2021). *Religious Communities as Actors for Ecological Sustainability in Southern Africa and Beyond*. Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- Toh, M. (2021, December 7). *Facebook sued for \$150 billion over violence against Rohingya in Myanmar*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/12/07/tech/facebook-myanmar-rohingya-muslims-intl-hnk/index.html>
- Tomalin, E. (2018). Religions, poverty reduction and global development institutions. *Palgrave Communications*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0167-8>
- UN environment programme. (2020, May 14). *UN Interagency task force on religion and development - Annual report 2019*. UNEP - UN Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/un-interagency-task-force-religion-and-development-annual-report-2019>
- United Nations. (2019). *The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development*. 2019 UN IATF Annual Report.
- Vlas, N. (2010). Is religion inherently violent? Religion as a threat and promise for the global security. *CONTEMPORARY BRITISH RELIGION AND POLITICS*, 4(2), 297-314. <https://doi.org/10.54561/prj0402297v>
- Warner, C. M., & Walker, S. G. (2010). Thinking about the role of religion in foreign policy: A framework for analysis. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 7(1), 113-135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2010.00125.x>
- Wolffe, J., & Moorhead, G. (n.d.). *Religion, Security and Global Uncertainties*. The Open University.
- The World Bank. (n.d.). *Faith based and religious organizations*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/partners/brief/faith-based-organizations>

World, T. (2017, September 8). *Anti-Muslim monk preaches hate: Ashin Wirathu* [Video].
YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16YhQ4JWHYU>