

Managing God: Religion and the Post-Secular in UK  
and US Foreign Policy

Vivien Jane Ralston Lindsay

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds  
The School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of  
Science

August, 2015

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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**Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to my family, friends, colleagues (past and present) and my supervisor for their advice, support and encouragement in completing this thesis.

## **Abstract**

The relationship between religion and foreign policy has emerged as a priority for Western governments in recent years, yet scholarly analysis of the religion-foreign policy relationship, particularly in the UK, remains scarce.

Seeking to contribute to this - still nascent - conversation, in this thesis, I ask the question ‘what are policy makers doing in the context of so-called religious resurgence or ‘post-secularism’? In doing so, I challenge conventional wisdom about the secularism of public policy, about the emergence of the post-secular, about the impacts of globalisation and about rational choice theories of religious vitality. Broadly speaking, I argue that policy makers are finding new ways to ‘manage’ religion by drawing on both domestic policy and domestic constitutional settlements. As a result, I argue, there are constitutive differences in the way the United States and the United Kingdom pursue religion-related foreign policy.

However, contrary to many sociological accounts which emphasise the outlier status of the United States in the otherwise overwhelmingly secular West (see e.g Berger et al, 2008), I demonstrate the ways in which Britain and America - when it comes to religion-related foreign policy - are religious and secular respectively. Furthermore, this thesis offers a different account than that presented by, increasingly numerous, post-secular narratives. Where they emphasise religious change at the international level, I demonstrate that religion-related foreign policy, on both sides of the Atlantic, is characterised by continuity at the national level.

Finally, I make suggestions about how a more religion-attentive UK foreign policy could be developed in ways which are consistent with this story of continuity in the national management of religion.

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## Chapter One: *Medium, method, message*

### 1.1 Introduction

The inter-relationship between religion and politics has been the subject of increasing conversation in recent years. The appearance of religion-related panels at political science conferences and vice versa<sup>1</sup>, the emergence of the ‘political science of religion’ in Serbia and then the United States<sup>2</sup> and the establishment of two interdisciplinary journals in 2007<sup>3</sup> and 2008<sup>4</sup> demonstrate the extent to which this nexus is now firmly established on the scholarly landscape. A

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<sup>1</sup> The General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, for example, has started to include panels on religion. In 2011, the panel ‘Religious/ Secular Politics: Local, National and Global’ invited contributions on the struggles between ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ in the context of the public sphere. Though there was no substantive panel on religion at the 2013 event, the upcoming 2015 General Conference will feature a ‘religion and foreign affairs’ panel for the first time. Similarly, the 2015 meeting of the International Society of the Sociology of Religion will host panels on ‘Religion in the Public Sphere’, on ‘Politics, Religion and the Management of Religious Diversity’, on ‘the Role of Religious Organisations in the Sustainability of the Welfare State’ and on ‘religion and public institutions: new practice and religious-secular dynamics’ to name a few.

<sup>2</sup> The discipline was formerly established in the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade, Serbia in 1993 long before the Berkeley Center at Georgetown University appeared in 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The first ‘Politics and Religion’ journal was established in 2007 and focuses on the ‘politology’ of religion. The journal is centred around a group of scholars at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance in Belgrade, Serbia. For more information see <http://www.politicsandreligionjournal.com/index.php?lang=en> - accessed 14 May 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The second journal ‘Politics and Religion’ which is multidisciplinary in approach and international in scope first appeared in 2008. It is a journal of the politics and religion section of the American Political Science Association.



combination of high profile politicians,<sup>5</sup> events,<sup>6</sup> and disputes<sup>7</sup> have brought this relationship not only to public attention in the UK but, perhaps more importantly, into the realm of public policy development.

A thesis which is firmly located at this intersection, then, is timely. Moreover, the specific focus of this research - the relationship between religion and foreign policy - has emerged as a priority for Western Governments during the course of my research such that one major transatlantic research institution has devoted a year to the subject<sup>8</sup> and one US official identified has identified 2014 as ‘the year of religion and foreign policy’ (USG/4 Oct 2013<sup>9</sup>). Indeed, as a direct result of my fieldwork interviews, US State Department and UK

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<sup>5</sup> Former Minister of State Baroness Warsi has been vocal about the extent to which the public sector has been gripped by ‘militant secularisation’ (Winnett, 2012) and has sought to create a society in which people feel ‘stronger in their religious identities’. Similarly former Prime Minister Tony Blair has spoken out about the need for the promotion of religious tolerance overseas given contemporary insecurities ‘could easily be fought around questions of cultural or religious difference’ (Helm, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> For example, a series of ‘Westminster Faith Debates’, founded by Charles Clark and Linda Woodhead, have attracted the attention of both policy makers and the media, helping to fuel the conversation about religion and public life in the UK and beyond. <http://faithdebates.org.uk/> - accessed 14 May 2015.

<sup>7</sup> In February 2012, the High Court judged that it was unlawful for Bideford town council to begin meetings with religious prayer. In response to this judgement, then Communities Secretary Eric Pickles responded that the announcement was ‘surprising and disappointing’ and set about giving councils back the ability to pray through the Localism Act ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), 2012). Elsewhere, in 2013, British Airway worker Nadia Eweida won a 6-year long battle against the airline for the right to wear a necklace bearing a cross to work. The Prime Minister responded on Twitter saying that he is ‘delighted people shouldn’t suffer discrimination due to religious beliefs’ (Doughty and Wilkes, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> The Transatlantic Academy, a research institute that seeks to bridge the scholar-practitioner divide declared their theme for the year 2014-2015 to be ‘religion and foreign policy’ and published ‘Faith, Freedom and Foreign Policy’ in April 2015, concluding that ‘policymakers in the transatlantic community must factor the influence of religion into their decision making on numerous issues.’ (Bartnett et al, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Roundtable contribution 4 October 2013

Foreign Office officials are now working together to better consider the role of religion in diplomacy.<sup>10</sup> This thesis is emerging, then, at a time of some considerable activity both within the US and UK Governments and outside them but this has not always been the case. In fact, this project was inspired by three related factors - all of which reflect the historical absence of reflection on the religion-international policy relationship.

My own experience as a former central Government civil servant was the main inspiration for this research. Quite unlike many of my colleagues in central government, my degree (in Theology and Religious Studies) often seemed irrelevant to the policy areas within which I was considered 'qualified' to work. While economists were often drawn to roles in Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT), geographers to the Department for International Development, or engineers and scientists to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, on entering the Civil Service, it was not immediately clear to me that a background in religious studies (and a particular interest in the sociological study of religion) would be relevant to any general policy area. However, after the 2005 London terrorist attacks, greater attention was being paid to the significance of religion (particularly Islam) as a motivator of threat actors whose actions could seriously undermine the UK's foreign and security objectives. It was in this

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<sup>10</sup> In May 2013, in conjunction with the State Department, I organized, facilitated and presented at an inaugural State Department-Foreign Office roundtable on religion and foreign policy. A second roundtable, in October 2013 continued the conversation, focussing on the ways in which institutional resistance to 'doing religion' might be overcome.

context that I was offered a role in developing a new initiative - a National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom which would respond to the changing global context and integrate domestic and 'international' departments within the government toward a series of shared security goals. Between 2008 and 2010, in fact, three such Strategies were produced (two under the premiership of Gordon Brown and one under the Coalition Government) and a number of related strategic policy projects undertaken. My involvement in this work led to a number of realisations: first, that the relationship between the research community (both Universities and Think Tanks) and the policy community was an essential part of the policy development process; second, that the policy community was reliant on (and increasingly called upon) subject area experts from outside, to identify emerging issues about which the policy community would need to respond; and third that the nature of international policy was changing at a rapid pace with which the policy community was struggling to keep up. Perhaps most importantly, while undertaking a project on the significance of 'soft power' as a strategic security tool, I became increasingly convinced that too little attention was being paid to religion by the foreign policy community. In-depth analysis of, and engagement with, Muslim communities at home and abroad had long been underway as part of the Counter-Terrorism agenda, but this tended to be marginalised within key departments and was certainly far from mainstreamed (further discussion of this work and its implications can be found in Chapter Three - 'Getting Religion Right

while Getting Religion Wrong'). The identification of 'ideologies and beliefs' in the 2009 National Security Strategy (HMG, 2009b) had not increased the depth or range of analysis of religion that was dedicated to other key 'threat drivers', such as poverty, resource shortages, and climate change.

The second factor which influenced the direction of this research was the attention which was being paid by parallel academic and policy communities in the United States who had started taking religion much more seriously. Not only had the overt religiosity of President Bush resulted in considerable analysis of the First Amendment and relationship between religion and society in the US, the Obama administration also showed attentiveness to religion. Indeed, one of Obama's first presidential speeches (in Cairo) focussed on his strategic objective to increase engagement and understanding of the Muslim World.<sup>11</sup> A number of influential political scientists were also coalescing around the religion-security-foreign policy nexus as an important subject for the future. The Task Force on Religion and the Making of US Foreign Policy (Appleby and Cizik, 2010) explored a number of related issues and sought to raise the profile of religion as a strategic issue across the US foreign policy community. So too were US Universities developing curricula dedicated to this subject, little

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<sup>11</sup> Birdsall (2015:173) suggests that Obama's Cairo Speech represented a watershed moment in American diplomacy given it has been followed up with a series of initiatives to increase the bandwidth for religion-related diplomacy in the State Department.

wonder, then, that former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair founded his ‘faith and globalisation’ initiative at a leading US University<sup>12</sup>.

Explaining and exploring these markedly different transatlantic approaches to religion, then, was one of the core objectives of this research project from the outset and remains pertinent even in light of recent developments. Necessarily, this raises a number of questions about the way the religion-foreign policy relationship has already been characterised. The third factor which influenced the direction of this thesis was my MA research into the relationship between religion and security. As part of that project, I examined work which considered the religion-political science nexus and found that the vast majority of what is a relatively underexplored field, originates in the American epistemic community. Indeed, the contributors to the previously mentioned Task Force (Appleby and Cizik, 2010) constitute some of the leading voices in this conversation - from Thomas Farr (Berkeley Centre, Georgetown University) to Douglas Johnston (International Center for Religion and Diplomacy). Although varied in their approaches to key foreign policy issues, and indeed in their interpretation of the First Amendment, there are common features in the approaches taken by advocates of religion/foreign policy nexus in the US. The most significant of these, I would argue, is the distinction (also present in UK policy and literature, though it is far less

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<sup>12</sup> The Tony Blair Faith Foundation ‘Faith and Globalisation’ network was started at Yale University in 2008, though it now consists of more than 30 research institutions around the world.

extensive) of ‘religious actors’ from what we might call ‘mainstream foreign policy actors’. My MA research thesis explored one manifestation of this distinction, focusing on the way ‘religious’ actors are presented in relation to security objectives. In my MA thesis, I argued that insufficient attention had been paid to the way religion might motivate state as well as non-state actors and, indeed, suggested that the security objective itself displayed certain ‘religious’ characteristics.

In this thesis, I investigate a different dimension of the religion-policy relationship. I seek to advance what might be called a ‘top down’ analysis of the role of religion in foreign policy - that is a thorough investigation of how and why religion (and particularly religion-state relationships) influences policy and policy makers - as a natural complement to the ‘bottom up’ analyses characteristic of development theory, terrorism analysis and the like. This is, as the title of this thesis suggests, something of a ‘character study’ of the way religion is ‘managed’ by policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic. The title ‘managing God’ is both a rhetorical evolution from the words of Alistair Campbell<sup>13</sup> which have been appropriated by scholars and

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<sup>13</sup> Famously former Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Communications Director forbade the Prime Minister from answering questions about his religion in an interview (see Brown, 2003) with the expression ‘we don’t do God’. This comment has been widely quoted as evidence of the supposed marginalisation of religion in the public sphere (see e.g. Carey and Carey, 2012).

policy makers since<sup>14</sup> and a reflection of the fact that the majority of this thesis deals with the nexus of religion and bureaucracy. Where ‘doing God’ is an unspecific moniker which fails to describe the complex interactions of religion and policy making, ‘managing God’, I suggest, offers a more constructive and clearer articulation of what seems to be going on both in the US and UK context. I contend that without unravelling the complex connections between religion and the people who make policy, the processes they use and the assumptions they draw upon, it is impossible to fully demonstrate when and where policies are pursued out of anything other than ‘narrowly drawn interests’ (Appleby and Cizik, 2010: 8). Broadly speaking, I argue that there are constitutive differences in the way the United States and the United Kingdom pursue religion-related foreign policy. However, contrary to many sociological accounts that emphasise the outlier status of the United States in the otherwise overwhelmingly secular West (see e.g Berger et al, 2008), I demonstrate the ways in which Britain and America - when it comes to religion-related foreign policy - are religious and secular respectively. Furthermore, as the title of this thesis suggests, I demonstrate the significant ways in which the religion-state relationship in each context influences the foreign policy making process thereby subjecting religion to different sorts of

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<sup>14</sup> For example, an event in March 2014 which brought together scholars and policy makers was entitled ‘How do Governments do God?’ - see <http://religiousliteracyhe.org/2014/02/how-do-governments-do-god-with-warwick-hawkins-head-of-faith-communitites-engagement-at-dclg-and-dr-chris-baker-university-of-chester-12-march-2014/#.VVxlCiesPR0> - accessed 20 May 2015. Similarly, at the British Council Workshop ‘Toward Better International Policy Making: Understanding the role of religion in the Middle East and North Africa’, the Head of Faith Community and Civil Society Engagement at the Department for International Development made a presentation entitled ‘Governments Do God: the role of faith and religion in development’.

‘management’. The result, I argue, is something very different than contemporary ‘post-secular’ narratives would have us believe. Rather than a story of religious change at the international level, this thesis exposes the reality that religion-related foreign policy - on both sides of the Atlantic - is characterised by continuity at the national level. Finally, I make suggestions about how a more religion-attentive UK foreign policy could be developed in ways that are consistent with this story of continuity in the national management of religion.

The research presented in this thesis, therefore, offers theoretical and empirical analysis of the way religion is understood by US and UK policy makers in light of both structural and cultural patterns of religiosity. It has been structured around three question sets:

\* **How does religion influence state and non-state actors?** Which actors are religious? How does religion orientate actors politically? Why does this matter for the UK?

\* **What are the goals of religiously-attentive foreign policy?** How far is the American model a product of its context? Is current foreign policy ‘secular’? Is the integration of religion into foreign policy a good idea?

\* **What might a strategy for integrating religion into UK foreign policy look like?** How significant are differences in the cultural



heritage of the US and the UK? How effective are current modes of engagement? How would religion fit in the UK system?

In answering these questions, it interrogates three analytical interfaces:

\* **The relationship between social science and public policy:** how do policy makers use social scientific knowledge? How can social scientists achieve policy impact?

\* **The relationship between religion and public policy:** how do policy makers contend with religion? How is religion represented to policy makers?

\* **The relationship between religion and social science:** how do social scientists account for religious dynamics? How is the relationship between religion and society understood?

The rest of *Part One* is largely focussed on the first of these interfaces with the second and third acting as the core foci of *Parts Two, Three, Four, Five and Six*.

## **1.2 Medium (or expanding the interface between public policy and social science)**

Over the last ten years, the study of religion has been revitalised as a result of global religious revival and diversification and there has been increased attention paid to ‘religion’ and ‘the sacred’ across the academy, including in sectors such as the social and political sciences which have traditionally marginalised it (for a discussion of the relationship of the sociology of religion to mainstream social science see Beckford, 2000). Beckford (2000: 482) suggests that the ‘return’ of the sociology of religion from its formerly marginalised position to centrality, is the result of sociologists of religion accepting mainstream social scientific premises and of religion having become more interesting to other social scientists: ‘the study of religion has entered the new millennium playing at least to some extent together with, rather than separately from, anthropologists, psychologists, other sociologists, political scientists and economists’. Despite these positive developments, however, in the following exploration of the relationship between social science in general (and the sociology of religion in particular) and public policy, I suggest that while policy makers are increasingly comfortable contending with religious dynamics, sociologists of religion may not have developed the sort of ‘policy literacy’ necessary to achieve real impact.

### 1.21 Policy literacy

In addition to the proliferation of interest in ‘religion’ across academic disciplines, renewed attention has been paid to religion and belief in the context of public policy. A number of essays in Woodhead and Catto’s (2012) collection reflect the prevalence of religion in the discourses of law, politics (Ganiel and Jones, Mawhinney et al, 2012) and public policy (Dinham and Jackson, 2012; Johnsen, 2012), just as policy makers themselves seem increasingly comfortable with ‘doing God’. Ministerial rhetoric emphasises not only the continued significance of religion in contemporary society but seeks to actively engage with religious communities and dynamics in the achievement of public policy goals.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, civil servants themselves have made public statements about the work being done within Government to ‘include religious organisations in public life’ (Hawkins, 2013) and to better understand the influences of religion on policy.<sup>16</sup> Beckford (2012: 15) suggests that the coalescence of dramatically increased religious pluralism, equalities legislation and the ‘confluence of communitarian and neoliberal currents’, which has

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<sup>15</sup> For example, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, celebrated the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible by calling Britain ‘a Christian country’ and describing the role the Bible has played in helping ‘to give Britain a set of values and morals’. Launching the ‘near neighbours’ policy, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles emphasised the ‘vital role’ played by faith communities <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-near-neighbours-programme> - (accessed 12 February 2013).

<sup>16</sup> See Sue J Breeze (an official in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office working on freedom of religion, antisemitism and post-Holocaust issues) Twitter, 4 October 2012: ‘Thought-provoking meeting this morning with government colleagues on influence of religion on policy. Loads of ideas to follow up!’

created a 'faith sector' in public service delivery, is responsible for boosting the visibility of public religion in Britain.

In fact, it is possible to trace the attention paid to religion, faith and belief by policy makers in three distinct dimensions: religion as a policy 'problem', religion as a policy 'solution', and, most recently, the emergence of religion as a contextual or determinative factor in societal dynamics. One official has described these three modes in the language of political science, suggesting that these modes reflect 'primordial', 'instrumental' and finally 'constructivist' conceptions of religion (HMG/4 October 2013/a ). Given the emergence of international Islamist terrorism at the end of the twentieth century, and the significance of religious dynamics and actors in military engagements in both Iraq and Afghanistan, it is perhaps unsurprising that religion has been presented as a policy 'problem' and, indeed, that the resulting 'securitization' (Croft, 2012) and 'stigmatization' (House of Commons, 2010a) of religious communities has been widely criticised. The description of 'ideologies and beliefs' as national security 'threat drivers' in the 2009 National Security Strategy (HM Government, 2009b), domestic and international counter-radicalisation policy 'Prevent'<sup>17</sup>, and the deployment of Muslim faith

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<sup>17</sup> The 2009 update to the UK's counter-terrorism strategy 'CONTEST' explains that 'The purpose of the Prevent strand of CONTEST is therefore to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and violent extremism' and goes on to suggest 'Prevent must be based upon a collaborative partnership between Government, policing and communities. Prevent must enable and support communities to continue to actively challenge the small minority who espouse violent extremism. But the Prevent strategy must not be the only or the main context in which Government and Muslim communities work and talk together' (HMG, 2009a p.12).

advisers to central departments and government agencies<sup>18</sup> all reflect the way policy-makers understood religion as an obstacle to the achievement of public policy goals. So too do they demonstrate the ‘instrumentalisation’ of religious actors and organisations as ‘policy solutions’. The contribution of faith-based organisations to civil society development both at home and overseas is long established. What Beckford describes as the ‘statutory’ role for religion in UK public life means that major public institutions - including schools, the military and prisons - have long intertwined monarchy, Church and state in the delivery of services and achievement of policy goals and in ways that have been expanded in light of religious diversity (Beckford, 2012: 16). So too has the proliferation of ‘third sector’ and ‘civil society’ welfare and health providers (see e.g. Dinham and Jackson, 2011) created a ‘faith sector’ (Beckford, 2012: 15) which is increasingly called upon to contribute to governance and service provision. Whether this represents the ‘cooption’ (Ketell, 2012) or ‘interpellation’ (Beckford, 2012) of religion, it is apparent that policy makers recognise religious organisations and communities not only as ‘policy problems’ but also as contributors to domestic policy outcomes.

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<sup>18</sup> One former ‘faith advisor’ to Her Majesty’s Prison Service explained to me that, from the advent of the Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda (made public with the publication of CONTEST, the UK Counter Terrorism Strategy, in 2006), Muslim Advisers and Muslim chaplains were increasingly being used as ‘tools against extremism’ and to ‘clarify’ and ‘expose’ extremist Muslim theological positions (HMG/4 October 2013/a).

Moreover, religion has been presented as a ‘policy solution’ in the international context. The Department for International Development has actively partnered religious organisations since its inception in 1997. Under then Secretary of State Claire Short, a mapping exercise was undertaken which revealed the limits of Government’s understanding of the contribution of faith-based organisations to international development (HMG/4 October 2013/b)<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, religious organisations complained that they were rarely engaged with except as ‘implementers of policy’ (HMG/4 October 2013/b). Importantly, Short encouraged wider engagement with FBOs and later the Department collaborated with academics on a large-scale Religions and Development Research programme, administered by the University of Birmingham<sup>20</sup> which ran between 2005 and 2011. Not only did this research help policy makers to understand the various ways in which religious organisations and communities are implicated in development processes, it demonstrated the complex inter-relationship between religion and development contexts (HMG/4 October 2013/b).

Indeed, in my interviews with policy officials across central government departments, it was external engagements with religion, particularly in non-Western contexts, which challenged their own assumptions about the significance of religion and its social location,

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<sup>19</sup> Roundtable contribution 4 October 2013.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on this programme, see the dedicated website: <http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/index.php?section=1>

as one official explained ‘we are only just starting to realise that our settled view of the world is otherwise’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c) and another suggested ‘there is a need for greater understanding of faith communities whose boundaries of politics and religion are not the ones we’re familiar with’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a). These experiences, supported by intellectual frameworks which are increasingly sophisticated about the religion-international relations nexus (e.g. Petito and Hatzopoulos, 2004; Thomas, 2005) have helped policy makers to recognise religion as more than an ‘obstacle’ or ‘barrier’ to achieving policy outcomes, and more too than a ‘tool’ or ‘instrument’ through which policy goals might be achieved. In fact, the most recent policy engagement with religion has uniquely been in encouraging religious organisations and communities to work with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to report and challenge religious persecution overseas (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a), enabling them to ‘utilise’ the extensive Embassy network to promote international religious freedom. I discuss this and other religion-related foreign policy initiatives in detail in Chapter Four (4.2 ‘On religious freedom’ and 4.3 ‘Post-secular foreign policy?’).

Whether it is the result of genuine ‘religious resurgence’ (Berger, 1999, Thomas, 2005) or reflects a less ‘radical’ series of circumstances in which religious actors have come to be implicated in public life (Beckford, 2012), many of the officials I interviewed recognised religious engagement as a policy imperative (e.g. HMG/27 July 2012/

a; HMG/ 23 August 2012/a; HMG/3 July 2012/a; HMG/28 August 2012/a). Moreover, this imperative has necessitated close contact between policy makers and external ‘experts’. One official expressed to me an openness to engagement with academics and think tanks and conscious attempts to ‘keep on top of key reports’ (HMG/27 July 2012/a), while others pointed to the FCO’s community of ‘research analysts’ as a way to ‘access’ external research (HMG/ 24 July 2012/a) and as the ‘central focus for academic engagement’ (HMG/28 August 2012/c). A number of other officials interviewed identified drawing on expertise from outside Government as a routine part of the policy process (HMG/4 July 2012/a; HMG/ 24 July 2012/a; HMG/5 July 2012/d), with one official noting that ‘we have to do so (engage with academics and think tanks) more and more as resourcing becomes ever tighter’ (HMG/ 27 July 2012/a)<sup>21</sup>. 8 October 2013/a).

### **1.22 Religious literacy**

However, while these relationships augur well for increasingly sophisticated understanding of religion in the policy context, they have also exposed a number of cultural and institutional barriers to engagement with religious dynamics and actors. Later, in Chapter Three, I argue that what I call ‘religion blindness’, a combination of ‘impartiality’ and fear of ‘getting religion wrong’, continues to be prevalent among officials in central government departments. Others

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<sup>21</sup> In correspondence 8 October 2013.



have identified a ‘secular’ orientation as influencing policy responses to religion (Gutkowski, 2013; Chapman, 2008). Yet perhaps the most prevalent observation about the policy community’s attempts to ‘manage God’ has been that there is an institutional lack of ‘religious literacy’ (Prothero, 2008; Dinham and Jones, 2010; Dinham and Francis, 2015; Knott et al, 2006; Carr, 2007). In fact, ‘religious literacy’ is understood and used by practitioners, scholars and religious civil society representatives in three different dimensions: first, it is used with reference to ‘knowledge about’ religious traditions and communities and, in some cases, ‘knowledge of’ the way religion orientates identities, worldviews and behaviours, as Carr (2007: 668 - my italics) suggests ‘it would be hard to count anyone as properly educated who completely lacked any religious *knowledge*’. Alternatively, ‘religious literacy’ can be described as an ability or skill as Prothero (2008:11 - my italics), who popularised the expression in the United States, suggests, it is ‘the *ability to use* religious terms and symbols’. Finally, the lack of ‘religious literacy’ is used as shorthand for either ‘secularism’ or the persistent belief in, or commitment to, variations of secularisation theory.<sup>22</sup>

The achievement of ‘religious literacy’ in the specific contexts of public policy and practice has also taken a number of different shapes.

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<sup>22</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this section to describe and problematise the many dimensions of secularisation theory, it is pertinent to identify the three main tenets of classic accounts of secularisation as described by Casanova, (2006) as: the societal decline in religiosity or religious affiliation; the differentiation of religion from other social spheres (economics, politics etc.); and the ‘privatisation’ of religion, or confinement of religion to the private sphere. It is likely that those interviewed conflated two or more of these dimensions in their own references to ‘secularisation’.

In the policy framework articulated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2008a: 33- my italics) religious literacy is the condition of demonstrating both ‘the skills and knowledge required *to engage* in an informed and confident way with faith communities’ (DCLG, 2008a:33 - my italics), where research into community policing emphasises ‘the importance of context-specific religious literacy and religious awareness...(as a means of) enhancing the *delivery* of an effective and responsive policing service’ (McFadyen and Prideaux, 2011:8 - my italics). More recently, the potential advantages of increased religious literacy have been articulated in an international context where understanding ‘how religion motivates and mobilises people’ and ‘how grievances are presented’ (HMG/4 October 2013/a) are considered critical in conflict resolution and peace-building operations; and where recognising and understanding ways in which religion may be significant as a ‘motivating factor’ and in ‘shaping the regional environment’ (HMG/ 28 August 2012/b) make understanding religion necessary to ‘manage our relationships with other societies’ (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a).

The exposure of policy makers both to a highly religious global context<sup>23</sup> and to the increasing body of scholarship on religion in public life across a range of disciplines (for summaries of recent developments in the study of religion, see e.g. Beckford (2000) and Sherkat and Ellison (1999), then, has revealed a series of institutional

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<sup>23</sup> According to Pew research (2012b) ‘worldwide, more than eight in ten people identify with a religious group’.

shortcomings within the policy community. In doing so, it has demonstrated the importance of ‘translation’ between different communities of practice to increase mutual intelligibility and enable more effective partnership working. The result has been a range of initiatives aimed at increasing the ‘religious literacy’ of the policy making process including, for example, the appointment of specific religious advisers to central Government departments HMG/4 (October 2013/a, HMG/5 July 2012/b), the publication of ‘principles’ for working with faith communities (HMG/14 June 2013/a)<sup>24</sup>, the inclusion of religious actors in advisory fora (HMG/ 23 August 2012/ a, HMG/23 August 2012/b) and the adaptation of existing ‘religious’ state functions (Beckford and Gillat, 2005). However it is understood, there is clear evidence that the accusation of religious ‘illiteracy’ has been internalised by central government policy makers and that efforts are being made to overcome it. Yet, from my own experience, as well evidence drawn from interviews I have undertaken in the UK and the US, suggests that in the rush to criticise the policy establishment, scholars of religion - and indeed religious civil society organisations - have often overlooked their own shortcomings and have failed to develop ‘policy literacy’.

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<sup>24</sup> Roundtable contribution 14 June 2013.

### 1.23 Two Communities?

There is a relatively well developed historical literature<sup>25</sup> on the ‘gap’ between social science research and the policy community which emphasises ‘that social scientists and policy makers live in separate worlds with different and often conflicting values, different reward systems and different languages’ (Caplan, 1979: 459) Indeed, so-called ‘two communities theory’ reflects on a supposed ‘great divide’ (Weiss, 1979) between social scientists and decision makers, particularly when it comes to substantive policy issues (Caplan, 1979). However, while the better understanding - and use - of academic research by policy makers has been recognised as a necessary part of successful ‘evidence based’ policy (see HM Government 2012: 14), how well do scholars of religion understand the policy environment?

Beckford (2012: 2) describes a range of different ways in which the idea of ‘post-secularity’ has gripped the academy and identifies ‘varieties’ of the post-secular in disciplines such as philosophy, literary theory, post-colonial studies, anthropology, political science, international relations and geography, noting that ‘the fact that commentary on religion is increasingly creeping into social scientific

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<sup>25</sup> It is significant that, despite the current emphasis on academic impact, I have struggled to find more recent literature on the relationship between social science research and the policy community, with a couple of notable exceptions. The dates of the research quoted here are potentially significant, given they appeared just before the Thatcher Government de-emphasised the role of ‘society’ and hence undermined the acceptability of the social sciences. It is possible that there has been a dearth of literature on the usefulness of social science literature since that time, though this is starting to change thanks to the impact agenda (see e.g. Bastow, Dunleavy and Tinkler, 2014 and Denicolo, 2013).

theorising about social and cultural change suggests that the study of religion is no longer isolated from the rest of the social sciences as it used to be' (Beckford 2000:488). Interest in religion from sectors that have traditionally marginalised it (see e.g. Philpott, 2009) has been an important contributor to the increased public visibility of religion in the UK. The appearance of 'religion', 'the sacred' and the 'non-rational' as key tropes in post-structuralist, post-modern and post-colonial thought, characterised by the social scientific 'turn to culture' (Robertson, 1988), has returned religion to the mainstream of academic enquiry. Yet, this proliferation of interest in 'religion' suggests something other than the 'harmony' of religious studies and wider social science (Beckford, 2012). I would suggest that it demonstrates important ways in which religious studies has not always been 'up to the task' of answering the questions posed of it in the contemporary era, and argue specifically for increased knowledge and understanding of the policy process in order to ensure both the medium and the message of religious studies achieves a greater policy 'impact'.

While there is an imperative for policy makers to utilise external expertise both in policy development and evaluation (Cabinet Office, 1999a: para 2.6), a number of officials I interviewed expressed frustration about the relevance, presentation and timing of, as well as access to, research findings, a combination of factors that I characterise as 'policy illiteracy'. Surprisingly, some officials even

expressed concern about the extent to which internal analysts (for example the FCO's Research Analysts or the Joint Intelligence Organisation Analysts) 'understand the policy context' (HMG/ 24 July 2012/a), given the analysis 'profession' is separated from the policy 'profession' within Government (HMG/28 August 2012/b). And this distance is also manifest in engagement with external experts as one official explained there is a sense that 'academic stuff happens in a different sphere...' (HMG/4 July 2012/a). As a result of this distance between the 'two communities', it seems, the challenge of 'translating' research findings into policy-relevant information is one which falls disproportionately on the policy community as social scientists 'know the literature but there is a skill gap when it comes to getting things done' (HMG/7 December 2012/b), hence 'policy makers puzzle how do we use this, how to take the idea and do something with it?' (HMG/4 July 2012/a). In fact, it is more common for policy makers to commission research in specific contexts (HMG/ 24 July 2012/a) or to draw on internal research capacity (HMG/7 December 2012/a, HMG/28 August 2012/a) than to routinely consult external academic expertise. Caplan (1979:467) calls this micro-level utilisation of information as 'parochial' given it rarely applies to macro-level issues or 'conceptual utilisation' and given the amount of data it is possible to gather and store in-house is limited. Further, he suggests, this approach is high risk and 'purely adventitious'. The same concerns were expressed by those I interviewed with one official suggesting that 'seeking out academic research is dependent on

person' and is 'often done via Google which is hit and miss' (HMG/4 July 2012/a). Caplan (1979: 467) argues for better institutional arrangements 'deliberately designed to supplement agency-provided information with other kinds of knowledge vital to national policy decisions', but also lays down a challenge for the academic community to make 'realistic appraisals of the relative merit of diversified social science information, linking persons with relevant expertise...to the policy setting; recognising and distinguishing between scientific and extra-scientific knowledge needs; and redefining issues in terms that may make them more amenable to solution or which allow them to be viewed from a different perspective' (Caplan 1979: 467). In an era where academics are being encouraged to demonstrate research impact in a number of spheres,<sup>26</sup> there is a clear role for them in assisting policy makers to access, understand and utilise knowledge effectively.

In addition, there are a number of specific challenges for sociologists of religion if we are to better inform and influence the policy making process. During my interviews with policy officials in the UK, it became apparent that there remains concern about 'how' to engage with religion given 'government and religion are speaking two different languages...as they should be....the government doesn't have anything useful to say about the existence or not of God' (HMG/4 July

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<sup>26</sup> A Joint Statement by HEFCE, RCUK and UUK, <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/maximising/Pages/Impactstatement.aspx> - (accessed 8 October 2013) explains that there is a need for Higher Education Institutions to 'consistently engage with business, the public sector and civil society organisations, and are committed to carrying new ideas through to beneficial outcomes.'

2012/c). As a result, the same official explained, when it comes to research on religion ‘I’m not convinced we’re intelligent customers’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). Furthermore, there are a number of ways in which these ‘different languages’ manifest themselves. Some policy makers explained that the data made available by scholars of religion was inadequate given ‘too much is based on views and assertions’ rather than the factual certainty of double-blind testing in the natural sciences (HMG/10 May 2012/b) and given the lack of available statistics and large-scale data sets on religion (HMG/5 July 2012/b). It is important to recognise that, though policy makers recognise their own shortcomings when it comes to the evidence-base of many policy decisions (HMG/7 December 2012/b), the type of data and the style in which it is presented by sociologists of religion are not always compatible with the policy making process. Indeed, the need to publish research outcomes in ways that are accessible to the policy community is another challenge for sociologists of religion. Nor do sociologists of religion have the sort of deep, long-term relationships with the policy community that their competitors in other social and political sciences benefit from: initiatives like the recent Westminster Faith Debates<sup>27</sup> were described as ‘useful’ but ‘unusual’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a). In fact, it seems, policy makers are more likely to consult religious ‘representatives’ than scholars of religion.

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<sup>27</sup> The Westminster Faith Debates is an initiative founded by Linda Woodhead and former Home Secretary Charles Clarke now both at Lancaster University. The Faith Debates bring together academics and public figures to debate the latest research on religion and values. For more information see <http://faithdebates.org.uk/about/> - accessed 18 May 2015.



Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the appointment of Muslim ‘faith advisers’ to a number of central government departments. These were able to increase understanding of different traditions and to challenge the way policy makers understood some issues as one official described: ‘I would argue it was a class thing. He would say it was about being Muslim....’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b), drawing on different migration patterns and religious trends to show ‘differences between religious groups in their tendency to achieve particular measures of ‘success’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b). Another suggested that Muslim advisors to the Prison Service were able to ‘clarify’ and ‘expose’ extremist theological positions and contribute to countering extremism (HMG/4 October 2013/a). In other circumstances, policy makers describe the inclusion of ‘religious voices’ into advisory groups on a number of policy issues (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a, HMG/23 August 2012/b, HMG/28 August 2012/a, HMG/27 July 2012/a, HMG/4 October 2013/a), and mechanisms for the consultation of religious communities at home and overseas through organisations identified with the nine historic faith communities.<sup>28</sup> While officials are aware of some of the inherent dangers in this approach such as the tendency to ‘look for representatives and institutions like us’ (HMG/7 December 2012/a), which can create a relationship of instrumentalisation and can also lead to intra and inter-religious conflicts over ‘patronage and

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<sup>28</sup> Central Government routinely consults the Christian Churches (individually for larger denominations and collectively), the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian and Baha’i communities.

influence' (HMG/27 July 2012/a), nevertheless in the scope of the Government's engagement of religious issues and dynamics across a range of policy areas, consultation of 'representatives' rather than consultation of 'experts' seems to be the default approach. Not only, then, are sociologists of religion competing with other academic experts for impact in public policy, they also - uniquely - face competition from religious voices.

#### **1.24 Toward 'policy literacy'**

It is apparent, then, that sociologists of religion face a threefold challenge: to better inform and impact upon the policy making process despite what is at best the ad hoc consultation of social scientific research in general by policy makers; to do so despite strong competition from other social and political scientists who often have a stronger track record of engagement with policy makers; and to compete against the dominance of 'confessional' religious voices in existing arrangements. To overcome this challenge, I suggest, will require us to find better and different ways to share our research findings - finding policy-relevant media - and to better understand the policy development process and the requirements of policy makers - developing policy-relevant messages.

In the United States, where the policy process is considerably more 'open' (Steiner, 1987), there are a number of useful precedents for

enabling sociologists of religion to achieve research impact. Not only have the Luce Foundation<sup>29</sup> and Pew Forum<sup>30</sup> committed considerable time and resource to the study of public religion, their research outputs are presented in terms that policy makers can understand and use, emphasising ‘the quantitative side of religious scholarship...(which) people aren’t used to discussing’ (USCS/30 April 2013/a). Not only did policy makers (USG/7 May 2013/a; USG/15 May 2013a; USG/4 October 2013/a) frequently refer to this data, scholars themselves acknowledged that ‘there is certainly an appetite for the sociological study of religion and people are seeing its value’ but that it is important to ‘use different language to get policy peoples’ interest...if they only speak a certain language they won’t be heard’ (USCS/30 April 2013/a). Specifically, the presentation of research ‘not stuck in academia’ (USCS/30 April 2013/a) and in terms that ordinary people, including policy makers can understand, is important. Further, research should be non-partisan but pragmatic - for example, describing phenomena as ‘religion-related’ is a useful way to avoid protracted and inward-looking debates about the ‘nature’ or

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<sup>29</sup> According to the Luce Foundation Website, ‘The Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion in International Affairs, launched in June 2005, aims to provide intellectual leadership, develop new paradigms for research and teaching, create new resources and networks, and enhance public understanding of and discussion about religion in the international sphere.’ Of particular note is the grant that the Luce Foundation awarded to the British Council to support the ‘Bridging Voices’ series of transatlantic scholarly and policy dialogues through which I was able to design and facilitate two transatlantic workshops ‘Toward Better International Policy Making’. For more information on this and other Luce initiatives, see <http://www.hluce.org/hrlucereintaff.aspx> - accessed 18 May 2015.

<sup>30</sup> The Pew Research Center is a non-partisan ‘fact tank’ that seeks to inform the public about ‘the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world’. Religion and Public Life is one of seven research projects undertaken by the Center which conducts polling of public opinion, demographic research and other empirical social science research. More information on Pew Center projects can be found here: <http://www.pewresearch.org/> - accessed 18 May 2015.

‘definition’ of religion (USCS/30 April 2013/a, USG/4 October 2013/a<sup>31</sup>) and makes the measurement and study of religion possible, opening up new avenues for scholars of religion. Civil society representatives in the US, too, are conscious of the need to ‘translate’ between communities which puts a premium on ‘knowledge and experience of the way politics works’ (USCS/24 April 2013/a\*), often drawn from direct experience of the policy environment, (USCS/26 March 2013/a\*, USCS/26 March 2013/b\*, USCS/24 April 2013/a\*) as well as the ‘ability of actors to be ‘bilingual’ or ‘multilingual’...able to speak to lots of different communities’ (USCS/26 March 2013/a\*).

Indeed, HMG officials too were concerned to dispel the ‘mystique of policy development: all policy really is a plan to do something’ (HMG/4 July 2012/a), thus research outputs need to be delivered in an appropriate way which means ‘knowing your audience and writing to the level that is required based on their understanding....’ (HMG/28 August 2012/b). Specifically, it is important not to ‘assume a massive level of specialisation’ (HMG/28 August 2012/b) and to recognise that officials may ‘lack the time or ability to think in detail’ (HMG/4 July 2012/a). At the same time, scholars must recognise that ‘officials are never starting from a zero base of a problem’ (HMG/4 July 2012/a) given Ministers and political parties determine strategic direction, meaning that the achievement of research impact must consider the multiple layers of ‘policy making’

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<sup>31</sup> Roundtable contribution 4 October 2013.

machinery. It may be for this reason that the ‘conceptual utilisation’ (Caplan, 1979) of knowledge is less common in the policy environment than its ‘instrumental utilization’ on day-to-day issues. This has implications for the type of research that is undertaken by sociologists of religion and for the way research findings are disseminated.

In seeking specifically to influence and inform policy makers, it is hoped that this research might act as a prototype for sociologists of religion. Alongside this thesis, I have published in a policy-facing journal (*The Review of Faith and International Affairs*: Lindsay, 2014) as well as other media (Birdsall, Lindsay and Tomalin, 2015a) that have a wider policy and public audience. I also successfully bid to the British Council for a ‘Bridging Voices’ grant to organise, design and facilitate two transatlantic workshops entitled ‘Toward Better International Policy Making: Understanding the role of religion’. These workshops involved scholars and practitioners from both the US and the UK and represented an opportunity for me to expose my own research to a policy audience. (More detail about these workshops and their findings can be found in Chapter Six (6.4 ‘The contemporary picture’.) Indeed, a crucial part of this project has been findings ways to present my research findings to policy makers and I have actively sought to build consensus around my findings and to help policy makers explore their implications. One Government official has already commented that ‘You are already contributing,

which is great' (HMG/13 December 2013/a)<sup>32</sup> and I intend to monitor the on-going 'impact' on the policy community of this range of media in the hope of producing findings about the best ways to measure and demonstrate 'impact' on the policy community.<sup>33</sup>

### ***1.3 Method***

My own research, which consciously seeks to inform and influence the policy community, bridges the gap between these 'two communities'. It seeks to increase policy literacy within the sociology of religion community by taking a loosely 'ethnographic' approach to interpreting the policy process and community and, at the same time, to increase the understanding of religion by policy makers through the adoption of an 'interpretative research' (Bhattacharjee (2012) methodology. Interpretative research, according to Bhattacharjee (2012:103) is the opposite of positivist methodology given 'the research starts with data and tries to derive a theory about the phenomenon of interest from the observed data'. Seeking to understand the way policy makers engage with religion to fill what I have perceived as a gap in the literature - the religion-bureaucracy

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<sup>32</sup> In correspondence 6 May 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Alongside this PhD, I have undertaken to develop an 'impact survey' as a means of testing and measuring research impact using qualitative methods. This survey takes the form of a semi-structured interview and has been piloted on Leeds City Council with whom myself and colleagues partnered on a project with the output 'Taking Religion and Belief Seriously: The challenge for Leeds City Council' (Lindsay, Starkey and Kirby, 2014). Using the impact survey to measure the impact of this report on Leeds City Council both helped me to refine the survey and to demonstrate the ways in which our academic research had changed the way Leeds City Council institutionally approached religion and religious communities. A second pilot, with English Heritage, will take place before the refined survey is used to measure the impact of the British Council Workshops.

nexus - I set out to understand the relationship between religion and state from the perspective of those experiencing it (Woodgate, 2001). Simply put, my research process involved the continued interplay of empirical data and theoretical reflections and this is reflected in the contents of this thesis. I began and ended the research process with extended engagement with the work of Margaret Archer and the critical realists and with Charles Taylor's seminal work 'A Secular Age'. These pieces of work represent the 'bookends' which support the analysis contained in this thesis - I begin in Chapter Two with some reflections on Taylor and end - unusually for a PhD thesis - in my final chapter by introducing new material to consider the extent to which Archer's model of cultural morphogenesis helps us to explain what is going on when policy makers 'manage God'. These theoretical reflections were therefore at the forefront of my mind when I undertook my empirical fieldwork. My fieldwork took place over a two year period during which time I sought - and was mostly given - access to policy makers in the UK and US systems whose work required them to engage with religious issues, actors and dynamics. I used these interviews to better understand the bureaucratic response to so-called 'religious resurgence' and used the insights gained from these interviews to reflect on dominant social and political narratives.

As such, this thesis has been developed through the triangulation of three research *methods*. First, it is informed by working experience of UK foreign and security policy and has involved close analysis of

primary material in the UK and the US including published foreign policy documentation, official communications and internal documents from the National Archives and US Library of Congress. This has been combined with a series of semi-structured interviews with experts and policy makers in order to explore the various dimensions in which the religion-foreign policy relationship are currently understood. Finally, I draw on a range of theoretical approaches. A conceptual analysis of the relationship between religion, culture and political action, and a sociological evaluation of the impact of the national understanding of religion on public life, have shaped a number of theoretical findings through which I reflect on the relationship between religion and society.

### **1.31 Policy and the non-rational**

Weiss (1979:439) suggests that the ‘contribution of social science to public policy cannot be understood independently of the processes for making public policy’ given these processes determine where and when external expertise is sought. As the Institute for Government’s ‘Policy Making in the Real World’ points out, most theoretical models about policy development present the process as a series of logical steps - most commonly as a cycle which ‘has the advantage of recognising that few policies are built on green field sites – most modify existing positions, which may have grown up piecemeal over time.’ (Hallsworth, Parker and Rutter, 2011). Indeed, most



professional policy training will utilise some form of ‘cycle’ to demonstrate the various stages of the policy development process as in the oft-quoted ‘ROAMEF’ cycle identified in HM Treasury’s ‘Green Book.’<sup>34</sup>

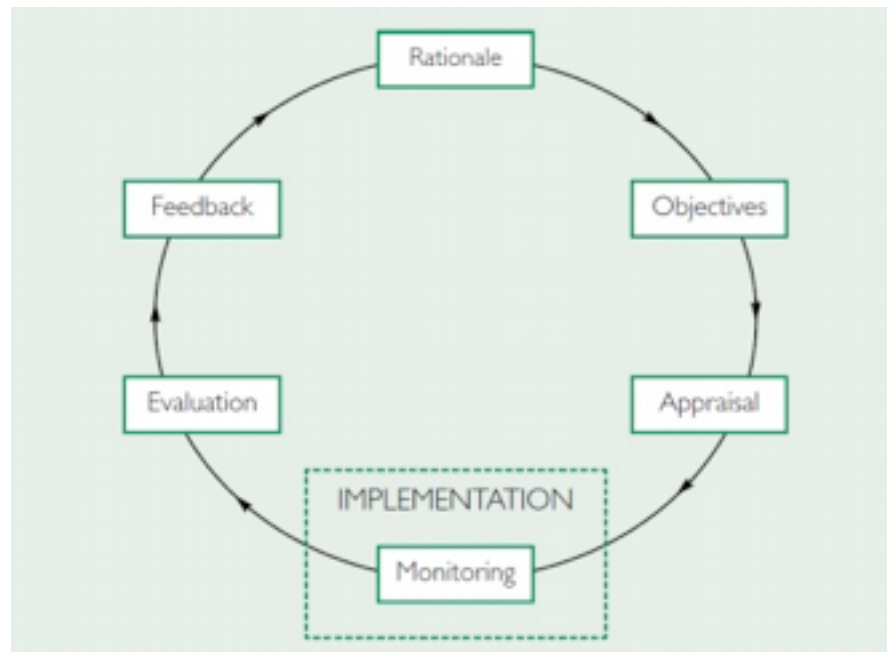


Figure 1: ‘ROAMEF’ evaluation and appraisal cycle, HM Treasury, Green Book (HMT, 2003/2011:3)

Despite its continued use, the cyclical account of the policy process is widely recognised as flawed. In fact, in 1999, a Cabinet Office publication explicitly rejected it: ‘we started to try to represent the ‘modernised’ policy process in the traditional way, using a model... showing sequential activities organised in a cycle. But we found that experienced policy makers reacted against such a presentation because

<sup>34</sup> The ‘Green Book’ is a resource, published by HM Treasury, which offers binding guidance for Government departments and agencies on the evaluation and appraisal of policies, programmes and services. See the 2011 update here [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/220541/green\\_book\\_complete.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220541/green_book_complete.pdf) - accessed 15 October 2013

they felt it did not accurately reflect the realities of policy making...' (Cabinet Office, 1999b: 2.9). In the absence of a theoretical model which better fits their experience, Hallsworth et al (2011: 31) suggest 'policy makers often have to fall back on their native wits. This is why many interviewees voiced concerns about the ad hoc nature of policy making: there is not so much a lack of recommended processes, just a lack of realistic ones.' The same report goes on to identify some of the characteristics which are often not accounted for in rational policy-process models including understanding organisational and bureaucratic pressures, understanding existing arrangements, or working toward unclear goals. It quotes one policy official who describes the challenge: 'You don't start from scratch, surveying the evidence and so on and building up from there and arrive at some policies. Someone comes in with an idea and our job so often is to sort of retro fit the evidence and rationale to support the policy that ministers have already decided they want to pursue.' (Hallsworth et al, 2011:41). Acknowledging the perennial struggle to improve the circumstances in which policy is made,<sup>35</sup> it is nevertheless critical for academics in general, and sociologists of religion in particular, to understand that policy making often involves what one special adviser describes as 'ad-hocery' (Hallsworth et al, 2001: 31) and has elsewhere been labelled 'muddling through' (Lindblom, 1959). Indeed, as Caplan (1979:454) suggests

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<sup>35</sup> This report and others like it (e.g Hallsworth and Rutter 'Making Policy Better' (2011) recommend a combination of increased rationalisation and increased controlling for/recognition of/accounting for the non-rational processes involved in policy making.

‘Rather than relying upon any single piece of information, the final policy decision was likely to depend upon an appraisal of scientific (hard) and extra-scientific (soft) knowledge from a variety of sources’ (Caplan, 1979:454).

### **1.32 An ethnographic approach to public policy**

Given this coalescence of the scientific and the extra-scientific - or the rational and the non-rational - I have purposely utilised ethnographic methods in my analysis of the policy community to better understand the cultural forces that influence the policy process. While this research project is far from an ethnography strictly speaking, I did adopt some ethnographic methods including field research in ‘naturally occurring settings’ which enabled me to capture the ‘social meanings and ordinary activities’ (Brewer, 2000: 10) of my subjects. By interviewing policy makers in their immediate context, utilising ‘insider’ language and analysing the data generated in light of political and social theory, I was able to generate broadly ‘ethnographic’ insights. In fact, this thesis is underpinned by new evidence and data drawn from two sets of original fieldwork. The first set of fieldwork, undertaken over a period of 3 years<sup>36</sup> in the UK, took the form of a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with 30 policy officials currently serving in Her Majesty’s Government. Broadly speaking, I

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<sup>36</sup> The majority of my interview data was gathered over a period of one year but a few follow-up interviews and other events took place at a later stage.

asked questions pertaining to the interview subject's own experience which fell into three categories<sup>37</sup>: conceptualisation ('what is the relationship between religion and foreign policy', 'is religion a (foreign) policy issue?'), capacity ('how often do you utilise external research', 'are there any religion specialists in your department?') and culture (do you consider there to be a department or organisational culture', 'what is the cultural make-up of your department?').

Appendix A outlines the full set of interview questions. Interviewees were all asked questions from the same set though interviews varied in the number and type of questions asked. Appendix B outlines the dates of these interviews though subjects will remain anonymous. The officials interviewed, all of whom participated voluntarily, have posts in a range of central government departments (though not all departments were represented) and most have policy experience in two or more Ministries. Though the level of seniority of those interviewed varied, the minimum grades represented were middle management (i.e. the minimum level at which civil servants are considered professional specialists) and the vast majority of those involved were either senior middle management or senior civil servants with considerable experience and expertise.

Participants were selected based on a combination of 'cherry-picking' and 'snowball sampling' (see Morgan, 2008: 816-7). While the

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<sup>37</sup> I have taken these three categories from Danan et al's (2007:39) report 'Mixed Blessings' into US Government engagement with Religion in Conflict-prone settings which identified these three issues as 'obstacles' to effective working.

process of identifying suitable elite interviewees, particularly in ‘closed’ contexts like central government, often requires making contact with senior institutional gatekeepers (Harvey, undated), as a result of my own background, it was possible to more directly target key officials whose current and/or former roles had involved engagement with either religion and/or foreign policy. While this kind of ‘cherry picking’ can result in an unrepresentative data sample, given it is necessarily driven by existing contacts and relationships, in fact, it reflected the most appropriate, if not only, way for me to access a small, and nascent Whitehall sub-community. I will comment further later on the benefits and challenges of my ‘insider’ status within this sub-community, but at this stage it is worth pointing out that, due to both the constant fluctuation of posts and people within central government positions, and specifically, due to the specific period within which this fieldwork was undertaken (in the first years of a new government after 13 years of New Labour continuity), being able to identify individuals based on prior experience rather than purely current job title was a distinct advantage particularly given new teams and posts of relevance to my research emerged during the course of my fieldwork.

Semi-structured interviews enabled me to ensure a degree of structure and consistency in the interview process, while also guaranteeing the necessary flexibility. As Bryman (2008: 475) has explained ‘the emphasis must be on how the interviewee frames and understands

issues and events'. This methodological approach ensured that, as well as 'official' information about policy structures and processes, my subjects were able to express their own perspectives about the subject matter and, in doing so, revealed some of the most interesting and challenging ideas in this thesis. Thus, while DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) identify the use of semi-structured interviews as an alternative to traditional ethnographic approaches (when not combined with participant observation), in this instance, a combination of personal experience and semi-structured interviews generated some significant ethnographic insights (see, for example, Chapter Three on the cultural causes of 'religion blindness' in HMG).

The same semi-structured interview approach was adopted to undertake the second set of fieldwork in the United States. This data collection took place over a three-month period in Washington, DC. In total, 15 subjects were interviewed including current and former federal government employees, civil society representatives, public intellectuals and lobbyists. The same questions as used in the UK were asked. There are significant differences between the governance arrangements of the two countries - perhaps the most apparent being the comparatively small number of permanent administrators and officials in the United States and comparatively large number of political appointees in senior positions. The implications of this for the policy-making process and, in turn, for the relationship between religion and foreign policy are explored in Part Five but there are two

methodological points worth noting here. First, there were access challenges in the US that I had not experienced in the UK which were due to the so-called 'revolving door' which enables the continual movement of people in and out of federal government as a result of changing administrations. Thus, while in the UK, it was possible to interview central government officials who had played a significant role in shaping policy over the last decade (and, in some cases, beyond that), in the US this was not always the case. Second, and perhaps more obvious, was the challenge of my 'outsider' status in relation to the US policy machine. This meant that it was considerably easier to access government officials of former administrations - many of whom now operate within the sort of 'epistemic community' around religion and policy that is still absent in the UK as scholars, teachers, advisors and lobbyists.

Of course, both of these have implications for my research findings. It was not, for example, possible to perfectly replicate the UK approach in the US as was my initial intention. As a result, the roles and experience of those who contributed to the US fieldwork data vary considerably and include current policy officials, civil society representatives, academics and lobbyists (Appendix B outlines interviews though anonymity of all subjects is preserved in accordance with ethics governing this research project). All of the American subjects interviewed continue to have an active interest - and contribution - to the religion-foreign policy relationship in the

United States, but not all of the subjects are still, or indeed ever have been, policy practitioners. However, while this makes direct comparison between data on institutional cultures more challenging, in many ways this experience reflects some of the key cultural differences of which foreign policy on religion is an outworking including the relative ‘openness’ of the foreign policy process in the US compared to the UK and the attendant relationships between those ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.

Given the purpose of the US interview data was to act as a foil for the UK situation and to provide context in light of which my initial hypothesis about the closeness of UK and US foreign policy and therefore the possibility of adopting US foreign policy on religion, the challenges I experienced in accessing interview subjects in the United States, and the non-replicative sample of subjects I was able to interview, did not undermine or significantly change my thesis. It did, however, require me to reflect on my relationship to the research.

In his useful paper on elite interviews, Harvey (undated: 1, 13) identifies ‘persevering with difficult stages of the research such as interview rejections and difficult meetings ‘as a critical aspect of the experience of junior researchers. This certainly proved to be the case in my study. While my background in UK government meant that I did not face the ‘outsider’ challenge, it was likely that a lack of professional contacts and social capital in the United States made it



more difficult to obtain responses from those contacted. In order to gain access to many of those interviewed, it nevertheless again proved beneficial to refer to my background and UK government contacts (one subject required full biographical details) and once my credibility was proven to key gatekeepers, a circle of relevant interview subjects was opened up to me and proved to be both well-formed and well-networked.<sup>38</sup>

My status as an ‘insider’ to the policy community, then, proved beneficial in permitting me access to UK, and even US, interview subjects. However, there is much evidence of the impact of ‘insider’ status on research outputs (see e.g. Brannick and Coghlan (2007). As Kanuha (2000) explains, there are both potential benefits and drawbacks of this position, ‘For each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied.’ (Kanuha, 2000: 444). Asselin (2003:100) suggests that the distinction between cultures and subcultures may be a way to overcome the ‘tendency to believe one knows the culture’ in that it offers the ‘insider’ researcher an opportunity to at the same time act as an ‘outsider’.

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<sup>38</sup> I use the word ‘networked’ here not only to describe the virtual and social interconnections between this group of people but to illustrate that it is a ‘community of interest’ which meets regularly and irregularly in both formalised and informal contexts.

Hence the importance of ‘reflexivity’ in relation to research is now widely acknowledged (see e.g. Angrosino, 2005) and, just as this thesis identifies greater cultural reflexivity on the part of policy makers as an urgent priority, so do I recognise that my own identity from within the British policy-making establishment has played a significant role both in the research process and its findings.

Perhaps most obviously, it likely helped me to obtain both an AHRC studentship and Research Travel Support Grant to fund my research in that there was a degree of assurance about my research subjects and access ‘built-in’ to the project. Indeed, not only was I able to access ‘elite’ interview subjects but shared language, identity and experience helped me to sidestep some of the challenges commonly faced by junior researchers (see Harvey, undated). Simply put, I was able to explain and justify my research and to persuade subjects of its utility precisely because I was ‘one of them’. One policy official interviewed explicitly stated at the outset that he was participating because we had a former colleague in common which added legitimacy to my enquiry (HMG/5 July 2012/c). Further, I was able to maximise whatever time was available for interviews (in some cases as little as 30 minutes) by virtue of the fact that I was able to make certain assumptions based on common experiential background: familiarity with the language of governance for example was key, as was knowledge of departmental and institutional mechanisms, policy processes and key players. My

interview with one official (HMG/28 August 2012/a), for example, began with a discussion of shared experiences in relation to colleagues we had in common. This both helped to establish rapport but also, more importantly, acted as a 'shortcut' into discussion of the issues I wanted to focus on without the requirement for preamble or extensive explanation of policy or institutional background. I suspect, as Dwyer and Buckle (2009) surmise, that my insider status enabled both more rapid and more complete acceptance and that the data gathered was of greater depth than had I been an 'outsider' getting to grips with systems, processes and language. Particularly significant were the number of interviewees who expressed a degree of 'trust' in my research endeavours - both that I would not 'expose' them individually or collectively and that my research would be useful (HMG/7 December 2012/b, HMG/ 21 September 2012/a, HMG/4 July 2012/c, HMG/7 December 2012/a). That said, in inhabiting what Adler and Adler (1987:73) call the 'ultimate existential dual role', it has been necessary to consistently be aware of assumptions, connections or comments entirely reliant on shared experience and to establish at the outset of the fieldwork process a protocol for interviews which included a clear explication of my role in relation to the research.

This 'dual role' has also been important in undertaking analysis of my interview data. I began by writing up full notes - including brief sections of transcription - which I then sent for clearance to my interview subjects. This was a critical component in maintaining their

trust and enabled them to reflect on what had been said. In my ‘dual role’ I was keenly aware of both the need to preserve interview subjects’ anonymity and for them to be able to have some control over the output of each interview. Though very few made comments or corrections, those who did often slightly ‘watered down’ their language or edited out particularly direct comments. While this was slightly frustrating, I found that it rarely affected the overall message of the interview nor did it compromise my research in any way. Once I had a full set of approved interview notes, I set about extracting every pertinent comment and then used a simplified coding based on the interview questions. Out of this coding emerged a range of key themes, including concrete policy initiatives such as international religious freedom (see Chapter Four and Chapter Five) and ‘Prevent’ policy (See Chapter Three); sociological insights about the relationship of religion to the state (see Chapter Four and Chapter Five); and cultural observations and the shaping of institutional responses to religion (see Chapter Three and Chapter Five).

That said, my inhabiting this ‘dual role’ is important in more than methodological terms, it also serves as a metaphor for both the medium and the message of this research in ‘bridging the gap’ between religion and public (foreign) policy.

### **1.33 A ‘secular’ approach to religion**

While it draws on a cultural analysis of the policy community, then, this thesis extends a ‘secular’ theory of religion in that it ‘chooses to interpret, understand and explain religion in non-religious terms’ (Geertz, 2000) rather than offering a phenomenological or theological account. Furthermore, given it is primarily concerned with developing appropriate policy responses to religion, this thesis might be called secularising given its focus on the temporal dimension by which religious actors and dynamics are implicated in ‘proximate’ rather than ‘ultimate’ concerns (Somerville, 1998). As one policy maker explained to me: ‘government and religion are speaking two different languages...as they should be....the government doesn’t have anything useful to say about the existence or not of God but..... we have to recognise that religious groups advance what have to be temporal positions (HMG/4 July 2012/c).

This methodological ‘pincer movement’ reflects the broader intellectual and empirical context within which this thesis is located (discussed in more detail in Chapter One). On one hand, it is inspired by, and draws from, a post-positivist moment in the social and political sciences; an era in which the policy process is being opened up to include both religion and the non-rational. Yet, on the other, it recognises that the result-orientation of the policy process is necessarily rationalising.

On one hand, it argues that the proliferation of religious issues and actors in public policy is better described as ‘secularisation’ than ‘religionisation’ (see Chapter Five). Yet, on the other, it challenges the idea that UK public policy is ‘secular’ (see Chapters Three and Four). And, as a result of both, it inverts the conventional wisdom - that when it comes to religion in public life, it is a case of ‘religious America, secular Europe’ (Berger et al, 2008).

#### ***1.4 Message***

This thesis is firmly located at the intersection between religion and politics, drawing on and testing theories about the transnationalism of religion and the relationship of religion to cultural and political formations. However, what this thesis seeks to offer is an account of an oft-neglected dimension: the nexus between religion and bureaucracy. I ask the question: what are policy makers doing in the context of so-called religious resurgence or ‘post-secularism’? As a result, while this account challenges conventional wisdom about the secularism of public policy (Chapter Three), about the emergence of the post-secular (Chapter Four), about the impacts of globalisation (Chapter Four) and about rational choice theories of religious vitality (Chapter Five), I have given each of my substantive chapters a subheading. Hence, in Chapter Three, I ask the question ‘How are UK policy makers ‘managing God?’’, Chapter Four answers the question

‘How are UK foreign policy makers ‘managing God?’ and Chapter Five focuses on ‘How are US foreign policy makers ‘managing God?’ Broadly speaking, I argue that policy makers are finding new ways to ‘manage’ religion by drawing on both domestic policy and domestic constitutional settlements.

In Chapter One, I describe the historical absence of reflection on the religion-international policy relationship in the UK, first drawing on my own experience as a government official and secondly, with reference to the relatively well developed conversation going on in the United States on the subject. Explaining and examining these markedly different transatlantic approaches to religion has been a focus of my research from the outset and is at the analytical core of this thesis. However, in this Chapter, I introduce some other conversations to which I also hope to contribute by writing this thesis. Perhaps most significantly, I suggest that the social sciences in general and the sociology of religion in particular, need to increase ‘policy literacy’ in order to better achieve impact on public policy. Specifically, I speak of the need to publish research outcomes in ways which are accessible to the policy community.

In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of the relevant literary context. I explore the emergence of the label ‘post-secular’ in recent years, which has been used to describe a range of apparent shifts in the religion-state-society relationship, and suggest that post-secular

discourses traverse two distinct, but relevant, scholarly conversations - one from the political sciences which emphasises cultural factors as most significant in accounting for religion-state relations in the current era; and the second from the sociology of religion which has evolved to emphasise structures as most important in understanding the relationship of religion and society. Exploring these two bodies of literature in detail, I suggest the 'post-secular' discourse has drawn from each to create a narrative of Western homogeneity and global religious change. Yet, I go on to explain, the material contained in this thesis inverts this narrative. Exploring the religion-public (foreign) policy nexus in the US and the UK, this thesis points to the heterogeneity of the Western experience and the significance of continuity in the national management of religion.

In Chapter Three, I explore the usefulness of the label 'secular' - drawing both from both the social and political sciences and from policy makers themselves - to describe the British policy context. First, I assess the extent to which the British polity is structurally secular and argue that, far from ignoring or marginalising religion, there is evidence of the repeated relocation of religion as a policy issue by successive governments. Next, I take an ethnographic approach to the UK policy establishment, to explore the cultural and institutional values that influence policy responses to religion. Here, I describe a culture of 'religion blindness' in which attention to religion has been avoided and feared. These two analyses suggest that the



relationship between religion and state in the UK context is more complex than a narrative of ‘secularisation’ can account for. Finally, I turn to consider the way the UK Government ‘does’ religion drawing on evidence from one signature religion-related policy: the Preventing Violent Extremism strategy. I suggest that - despite manifest problems - Prevent has played a significant role in forcing the Government to engage with religion and in extending the religion-policy relationship into the international context. The Prevent Strategy, I suggest, exemplifies both the way the UK Government ‘manages God’ given it at once represents religious engagement and, at the same time, has contributed to religion blindness.

In Chapter Four, I consider the extent to which narratives of globalisation and the post-secular, drawn from the political sciences, are helpful in describing religion-related UK foreign policy. I begin by describing the contribution religion has made to the marginalisation of foreign policy - with religious actors often being located at the ‘non-state’ level. The inclusion of religion into international relations analyses has often seemed to compound the diminishing agency of the nation-state presented in neo-realist international relations models. However, I go on to describe the way evidence from my own research presents a different picture. Starting with international religious freedom policy, I suggest, while it responds to the global circumstances, it is significantly shaped by the domestic constitutional context. I then go on to describe a number of recent religion-related

foreign policy initiatives, demonstrating the way they too are shaped by the domestic context in a way that challenges ‘post-secular’ narratives. Advocating the sort of foreign policy analysis described by Hill (2003), I argue that it is necessary to recognise the domestic sources of foreign policy as evidence of the way the Government manages religion and to understand the way both structural and cultural patterns shape the agency of the nation-state.

In Chapter Five, I turn to the American context, to consider how far the label ‘religious America, secular Europe’ could be applied to the foreign policy context. I begin by evaluating a number of recent developments in the US State Department - culminating in the establishment of an ‘Office for Religion and Global Affairs’. I suggest, contrary to the assumption that America is ‘more religious’ than Europe, that a trajectory of increased engagement with religion in the State Department could be characterised as ‘secularising’ in that it remains firmly rooted in the First Amendment separation of Church and State. The way the US Government ‘manages’ religion is thus equal and opposite to that in the United Kingdom. Going on to explore the foundation of the US polity on the principle of religious freedom, I suggest that this principle underwrites its policy culture and deeply interconnects its domestic and international policy, reflecting the sort of macro-level secularisation that Casanova (1994) describes. Yet, I also suggest that religious freedom has an important cultural dimension. Drawing on Herberg’s (1956), Parsons’s (1978) and

Bellah's (1967) theoretical perspectives, I re-make the case for American exceptionalism - suggesting that the principle of religious freedom constitutes a 'civil religious' position and arguing that at the macro-level America is at once both structurally secular and at the same time deeply culturally religious.

In Chapter Six, I bring together the evidence gathered both from my UK and US interviews, with analysis from each of the three substantive chapters of this thesis to demonstrate the way religion-related foreign policy challenges some common assumptions drawn from both bodies of literature I introduced in Chapter Two. First, I consider the way the Treaty of Westphalia - the settlement of the Wars of Religion in the seventeenth century - has been treated in International Relations scholarship and argue that, contrary to common assumptions, the legacy of the Treaty of Westphalia is very relevant in describing religion-related foreign policy today, given it subjected religion to national authority or what I have called 'management'. Next, I return to the literature analysed in Chapter Two. Here, I draw on my original research evidence to demonstrate the limitations of either purely cultural or purely structural models as able to independently explain what is going on in either the UK or the US context. Drawing on Archer's (1988, 2012) model of 'morphogenesis', I offer a new way to understand the relationship of religion to foreign policy which is more complicated than accounts of the 'post-secular', 'religious resurgence' or 'secularisation theory' are

able to offer, given it at once describes Western heterogeneity and at the same time provides analytical space for religious continuity.

Finally, I turn from the theoretical to the practical to describe the ways in which I have sought to make my work not only policy-relevant but also impactful. I offer a 'typology' of religious engagement as it appears in the UK policy context and advocate - in line with the report of the British Council workshops I designed and facilitated - the creation of greater bureaucratic space within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for strategic engagement with religion. This would in fact be a natural successor to current UK Government initiatives for managing God and would represent continuity rather than change. Furthermore, though such an initiative might appear to echo American arrangements, it would inevitably be shaped by domestic constitutional arrangements and would exemplify the way the UK and the US 'manage God' differently.

## **Chapter Two: Religion and the Post-Secular: Structures, Cultures and Actors**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In Chapter One, I described the current era as one in which the relationship between religion, politics and society is under increasing scrutiny. I explained that this dynamic context, combined with my own experience of policy making, had inspired me to write a thesis which at once explored the religion-foreign policy nexus and at the same time explained markedly different transatlantic approaches to religion. It falls to this Chapter to outline the ways in which the contemporary era has been explained in the literature. In it, I demonstrate that the label ‘post-secular’ has been used to describe a range of apparent shifts in the religion-state-society relationship in both Western countries and the global context. I suggest that post-secular discourse traverses two distinct scholarly conversations - one from the political sciences that emphasises cultural factors as most significant in accounting for religion-state relations in the current era; and the second from the sociology of religion which has evolved to emphasise structures as most important in understanding the relationship of religion and society. Exploring these two bodies of literature in detail, I suggest that ‘post-secular’ discourse has drawn

from each to create a narrative of Western homogeneity and global religious change.

Yet, I argue, this story of religious change is being articulated without an important component - these narratives neglect to tell the story of the religion-bureaucracy nexus i.e. what policy makers are doing in the context of what is being described as a 'resurgence of religion'.

This thesis seeks to redress that neglect and suggests, broadly speaking, that policy makers are finding new ways of 'managing religion' by drawing on domestic policy precedents and on domestic constitutional settlements. I shall suggest that this means there are constitutive differences between the UK and US contexts, and that the ways policy makers 'manage religion' is influenced both by structural and cultural factors, necessitating a new way of engaging with both to understand the relationship of religion to foreign policy today.

## **2.2 The post-secular**

In light of what Berger (1999) and others (e.g. Thomas, 2005) describe as the global 'resurgence' of religion, the notion of 'post-secularity' has emerged as a major inter-disciplinary trope. Analyses of the post-secular are increasingly widespread, as Beckford (2012) notes, such that it has become something of a shorthand to describe the 'return' of religion to public significance in the last 20 to 30 years. While it is

true that there are a range of other uses of the expression ‘post-secular’, explored in detail by Beckford (2012), in this chapter I am primarily concerned with the ‘cluster’ of meanings relating to the ‘resurgence of religion’ or the re-entry of religion into the public sphere as this discourse speaks most profoundly to the subject matter of this thesis. Some scholars define the post-secular with specific reference to what Beckford describes as ‘fresh opportunities for religion to re-enter the public sphere’ (2012:8). Crockett (2010), for example, describes the dissolution of the public/private boundary while others (e.g Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes, 2009) focus on the particular circumstances of neo-liberalism having created opportunities for religious groups in welfare states. Arguably the most famous proponent of the ‘post-secular’, Jurgen Habermas (2003), argues that a post-secular age is one in which liberal democracies take religion more seriously than before. For Habermas (2008), the post-secular is a later phase of development in secular societies and is characterised by a number of changes: belief in the disappearance of religion has weakened, religious organisations function in the public sphere; and the integration of religious minorities is perceived as a problem. In this context, rather than presenting a challenge to secularisation, the ‘post-secular’ initiates a reworking of secularisation theory in which the public sphere might include religion but that ‘religious utterances must be translated into generally accessible language before they can find their way onto the agendas of parliaments, courts or administrative bodies’ (Habermas, 2011: 25-26).

Calhoun (2012) suggests that post-secularity is essentially about how the secular public sphere should integrate religious voices. Similarly, Carlson (2009) describes the post-secular as an era in which ‘secular institutions are making adjustments to new realities’ (p.51), blurring the public/private distinction. Elsewhere, Casanova (2012:44) has drawn on Taylor (2007) to describe the ‘post-secular’ as the destabilising of the secular immanent frame and being open to ‘manifold forms of being religiously human’. While Wickstrom and Illman (2012) focus specifically on the movements of globalisation, neo-liberalism and the resulting challenges to the binary codes of modern thought. Importantly, then, post-secular discourse is concerned with the relationships between religion and state and the conditions for the ‘return’ of religion to the public sphere in the modern West. As a result, it traverses two distinct scholarly conversations, one drawn from the social and political sciences and the other from the sociology of religion.

Before I turn to these two bodies of literature, it is instructive to reflect on one thinker who himself traverses these two bodies of scholarship. In his landmark monograph, Taylor (2007) offers a deeply cultural reading of secularisation, arguing that secularisation consists neither at the micro (religious decline) or the macro (differentiation or privatisation) level but in a third movement that he calls the ‘conditions of belief’ (2007:3). This is a movement ‘from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one



in which it is understood to be one opinion amongst others...’ (p.3) and this, he argues, is the condition in which the modern West now finds itself. It is a condition in which the characteristics of religious life - good beyond human flourishing, power beyond the immanent and life beyond its natural scope - are now perceived as ‘options’ in an era where self-sufficient humanism has emerged. For Taylor (2007:437), then, the ‘secularisation’ process is a positive rather than a negative one, characterised by the emergence of alternatives, ‘marked by an unheard pluralism of outlooks, religious and non-and anti-religious, in which the number of possible positions seems to be increasing without end’.

While Taylor himself categorises his work as describing a process of ‘secularisation’, others (e.g Casanova, 2012; Wickstrom and Illman, 2012) have interpreted Taylor’s thesis as distinctly ‘post-secular’. In doing so, they emphasise the cultural dimensions of his thesis, including the role of the individual in post-secular society (Wickstrom and Illman, 2012: 219) and the cultural shift in the conditions of belief which Casanova (2012:31) calls the abandonment of the ‘secularist stadial consciousness’. Yet closer reading of Taylor’s text reveals his key concern with social structures: not only do processes of immigration need to be understood with reference to structural factors hence ‘the crucial factor is a *structural* feature of the host society, the way it integrates through religious identity’ (Taylor, 2007: 524 - my italics), while his three-fold Durkheimian model of religious change is

better understood not as representing merely cultural forms but as describing the links between cultural phenomena and social structures.

It is for this reason that Taylor, following the earlier work of David Martin (1978), is able to explain the differences between European and American experiences of secularisation. While all North Atlantic countries are living in a 'secular age' - characterised as an era in which belief in God is 'understood to be one opinion amongst others' (Taylor, 2007: 3), the experience of the secularisation process differs considerably. He acknowledges that mobilisation happened by various different paths in a way which challenges the dominant linear secularisation theory which presents secularisation and modernization in steady progress: 'my aim is to suggest, in place of the supposed uniform and unilinear effect of modernity on religious belief and practice, another model, in which these changes do, indeed, frequently destabilize older forms, but where what follows depends heavily on what alternatives are available or can be invented out of the repertory of the populations concerned.' (Taylor, 2007:461). In the US, Taylor suggests, a 'neo-Durkheimian' form of religion-society relationship exists in which connection to the sacred comes via choice within a broader church. On the other hand, European settlements reflect sediments of both paleo-Durkheimian (in which connection to the sacred came via the church) and neo-Durkheimian forms. The emergence of the 'immanent frame' - in which belief in God is one choice among many - interacts differently with the settlements in the

two contexts. The result, he argues, is that there has been less opportunity for belief to decline in the American context, especially given there has been strong resistance to the break up of the neo-Durkheimian form (characterised by those who resist this break-up as a ‘culture war’). Taylor’s work offers us a paradigm through which to understand the material presented in this chapter. Through this reading of Taylor we see that the secular and post-secular might not be mutually exclusive positions; that it is necessary to understand the interplay of culture and structure and that doing so helps us to explain the heterogeneity among Western experiences of secularisation.<sup>39</sup> All three factors emerge as significant in the following discussion.

## **2.2 The legacy of secularisation**

Classical sociology, according to Bryan Wilson (1985:9), ‘documented a secularising process’, as a result of which ‘neither institutions nor individuals operate primarily to attain supernatural ends’ (1985:19). Indeed, proponents of ‘strong’ secularisation theory predicate an inverse relationship between modernisation and religiosity on multiple levels: ‘religion - seen as a way of thinking, as the performance of particular practices, and as the institutionalisation and organisation of these patterns of thought and action - has lost influence’ (Wilson, 1969: 11). Not only this, structural differentiation results in the rise of

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<sup>39</sup> It is important to note that Taylor’s work draws heavily on the earlier contributions of David Martin (1978, 2005) who was an early and significant critic of the presentation of Western secularization as a singular process.

technical and legal procedures and the rise in scientific knowledge replaces religion which previously 'interpreted the cosmos, giving sense to the physical and social world' (Wilson, 1976:267). So too has Bruce repeatedly (2002, 2003) pointed to the significance of the Enlightenment and Reformation in creating the twin processes of individualism and rationalism which have both eroded the communal base for traditional forms of religion and the purpose of religion in helping individuals to understand the world. Both of these classic statements of secularisation, then, describe a process that operates at *multiple* levels. Yet, as we shall see, the legacy of classical secularisation theory has impacted quite differently on the two bodies of literature with which this thesis is concerned.

Beckford (2000) has suggested that, after nearly a century of divergence, the end of the twentieth century saw the sociology of religion 'playing together' with the mainstream social and political sciences for a number of reasons. They are, he suggests, both interested in the apparent return of religion such that 'scholars who have rarely commented on religion in the past now seem to find it indispensable to their accounts of current change, especially the kaleidoscopic multiplicity of competing religious worldviews' (2000:457). However, in this Chapter, I suggest that - far from 'playing together' - in their analyses and accounts of religion in the contemporary era, the sociology of religion and the social and political sciences have followed dramatically different trajectories.

First, social and political scientists tend to identify the current era as somehow ‘different’ than earlier eras, offering accounts of religious change. Second, in so doing, they identify their own intellectual frameworks, often described as ‘secular’, as inadequate to account for these changing dynamics. Finally, these accounts tend to describe the ‘West’ as a homogenous entity and to describe processes of modernisation and state formation as resulting in its ‘secularism’, which is seen to be at odds with the rest of the world where religion seems to be thriving. Seeking to ‘bring religion in’ to these disciplines, scholars have undertaken a ‘turn to culture’. Dispensing with traditional political models, political scientists have embraced constructivism as a way to account for the non-rational actor. However, as we shall see, in doing so, they firmly locate the religious actor at the non-state (or micro) level. By contrast, I argue, the sociology of religion has evolved in the opposite direction: where political scientists have emphasised the secularism of the ‘West’ in comparison to the religiousness of the ‘rest’, secularisation theorists continue to point to the differences between Western states and their experience of secularisation. Where the social and political sciences have turned to culture and classified the drivers of religious change as non-state actors, sociologists of religion point to the significance of structural macro-level rather than micro-level religious change.

## **2.4 Bringing Religion In**

God is back. As Micklethwait and Wooldridge's (2009) book so entitled attests: globally, religion is on the rise. From the explosion of evangelical Christianity in China and Latin America to the worldwide spread of Islam, the numerical evidence of religion's 'resurgence' is clear. As a result, there has been a parallel 'resurgence' of religion in the academy where political and social scientists, having for generations ignored or marginalised religion, now pay increasing attention to it. This section seeks to explore the ways in which scholars from a variety of different political science communities have sought to bring religion into their disciplines.

Drawing on evidence from international relations theory, terrorism and security studies and development studies, I will identify the 'secularism' of intellectual frameworks to be a common 'experience' and will consider the similarities and differences in the way different scholars have sought to overcome this dominant secularism, focussing particularly on the presentation of the 'religious actor' throughout the literature. Exploring literature from a range of disciplines, I will argue that political scientists have tended to construe the 'religious actor' in a particular way: as a non or sub-state individual or group which is either a barrier to the achievement of particular national objectives or, more often, which can be utilised as a 'proxy' in helping to deliver them. This, I suggest, reveals the significant influence of social scientific assumptions about the location of religion in society and the relationship between religion and the state. Next, I consider the post-

positivist movement in the political sciences, which has drawn on social constructivism as a way to overcome the dominance of these secularist assumptions and frameworks. Acknowledging the significant progress that has been made as a result of this ‘turn to culture’, I suggest that religious agency is increasingly well understood as something symbolic and non-rational which orientates political actors in the world. However, given the distinction between culture and structure, religion as a cultural phenomenon is conceived as existing alongside political structures, rather than within them. Finally, then, I expose what I consider to be a critical gap in the literature and its implications for the way we understand political and social agency: a better understanding of the relationship between culture and (national and international) political structures will enable us to identify ways in which religious agency is manifest in the motivations and actions of states and governments.

The so-called ‘resurgence’ of religion is now the subject matter of a significant niche in political scientific scholarship. The forces and consequences of globalisation have been experienced in profound ways by the countries in which this discipline was founded and developed (see a more thorough discussion of globalisation in Chapter Four). The combination of a more open global context, and key events which this type of globalisation has enabled, including the opening up of new economic markets, incidents of international terrorism and massive migration flows, has resulted in both the diversification of

political scientific study, its integration with other disciplines and, critically for the purposes of this research, a new focus for a range of scholars on the concept and nature of agency in political systems.

Across a number of disciplines, religion has emerged as a particularly significant source of political agency. This has resulted in a reinvigorated interest in religion across the board over the last 25 years, prior to which, as Philpott (2002) describes, the study of global politics largely ignored religion. Indeed, academic analysis of three important Western political objectives: security, international relations and international development or domestic welfare provision, now consciously includes a religious dimension. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, scholars lament their secular intellectual inheritance, finding themselves without the tools to appropriately 'bring religion in' (Fox and Sandler, 2004).

In part this is a conceptual problem: multifarious versions of 'religion' appear throughout the literature. It is a category which is used simultaneously to describe a wide range of different historical expressions including the ideology of Al Qaeda, post Reformation Christianity in Europe, and evangelicalism in the United States to name a few. Without an adequate conceptual basis that enables users to understand what it is these different 'types' of religion have in common, it necessarily becomes impossible to identify what makes them different. Thus, when Philpott (2000) writes illuminatingly of the



‘religious roots of international relations’, what he really means is the reliance of international relations on an intellectual framework and political system which is contextually dependent on specific aspects of the way Christianity developed in Western Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, when Juergensmeyer (2003) writes about ‘religious terrorism’ and ‘cosmic war’, he covers ground extending from right-wing Christian anti-abortionists in late 20<sup>th</sup> century USA, through to Hindus in India from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Shi’a Muslims in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Middle East. There is, then, no substantive consensus about how religion should be accommodated into political scientific frameworks.

That said, a number of common - and interconnected - themes emerge in this vast array of literature, the first and arguably most significant being a degree of unanimity about the reasons both for the historical marginalisation of religion and its current popularity. Analyses of development studies (e.g. Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011), of international relations theory (e.g. Thomas, 2005), of security studies (e.g. Seiple and Hoover, 2004), of terrorism studies (e.g. Juergensmeyer, 2003) all reveal the disciplinary absence of religion from their intellectual frameworks which is problematic in the current context. Not only this, explanations of the development of each tradition have common features. According to Deneulin and Rakodi (2011:49) ‘development studies was founded on the belief that religion is not important to development processes, for, as societies

develop and modernise, it was assumed that they would also undergo a process of secularisation'. The same explanation is offered across the board by those now seeking to integrate religion into their disciplines: Petito and Hatzopoulos (2004:1) describe secularism as part of international relations theory's 'genetic code'.

So too is secularisation - as a process - given as an explanation for the historical absence of religion from these fields of enquiry: Thomas (2005), for example, suggests that 'the invention of religion, as a set of privately held beliefs or doctrines, was the product of state-building – necessary for the rise of the modern state, modern nationalism, and the rise of modern international society', and elsewhere attention is paid to 'two fundamental assumptions: that the significance of religion will decline as societies modernize, and that the political space can and should be strictly separated from the religious space' (Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011: 46). It seems, then, that these disciplines have all inherited certain elements of classic secularisation theory, specifically they seem to reiterate a connection between structural differentiation and religious decline (inversely related to modernisation). In doing so, it is worth noting, that there is a tendency to conflate the experience of Western nations as though there were a singular process of Western 'secularisation' originating in the Treaty of Westphalia (see e.g. Thomas, 2005: 25 and Philpott, 2000). As we shall see, this is in striking contrast to accounts of the differences between European and American experiences of secularisation as described by sociologists of

religion. It is apparent, then, that the legacy of secularisation has impacted upon the frameworks through which political scientists seek to explain the world, but how has it impacted upon the way religious actors are presented in political science literature? And what does this tell us about how they understand the relationship of religion to state and society?

#### **2.41 The ‘non-state’ actor**

Given one of the primary reasons for the renewed political interest in religion has been the emergence of a major ‘religious ideology’ - Al Qaida’s conception of political Islam - and of a network of global actors which today constitute the most significant security threat to the major Western powers (at least according to the US, UK and EU Security Strategies), the most obvious starting point for a review of the political science literature is that which analyses the relationship between religion and international security.

Perhaps the most widely known reflection on the role of religion in international affairs, Huntington’s (1993) ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’ article and subsequent book (2002) sought to challenge the idea of Western universalism, in particular, responding to Fukayama (1992:xi), who had presented the West’s victory in the Cold War as symbolic of ‘the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form

of government'. Instead, Huntington argued that the global context would continue to be marked by conflict in the post-Cold War era. However, he suggested that this conflict would not be ideological or economic, but civilisational and religious: 'the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilisations.... The fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines of the future' (Huntington, 1993:22). Here, Huntington introduced a radical new variable to the study of international relations, following the unexpected introduction of religion into politics after the Iranian Revolution, suggesting that ideational as well as material forces could drive actors on the world stage. It is worth noting that he also presented the 'West' as a single civilisational identity.

Huntington's thesis, though widely contested, set a precedent for the integration of religion into political science and enabled scholars to focus on the role of religion as a source of conflict and insecurity which undermines Western policy objectives (Baruma, 2010; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Kepel, 1994). This focus has been shared by the vast majority of popular literature on the subject as well, in which religious belief is portrayed not only as irrational but dangerous (e.g. Harris, 2004: 72, 26-27). An alternative 'positive nexus' between religion and Western objectives is described by others. Here, religion plays a more ambivalent role, with some offering solutions to conflict, models for successful diplomacy and stabilisation (Appleby, 1999;

Johnson, 2003) while others advocate that its value should be better recognised and harnessed (Johnson & Sampson, 1994; Seiple & Hoover, 2004).

The inclusion of religion in development studies has tended to follow the same model as there has been increasing recognition that ‘many individuals and organisations have engaged in development work in line with specific commitments from different religious traditions’ (Alkire, 2006: 502-510) Acknowledgement of the religious origins of development (specifically the welfare activities of the Christian mission during the colonial period), the persistence of religion in developing countries, its relocation to new contexts and the contribution that religious or ‘faith based’ organisations make (Clarke and Jennings, 2008) have all contributed to increased attention being paid to religion both by theorists of development and, critically, those involved in development policy. Recognising not only the potential for religious organisations to deliver social services, but also their potential strengths in state-building,<sup>40</sup> Western policy makers increasingly support and fund FBOs as ‘proxies’, though this has led to accusations of the instrumentalisation of religion (Clarke and Jennings 2008).

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<sup>40</sup> For example see De Gruchy (1995) on the role of religion in overcoming apartheid in South Africa and Moreno (2008) on religion’s contribution to the transition to democracy in the Philippines.

Importantly, the same accusations dominate debate about the role of religion in the context of domestic policy. As evidenced in contemporary social policy, the religious individual or organisation's place in public life is usually identified as being within 'civil society' (e.g. Dinham, 2009). Yet, as Herbert (2003) recognises, 'civil society' is ambivalent, at once associated with integration but also recognised as a space for the expression of identities of difference. Though associated with a particular democratic political settlement, the 'civil society' motif reflects the relationship of religion to public life across a range of political realities via what we might call the 'service delivery' model. In this, religious organisations take on social roles that the state is not able or chooses not to fulfil, such as health and education. Many of the faith-based organisations which are involved in international development should be considered under this umbrella, as would religious individuals or groups contributing to peace and nation-building overseas. Closer to home, both in the UK and, more significantly in the US, religious organisations deliver important health, welfare and education services to domestic populations. So too does religion take on what we might consider a 'civil society' role in contexts where there is government repression of particular institutions or practices. This could also be called 'service delivery' but in this model religious organisations and individuals tend to operate counter to legitimate authority rather than in contributing to its objectives.

It seems that religion has been accounted for by political scientists in all three contexts in a similar way. The religious actor is conceived as an individual or group which either contributes towards or undermines specific government objectives. In fact, we might suggest that the relationship between religious agency and the state is presented as one of ambivalent externality. Not only does the description of public religion as a 'non-state actor' reflect a particular conception of politics as secular, it also reflects a related culturally contingent definition of religion as something private and voluntary. It seems that even ways to integrate religion into political science are dominated by secular political assumptions according to which religion and politics are not able to occupy the same social space. Because religion's role in public life is defined as being outside the state, a new public realm called 'civil society' or 'the third sector' emerges as the location of the full range of 'faith based organisations' which Clarke (2006) describes.

The cultural contingency of the 'civil society' model, then, is both significant and problematic, informed as it is by sociological accounts of the religion-society relationship based on the experience of the (secular) liberal democratic polity. Herbert (2003) provides a long and detailed history of the concept of civil society, demonstrating the extent to which it has helped to define debates about the role of religion in the public realm in the context of liberal democracies. Though Habermas (1962) and Mayhew (1997) provide different accounts of the foundations of the concept - the former tracing the

idea of the 'public sphere' to the salons and coffee houses of 18th century Europe and the latter to 17th century radical Protestant Ministers, both recognise the significance of the 'public realm' or 'civil society' concept in shaping Western conceptions of religion as something outside of, and even subject to, secular authority.

Thus, even though the 'civil society' idea helps us to overcome the sort of polarised 'public/private' dichotomy between religion and the state which is characteristic of some traditional sociological accounts and which is practically manifest in, for example, the US and French Constitutions, it nevertheless still reveals the pervasive influence of secularisation theories on the political sciences. The secularism of political science - and sociological theories from which it emerged - is thus increasingly considered to be constitutive. Hence, in their 2008 article, Gorski and Altinordu (2008:60) describe a new phase in the study of religion and society marked by the cleavage between secularisation as a theory and secularism as an ideology. Tracing the etymological history of the term 'secularism', they describe a number of meaning-shifts over the course of Western history, concluding with 'the church-state struggles of the fin de siecle' which gave new meaning to the concept of 'secularisation' as a political programme. Contemporary discussions of secularisation, they suggest, point to a fruitful new dimension for analysis - of the sort undertaken by Ozyurek (2006) in Turkey and Gutkowski (2012, 2013) in relation to British security actors - in which secularism is recognised as a cultural formation that 'is carried by social actors with specific interests who



associate it with concrete lifestyles, emotionally identify with it, sacralise it in the image of the state and of the founding fathers, performatively display their adherence to it, and mobilize against religious movements through complex strategies' (2012: 73-74). I discuss the elevation of one model of 'secularism' to a sacred value further in Chapter Five.

Accounting for religion, then, requires more than the integration of religion into existing frameworks. Instead, as part of a broader critique of modernity as a culturally contingent ideology (Alexander, 2003:193), a range of scholars (Thomas, 2005; Wuthnow, 1989; Xintian, 2004) seek to overcome the 'positivist assumption' implicit in the social and political sciences by advocating an 'interpretative approach' (Wuthnow, 1989) to religion or what we might call a 'turn to culture'.

#### **2.42 The turn to culture**

Consistent with what Robertson (1988) describes as the 'reawakening' of cultural analysis in sociology, the need to overcome political science's marginalisation of culture is now being acknowledged. A new range of approaches, broadly labelled 'constructivist' has emerged which come to terms with religion's role by challenging and redefining the intellectual frameworks of the political sciences that are inextricably tied to the modern distinction

between church and state (Wendt, 1999; Fox & Sandler, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Snyder, 2011; Hurd 2011). These analyses introduce what Lapid (1989: 236) calls ‘meaning related content’ to the political context and, in line with ‘anti-positivist philosophical and sociological trends’, emphasise non-rational methodology, including the analysis of meaning, ‘thick’ description and interpretation as the best way to explain religious motivation. The result of this sort of post-positivist analysis has been a better understanding of religious agency, which is now able to be interpreted in light of the histories, narratives and symbols of different cultural contexts, rather than according to the universal myth of secular modern culture. Allied to this is increasing recognition from political scientists that interests are constructed in relation to these histories, narratives and symbols and not independent of them. Thus, the ‘religious actor’ can be recognised as a product of his/her/its own context rather than being artificially subjected to the requirements of the Western secular norm. Indeed, this trend has also opened up the category of secularism itself to political analysis (Hurd, 2011, Asad, 2003). Rather than the neutral or objective universal future predicated by modern narratives, the ‘secular’ has emerged as constituted by and constitutive of, a particular civilisation and cultural context: a ‘series of political settlements that define, regulate, and manage religion in modern politics, including international politics’ (Hurd, 2011: 60).

The post-positivist orientation has undeniably moved the conversation about religious agency forward, introducing non-rational, symbolic

and ideational motivation to a discussion that had previously been almost exclusively rationalist-utilitarian. In accounts of ‘religious actors’, scholars are increasingly cognisant of the need to consider social relationships and motivations other than those based on self-interest. Similarly, in arguing against rational-choice models of religion, Spickard (1998) and Mellor (2000) have both identified the potency of non-utilitarian modes of social action. Kubalkova (2003) has argued for the introduction of ‘international political theology’ in order to ensure that international relations is able to recognise the significance of ‘assertive rules’<sup>41</sup> as a source of agency. Indeed, if the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism has taught us anything, it is that actors on the world stage continue to be motivated by non-contractual rules and not by rationality or self-interest. What has not yet been considered is just how powerful these ideational forces might be in our own system. That is to say, for all constructivism has so far contributed to the conversation about the religious actor, it is limited in two critical ways.

First, while the introduction of social constructivism to the analysis of international relations presents a promising alternative to a purely positivist account of political agency, nevertheless some such accounts have tended to define religion in terms of ‘narratives’ and ‘meanings’ which help individuals construct identities and navigate their environment (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2003: 113-115). Alexander

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Assertive rules’ involve an immediate demand which must be followed and are distinguished from ‘contractual rules’ which involve the application of reason and judgement by the individual.

would call this a 'weak' cultural concept, something which assumes that meanings, narratives and ideas are both deeply personal and voluntary. Religious motivation, in this light, is essentially the result of an intellectual or rational construction and is infinitely multiple, making it theoretically unappealing to those who continue to recognise the benefit of positivism when 'being driven by the need to find the best explanation' (Dunne et al, 1998:ix).

Secondly, while the recognition that religion is a cultural social form has derived benefits for our understanding of political agency - introducing to it greater attentiveness to the non-rational and non-material, such accounts have not yet overcome what Robertson describes as the 'highly circumscribed definition of culture' (1998, p. 5) which is the modern legacy and which excludes cultural categories from structural significance. The intellectual distinction between culture and structure, I would suggest, lies at the very heart of what international relations theorists call the 'third debate'. With Robertson, I therefore advocate a 'metacultural' approach that considers culture explicitly in its relation to structure as well as agency. We might call this not 'post-positivism', but 'positivism-plus', something which acknowledges religion as a cultural phenomenon and therefore religious agency as something expressed and manifest in symbolic and non-rational ways, but at the same time which acknowledges the ways in which the symbolic and non-rational might all be manifest in social structures.

The way forward for the analysis of religious agency in public life, I suggest, is with reference to the sort of middle ground cleared for us by the critical realists (e.g. Archer et al, 1998; Archer 1988) who argue that though positivists are misdirected in seeking to identify the sort of laws in the social realm which are observable in natural science, so too are hermeneutists wrong in abandoning this goal altogether. The task before us, instead, is to identify a *via media* - to recognise that religious agency is not merely a private nor a cultural phenomenon because 'cultural actors are also structural agents.' (Archer, 1988: 298)

The disciplines of political science have come a long way in a short time, but the final part of the journey, as yet, has not been negotiated. The attention paid to religious actors has been fruitful: it has resulted in recognition of non-rational agency as a significant factor in international affairs and it has given us a direction of future travel. To fully integrate religion into political scientific analysis will require us to develop a better understanding the relationship of culture to structure through which we are able to identify whether religious agency might be a factor in the behaviour of states and governments. Indeed, we should not be surprised to find that this is the case in a range of complex ways given 'subjective and internal feelings that so often seem to rule the world... [they] form[s] the will of collectivities; shapes the rules of organisations; defines the moral substance of law; and provides the meaning and motivation for technologies, economies, and military machines' (Alexander, 2003: 5).

In this thesis, I explore this interplay between structural and cultural levels, suggesting that it is significant in understanding both the UK and the US foreign-policy relationship to religion. In the UK, I argue, the ‘mutual embrace’ (Beckford, 2012:16) between religion and state is such that the state should be considered a religious rather than secular actor. In the US, I suggest, while the state is formally secular, the cultural patterns of the market orientate religion-related policy in critical ways. In both cases, then, it is necessary to traverse the distinction between structures and cultures as ways of understanding the relationship of religion to state.

In seeking to understand the way policy makers in the UK and the US understand and negotiate their interactions with religion, then, there is some useful material that can be drawn from the political sciences.

Indeed, post-secular discourse has drawn heavily from this body of work. Here there is a story about Western secularism being confronted by global religiosity; the religious non-state actor functioning in ‘civil society’; and a need to be attentive to cultural dynamics. But there is another body of literature which speaks to questions about religion, public life and public policy: the sociology of religion.

## **2.5 Secularisation challenged**

Like their counterparts in the political sciences, sociologists of religion have sought to explain the contemporary era of religious

resurgence by challenging the legacy of secularisation theory. Though it had been questioned long before - notably by David Martin (1965, 1978) who sought to explain religious change with reference to the diversity within religious traditions rather than the external effects of 'modernity' - toward the end of the twentieth century, secularisation theory has come under sustained attack from two different directions.

The first set of challenges question the empirical validity of a theory of 'religious decline' with reference to global religious revivals.

Yamane (1997) points out that the proliferation of new religious movements, the growth of conservative Protestantism in the US and the persistence of religion in various forms have been given as evidence that secularisation is flawed. One of secularisation theory's early advocates, Peter Berger, in a dramatic about-face, is now convinced that secularisation theory cannot be sustained in light of empirical evidence: 'In my own thinking....the major change of mind has been, precisely, the abandonment of the old secularisation theory - not, I would like to emphasise because of some philosophical or theological change, but because the theory seemed less and less capable of making sense of the empirical evidence from different parts of the world....' (Berger, 2003: 337). In fact, Berger's (1999) edited collection brings together a range of scholars who claim the current global context is one of 'desecularisation' in which a range of developments - from Pentecostalism in Latin America to religious resurgence in post-communist China - undermine the assumptions he

and others made about the causal connection between modernity and religious decline.

However, this empirical challenge is not the only one with which secularisation theorists have been forced to contend. While Rodney Stark (1999) has made a scathing attack on secularisation theory for its lack of empirical base and reliance upon a 'bygone Age of Faith' which never existed, he has also launched a major theoretical alternative to secularisation theory. The US experience of high modernity and high personal and public religiosity has long been a thorn in the side of European secularisation theorists who had often made 'the expedient appeal to 'American exceptionalism' (Casanova, 2003: 19) in order to continue with their 'universal' model which predicated the correlated developments of modernity and secularisation. On the other side of the Atlantic, however, unsatisfied by this non-explanation of the American religion-society relationship, an alternative paradigm was under construction. Warner (1993) observes the emergence of an explanation for the simultaneous co-existence of high secularity and high religiosity in the US: the rational choice paradigm. Counter to the assumptions of secularisation theory, rational choice approaches argue not that the existence of religion in secular sites is evidence of its decrease but in fact is a recipe for its success (Stark, 1999). Based on the assumption that America's tradition of religious liberty has created a competitive market environment in which religion thrives, the economic theory of the free



market is “the analytic key to the new paradigm” (Warner, 1993), which envisages religious activity as the result of rational self-interest forcing religions themselves to diversify and compete in order to ensure their existence.

First appearing in the 1980s, ‘rational choice’ or ‘supply side’ models have arguably been secularisation theory’s most significant opponents. These models explain religious vitality - rather than decline - by describing religion as a human need and pointing to a causal connection between the availability of religious ‘choices’ and levels of religious vitality. In 1987, Stark and Bainbridge’s ‘Theory of Religion’ offered a deductive, axiomatic approach to understanding the relationship between religion and society based around the assumption of human beings’ tendency to utility maximisation. In their account, macro-level secularisation, vis societal differentiation is accepted as given and the cultural ‘market’ model is applied to micro-level religiosity. Though some critics (e.g Gorski, 2012) consider rational choice models to be primarily concerned with micro-level religious ‘demand’, in fact it was Iannacone (1992) who developed the idea of the ‘religious economy’ as a way of describing ‘all the religious activity going on in any society (Stark and Finke, 2000: 193). The rational choice paradigm, we might suggest, offers us the inverse opposite to the political sciences ‘turn to culture’. Where political science is increasingly embracing the non-rational elements of human agency, here sociologists of religion turn to the rational

principle of utility maximisation as the basis for religious choice.

Indeed, while there are manifest challenges to rational choice models, not least in their failure to account for social or other non-rational influences on religious behaviour (see e.g. Sherkat, 1997; Neitz and Mueser, 1997), they have ironically enough made a significant contribution to the development of so-called ‘neo-secularisation’ models both by decentring the European model of secularisation in sociological thought and in helping to elevate the ‘core’ subject matter of the sociology of religion from the micro-level to the macro-level. (For more on rational choice theory and the US context, see Chapter Five).

## **2.6 Secularisation re-stated**

While some proponents of secularisation (e.g. Bruce, 2006) persist with the traditional model and continue to posit a causal connection between increased egalitarianism, individualism and diversity and the *decline* of organised religion, it has become increasingly common for secularisation to be described as a process of religious *change*. Davie (2000), for example, draws on evidence from the European Values Survey to identify a pattern of ‘believing without belonging’ across Europe and suggests that religious memory is ‘mutating’ rather than declining. Furthermore, even Bruce himself limits the applicability of his position to the ‘undeniable’ decline of religion in Europe. So too, in 1998, Wilson felt it necessary to explain that ‘secularisation does

not occur in the same way in different countries or even in different regions: the specificity of cultural conditions and historical circumstances ensures that the process by which religion loses social influence follows a distinctive, perhaps even a unique course in each separate social setting' (Wilson, 1998: 48). Elsewhere (Davie, 2000, Berger, Davie and Fokas, 2008), evidence is used to support the presentation of Europe as an outlier - or a 'curious case of deviance that requires explanation' (Berger, 2003: 340) in relation to both the United States and the rest of the world. Unlike in the political science literature, which as we have seen tends to conflate Western experiences of secularisation, it has become increasingly important for sociologists of religion (see e.g. Martin 1978, 2005b) to point to cleavages between Western nations in their experience of secularisation.

But it is not only by narrowing the geographical scope of secularisation theory that it has been re-stated. European sociologists - notably Dobbelaere (1981) and Casanova (1994) sought to bring greater analytical clarity to secularisation which had previously 'been used in sociology in different ways. It may refer to decline in church involvement, to laicisation of social institutions or to religious changes' (Dobbelaere, 1981:8). Describing the process by which 'secularisation' emerged into the social sciences in the early twentieth century, Dobbelaere suggests that it was originally used in reference to the separation of social sectors - or what Parsons called

‘differentiation’ - before later being applied to the individual level. As a result, he identifies three levels: ‘laicisation’ or the process of institutional differentiation where religion loses its overarching claim which often involves ‘disenchantment’ or rationalisation; ‘religious involvement’ or the decline in individual religious beliefs and practices; and finally ‘religious change’ or the adaptation of the church and religious organisations to the world. Through these analytical distinctions, Dobbelaere proposes, ‘we are in a better position to study the empirical relationships between laicisation and religious change; between laicisation and religious involvement; and between religious involvement and religious change’ (1981:12).

In his ‘neo-secularisation’ paradigm, Yamane (1997) has rejected claims that global data provides an empirical challenge to secularisation theory given it is either ‘irrelevant or interpretable within the terms of the theory’ (1997:110) In the face of empirical challenges facing secularisation theory - from the proliferation of new religious movements to the growth of conservative Protestantism in the US - as well as the theoretical challenge provided by the religious economies model, Yamane argues that ‘the insights provided by the new paradigm do not force us to abandon the idea of secularisation that has provided sustained insights for cautious sociologists for the past century (1997:111). While challenges to secularisation require theorists to ‘self-consciously reevaluate the paradigm which for so long was part of the taken-for-granted background of sociological

thinking' (1997:112), nevertheless, it is possible to hold onto the two core ideas at the heart of the secularisation thesis: the effect of modernisation processes in transforming religion and the macro-social significance of religion. For Yamane (1997:115), 'the neosecularisation paradigm emphasises the centrality of institutional differentiation at the societal level' meaning that it is possible to dispense with 'peripheral' elements of the theory including the reliance on individual or organisational level data and the oversimplification of secularisation processes as 'decline' or 'death' of religion.

Casanova's (1994:11) landmark text 'Public Religions in the Modern World' too unravels the 'wide range of meanings it (secularisation) has accumulated through its history'. Putting 'secularisation' into the historical context, he describes the 'double dualist system of classification' according to which pre-modern Europe was structured in which, in addition to the distinction between 'this world' and 'the other world', a dualism also operated within 'this world' such that it was structured into 'the religious' and 'the secular'. In light of this, 'secularisation' describes the process by which this dualism in 'this world' broke down such that 'now the secular sphere will be the all-encompassing reality, to which the religious sphere will have to adapt' (1994:15). Hence he offers a 'spatial-structural' understanding of secularisation, less about the religious practices of individuals and more about the process by which the differentiation of spheres has

taken place in different contexts. In doing so, he suggests that differentiation is the analytical core of the secularisation thesis, to which two sub-theses - the decline and privatisation of religion - have been attached leading to a 'confusion of historical processes....with alleged and anticipated consequences which those processes were supposed to have upon religion' (1994:19).

He describes four developments which contributed to the breakdown of the medieval system of religious classification: the Protestant Reformation - which undermined the unity of the church and legitimised the development of secular ethics; the emergence of the modern nation state - in which religious conformity eventually gave way to tolerance of pluralism; the emergence of capitalism which the church could not regulate and which eventually subjected the church 'to the logic of commodification' (1994:23); and the rise of modern science which brought faith and reason into conflict. Each of these processes, Casanova suggests, contributed to secularisation in that they were 'carriers of differentiation' (1994:25), though the processes happened in different places and at different times and make it necessary to understand secularisation less as a 'universal teleological process' and more as a variable process that is related to patterns of state formation.

The 'decline of religion' thesis and 'privatisation of religion thesis', Casanova argues, have variously been added to the process of

differentiation, though with little analytical clarity. The global picture reveals that religion has maintained or increased in vitality in most parts of the world beyond Western Europe, such that it must be considered a global exception. This means that a better understanding of the way in which religion has persisted alongside the processes of modernity is essential. The privatisation of religion thesis, Casanova suggests, has developed out of the observation that religious institutions are increasingly marginalised, and/or that the quest for meaning is increasingly an individual one. However, Casanova suggests, there is resistance to depoliticisation in a range of contexts which means there must be room within secularisation theory for 'public religion'. In doing so, he makes an important theoretical movement by suggesting that meso-level religious mobilisation or 'public religion' is still possible even in the context of macro-level secularisation. This analysis achieves two important gains for secularisation theory: first, it elevates the narrative of secularisation from the micro to the macro level and second, it demonstrates that different dynamics are possible between the levels, contrary to classical secularisation theory which posited causal connections between structures and cultures.

Casanova (2006:9,11) has emphasised the need to 'historicise and contextualise' accounts and to recognise that 'there are multiple diverse secularisations in the West and multiple and diverse Western modernities'. He goes on to articulate differences between the Latin-

Catholic cultural area - in which reason and freedom had emancipatory power (e.g. during French revolution) hence religion is marginalised and privatised and the Anglo-Protestant area (particularly the US) where tensions between religion and 'freedom' were never present hence the US is 'more religious' but not necessarily 'less secular' (Casanova, 2006:12). Casanova (2006:13 - my italics) suggests that the 'civilisation of modernity' is underpinned by 'the continuous *transformation* of the pre-modern historical civilisations under modern conditions, which help to shape multiple modernities'. For this reason, Casanova suggests that secularisation should not be associated with processes of modernisation but patterns of fusion and dissolution of religious, political and social communities.

It seems, then, that at the beginning of the 21st century, secularisation theory is far from being abandoned as a way of understanding the relationship of religion to state and society. Rather than a theory of religious decline, it is now described as a process of religious change. Furthermore, it has been significantly remodelled so that the emphasis is now placed on macro-level structural differentiation and on the differences between Western experiences of the secularisation process. Both of these are important developments for this thesis. Moreover, it seems that accounts of the post-secular bring this body of literature into conversation with the political sciences in important ways.



## 2.7 In conversation

Narratives of the post-secular draw from the sociology of religion and from accounts of secularisation, taking from them an emphasis on religious change: the post-secular is about the *transformation* of beliefs and values (Wikstrom and Illman, 2012: 217), and is a way to conceptualise the contemporary *resurgence* of religion in the public sphere (Moberg, Granholm and Nynas, 2012: 3). Yet at the same time, they draw from the political sciences to tell a story of Western secularism being confronted by global religiosity or the ‘growing public visibility of religion throughout much of the Western world’ (Moberg, Granholm and Nynas, 2012: 6) as a result of which ‘we are entering a new phase of state-religion relations, which are historically anchored in modernity but affected by neoliberalisation and the globalisation of society and social life’ (Martikainen, 2012: 71). As Wikstrom and Illman explain ‘to sum up this introduction of the post-secular discourse, it rests on the observation that religious perspectives have renewed their public prominence in contemporary Western societies...’ (Wikstrom and Illman, 2012: p.220). What emerges from this conversation, then, is a narrative of homogenous Western secularism in the face of global (and national) religious change. Yet, this narrative does not tell the whole story. In bringing accounts of the post-secular from the sociology of religion into conversation with those drawn from the political sciences, a number of key questions emerge:

- \* does the turn to culture give us the best tools to explain the way UK and US government's engage religion in foreign policy?
- \* does macro-level secularisation (differentiation) describe conditions in the UK and/or the US?
- \* how should we account for differences between the UK and US context?

First, I contend that these literatures independently only offer a limited insight into the relationship between religion and foreign policy in the UK and US. More importantly, I suggest, bringing these two literatures into conversation with one another exposes critical flaws in both, which are not always cited in post-secular narratives. Where one (the turn to culture) set of accounts overplays religion's significance in micro-level agency, it underplays its role in structure. The other (mainstream secularisation theory) overplays the significance of structures at the expense of culture.

This very impasse is the central concern of critical realists such as Archer (Archer, 1988) who argues that - just as culture and agency can be analytically, if not empirically separated - so culture and society are analytically separable, hence cultural and structural change can happen *independently*. It is this central tenet that, I suggest, is played out by the material contained within this thesis. The analytical separability of cultural and structural change means that there is a

wider range of options to describe what is going on in UK and US foreign policy than these two bodies of literature account for. Hence, the religion-policy relationship need not be characterised by a single dimension of 'secularisation' or 'religious resurgence' as the literature presents to us. It is possible, for example, that micro-level religious resurgence can be occurring at the same time as macro-level secularisation or the opposite could also be the case, i.e. that micro-level secularism can be occurring at the same time as macro-level religiosity. In this thesis, I will argue that the religion-state relationship influences the religion-foreign policy relationship in two ways: the first is structural (the status of differentiation); and the second is cultural (institutional patterns and behaviours). In doing so, I bring the sociology of religion to bear on the political sciences and vice versa. Emerging from this conversation is a narrative quite different than that offered by 'post-secularists'. Where there is an emphasis on cultures of secularism and therefore Western homogeneity, I (with e.g Casanova, 2012) offer a cultural as well as structural analysis of the macro-level, drawing on structural factors to emphasise the heterogeneity present within the religion-state relationships of the UK and the US. Furthermore, where there is an emphasis on structural religious change, shifting global dynamics and transformations of both religion and state, I point to religious continuity, the stability of church-state settlements and their influence over the management of religion.

**Chapter Three: ‘Getting’ religion and getting religion wrong**  
**(or ‘how are UK policy makers ‘managing God?’)**

**3.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Two, I described and analysed two broad areas of scholarship which concern themselves with the relationship of religion to the state and society. The first, I suggested, was located in the mainstream social and political sciences which have undertaken a ‘turn to culture’ in a bid to rescue themselves from the positivism which had robbed their intellectual frameworks of the ability to take religion seriously. The second area of scholarship - the sociology of religion - had, I suggested, undergone a 360 degree turnaround from secularisation theory, through the abandonment of secularisation theory to its restatement with a number of conditions. What both of these schools of thought increasingly utilise, I observed, were narratives of ‘post-secularity’ given they neatly describe the sort of scholarly journey both disciplines had experienced. Yet, in describing the current global context as ‘post-secular’, there is a fashion for scholars - and increasingly practitioners - to label persistent outliers as ‘secular’ for refusing to conform to the new ‘post-secular’ landscape. In what follows, I evaluate the accusation that British public policy is secular. In order to do so, I begin with an exploration of the religion-policy relationship in recent years, demonstrating that, far from being

ignored, religion has been repeatedly relocated as a public policy issue by the last two Governments. Yet, I suggest, while successive governments have characterised the relationship between religion and public policy differently, there remain implicitly Christian assumptions in the way the state engages religious forms.

Next, taking an 'ethnographic' approach to the UK policy establishment, I go on to explore the dimensions of 'secularism' as they have been applied to the UK policy context, distinguishing between two different narratives which are often conflated. First, I suggest it is necessary to distinguish between 'structural' and 'cultural' dimensions of UK Government - that is, between institutional encounters with religion and the religious complexion of the governing elite and its influence over public policy. I argue that the last 15 years has been characterised by the repeated 'relocation' of religion rather than its marginalisation or by secularism, noting that despite these relocations there remain some common elements. Next, I seek to evaluate the extent to which the accusation of 'cultural secularism' is appropriate. Here, I distinguish between the political and administrative levels of government, suggesting that it is within the permanent administrative cadre that aversion to religious engagement is strongest but that this is less as a result of cultural secularism and more of an attempt at ideological impartiality which I call 'religion blindness'. These two analyses suggest that the relationship between religion and state in the UK is more complex

than the narrative of secularisation can account for. Finally, I move to consider the way Her Majesty's Government 'does' religion in those circumstances where religious engagement is non-discretionary. Re-examining the legacy of HMG's encounters with religion under the auspices of 'Prevent', I suggest that despite its manifest problems, Prevent played a significant role in forcing the UK Government to engage seriously with religion and in extending the religion-policy relationship into the international context. As a result, the Prevent strategy exemplifies the challenge I earlier levelled at accounts of public policy's 'secularism': it has both contributed to the culture of 'religion blindness', by eliciting fear among policy makers, and at the same time draws from strongly felt cultural values including implicit Christianity.

### **3.2 Religion Blind?**

During its time in office, the Coalition Government took a variety of steps to respond to criticism about the way religious engagement was undertaken by its predecessors. In June 2011, counter-radicalisation policy 'Prevent' was refocused around known targets and removed from association with integration work<sup>42</sup>. Indeed, though the Coalition Government faced accusations of 'co-opting' (Ketell, 2012) and 'marginalising' (Christians in Parliament, 2012) religion, its attempts

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<sup>42</sup> For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011>

at religious engagement have tended to emphasise the positive contribution of religion to public policy goals. While considerable attention has been paid to the role of religious civil society organisations in the so-called ‘Big Society’ agenda<sup>43</sup> (see e.g. Ketell, 2012), in fact a range of central government policy actively engages religious communities and organisations. The ‘Near Neighbours’ programme, launched by Communities Secretary Eric Pickles in November 2011, aimed to increase interfaith and intercultural cooperation in improving local neighbourhoods. Administered through the Church Urban Fund, this programme explicitly places a strong emphasis on the ‘vital role’ played by faith groups in local communities (Pickles, 2011). The conviction that religion plays an important role in society was further underlined by the publication of ‘Faith Partnership Principles’ by the Department for International Development in February 2012 which ‘marks a new era of understanding between government and faith groups on global development’ (Mitchell, 2012).

Indeed, Ministerial rhetoric suggests that these initiatives are part of a conscious shift toward ‘doing God’ (Pickles, 2012). On a number of occasions the UK’s Christian foundations have been reasserted<sup>44</sup> and

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Big Society’ policy is focused on ‘making it as easy as possible for civil society organisations to help shape and deliver our public services’ (Big Society - Frequently Asked Questions [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85850/Big\\_Society\\_FAQs.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85850/Big_Society_FAQs.pdf) accessed September 16 2013).

<sup>44</sup> On 16 December 2011, the Prime Minister called Britain ‘a Christian country.’ The following February, Baroness Warsi emphasised ‘the importance of the Established Church and our Christian heritage’ (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/baroness-warsi-speech-in-the-holy-see> - accessed 22 June 2013).

historic policies of multiculturalism criticised.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Ministers have also accused previous Governments of ‘secularism.’<sup>46</sup> My own interviews with officials reveal the extent to which these criticisms have been internalised. All of the officials I interviewed were conscious of various ways in which Government had made mistakes in the past. As a result, officials explained, there were perennial concerns about ‘getting religion wrong’, ‘causing offence’ or engaging with ‘inappropriate organisations’ (HMG/4 July 2012/b, HMG/4 July 2012/c, HMG/7 December 2012/a, HMG/5 July 2012/b). A number suggested to me that high profile errors in the past meant that ‘religion is not a comfortable space’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c) for policy makers, that Government ‘culture is to be embarrassed about religion’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a) and that religion is considered as a policy issue only by exception (HMG/10 May 2012/b). As one official explained to me ‘There are areas where engagement with religion is discretionary and areas where it is non-discretionary. The majority of my work has been where religion really has affected us and we have been forced to deal with it.... but we have not been particularly successful in dealing with it because we don’t have much practice’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). That said, a number of officials did

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<sup>45</sup> In February 2011, the Prime Minister declared that the doctrine of ‘state multiculturalism’ which has ‘encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream’ had failed to prevent extremism. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference> - accessed 25 October 2013

<sup>46</sup> The Communities and Local Government Secretary criticised the ‘intolerant secularism’ of the public sector, (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17082136> - accessed 1 September 2013). Prior to this, Baroness Warsi described the ‘militant secularism’ - see <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2012/02/14/warsi-s-speech-on-militant-secularism-in-full>, accessed 22 June 2013)



acknowledge that lessons had been learned from the past and were able to utilise major narratives drawn from the social and political sciences to explain contemporary practice. For example, a number of those interviewed described increasing recognition of the exceptionalism of the British and/or European church-state settlement (Berger, Davie and Fokas, 2008), suggesting that ‘The desire to separate (religion from politics) is European and particularly British’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a) and ‘we are only just starting to realise that our settled view of the world is otherwise’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). This expression is characteristically ‘post-secular’ (Habermas, 2008) in that it recognises the cultural contingency of the Western model which separates religion from politics. In addition, officials described the changing ‘mood music’ (HMG/27 July 2012/a) within Government departments in which there were increasing signs that ‘it’s OK to be open about religious motivation’ (HMG/27 July 2012/a). As one explained to me, ‘the key question is whether the public space can only be secular or because we have a pluralistic system do you allow all voices to shout all the time. We now allow all the voices’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b). Government policy, rhetoric and practice then, seem to be responding to critiques of the ‘secularism’ of the public sphere by actively providing space for religion within it. But what if the extent of this ‘secularism’ has been overstated?

### **3.21 Marginalisation or relocation?**

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles (2012) has claimed that ‘long-standing British liberties of freedom of religion have been undermined in recent years by aggressive secularism, especially in the more politically correct parts of the public sector’. Critical of high profile legal disputes over the right to religious expression, including over the right to wear or display religious symbols in a working environment, Pickles explicitly criticizes the National Secular Society’s campaign against council prayers as ‘intolerant’. What is more, he advocates the right of religious groups (and Christians in particular) to ‘be heard by policy makers’.

The notion that public policy is inappropriately secular has been expressed by another senior politician, Baroness Warsi (Winnett, 2012), who claimed that religion has been ‘sidelined, marginalised and downgraded in the public sphere’. She describes this tendency as ‘militant secularism’, such urgent language reflects her fear that this ‘rising tide’ is ‘taking hold of our societies’. Like Pickles, Warsi highlights what she considers to be visible signs of encroaching secularism including the prohibition of the display of religious symbols and considers the ethos of secularism to be intolerant ‘when it requires the complete removal of faith from the public sphere’. What Warsi and Pickles both highlight (and condemn), then, is what they perceive to be the deep secularism of the public sector and its implications for the limiting of free religious expression. Sociological accounts of secularism might describe this removal of religion from

public life as the ‘privatisation’ of religion - a structural form of secularisation characterised by the differentiation and the ‘emancipation of the secular spheres—primarily the state, the economy, and science—from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialisation of religion within its own newly found religious sphere’ (Casanova, 1994: 19). However, I would suggest that a variety of historical public policy actually reflects the conscious engagement of religious communities and organisations, the ‘management’ of religion rather than its differentiation from the state.

The so-called ‘Rushdie affair’ is often identified as a watershed moment in the relationship between religion and British society. The reaction of Muslim communities in parts of the UK to the publication of a novel labelled blasphemous, according to Herbert (2003) had the effect of politicising urban Muslim youth in the UK and creating a nascent South Asian-facing Islamic civil society in Britain. While the most significant policy outcome of the Rushdie affair was the eventual inclusion of ‘religion’ in anti-discrimination legislation, making religion a defining category of difference according to British law, I would suggest that it also set a precedent for the subsequent development of the religion-public policy relationship in the UK: policies of multiculturalism, community cohesion, what I label ‘heritage Christianity’ and, controversially, security, are all attempts by the policy community to galvanise the socially cohesive potential of religion in the face of problematic intercultural relations. In other

words, by repeatedly ‘relocating’ religion as a policy issue, the policy community has sought to ape exactly the effect the Rushdie affair created: the political mobilisation of religious communities in a thriving ‘civil society’, with mixed results.

In the midst of debate and policy making about the ‘race problem’, brought to a head by the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the development of a Home Office ‘faith unit’ was Jack Straw’s response to what he recognised were religious tensions within his own Blackburn constituency (HMG/ 8 June/2011). When Blunkett succeeded him as Home Secretary, after the 2001 election, civil unrest in ‘multicultural’ northern cities resulted in an increased focus on citizenship and integration - the government was increasingly engaged in the ‘management of diversity’. Back et al (2002) have argued that New Labour’s policy was necessarily Janus-faced, struggling at once with the promotion of tolerance and diversity and the challenge of coherent national politics. The Christocentric<sup>47</sup> label ‘faith’, I would suggest, was a critical part of their early attempt to overcome this tension, at least as far as dealing with religious communities was concerned. While citizenship - by 2005, a status to be achieved via examination - continued to be an individual, legal matter, a rational contractual relationship between the individual and the state, ‘faith’ was increasingly recognised, even encouraged, as a source of local

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<sup>47</sup> My evidence suggests that Beaman’s (2003) research into the United States and Canada where there exists an implicit model of what constitutes a legitimate religion, could be extended to the UK where mainline Protestantism also has constitutional privilege.

and communal identity. As a flagship education policy, the Blair government sought to encourage the establishment of 'faith schools' within the state sector. Though the idea of the 'faith school' was not new, its application beyond the Judaeo-Christian norm, a reflection of the reality of cultural diversity, certainly was. The accommodation of other faiths into a Judaeo-Christian model is evidence of what Beckford and Gillat (2005) describe as the New Labour Government having a concept of 'religion' but not 'religions'. In their analysis of the role of prison chaplains, they suggest that the Christian clergy acted as 'religious brokers' performing spiritual and pastoral responsibilities to a number of faith communities in the prison population and, in some cases, being utilised to carry out government monitoring of them.

Todd (2013) has made the same observation about military chaplains who represent not only the Christian Church but also the UK armed forces and are increasingly called on as interlocutors in negotiations with communities in theatre. Not only does this challenge accusations of secularism, given the embeddedness of chaplains in both contexts, it suggests that there is an implicitly Judaeo-Christian or Christian 'model' according to which the government approaches faith communities. Hence the 'faith schools' initiative encouraged the expression of religious identity in ways which were compatible both with existing structures and with national education priorities. Through this and the new attention being paid to 'community

cohesion,<sup>48</sup> then, the Blair government's domestic policy narrative - far from 'ignoring' or 'marginalising' religion, located it in a localised context. As a result, the Government of the time presided over a paradox in its policy on religion: diverse 'faith' identities were supported, encouraged and welcomed into public life in communities, but the resulting diversity, and potential conflicts arising from it, required management at national level via citizenship tests and anti-discrimination legislation.

While 9/11 brought religion, terrorism and security to the forefront of both the policy and academic agendas, the events of July 7 2005 challenged the relationship between religion and public policy in the UK more profoundly. The sort of distinctions between 'private' religious and 'public' national identity could no longer be sustained, nor could the inconsistent local, national and international policy on religion. The possibility of 'home grown' terrorists, gave rise to an overt 'counter-radicalisation' agenda in counter-terrorist work: the publication of CONTEST in March 2006 turned what had been internal counter-terrorism planning into an official cross-government strategy, while the establishment of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) in 2007 made counter-terrorism a strategic priority across government, eroding not only internal boundaries

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<sup>48</sup> For example, In response to social disturbances in the city of Bradford in 2001, the Home Secretary established an inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion to consider 'how national policies might be used to promote better community cohesion, based upon shared values and a celebration of diversity.' see the report of this group here: <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/Default.aspx?recordId=94>

between departments but also symbolically those between local, national and international policy. This emphasis on counter-terrorism was only underlined further by the new Brown administration which, distancing itself from the failures of 'ethical foreign policy', embraced the idea of national security as 'the first duty of government'. The publication of two national security strategies in quick succession (HMG 2008a, HMG 2009b), the establishment of a National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office and the application of national security policies across a range of departments, to some extent brought greater coherence to local, national and international policy on religion<sup>49</sup>. Counter-terrorism and national security strategies increasingly recognised the interconnectedness of 'home and away': UK foreign policy was recognised as a potential source of radicalisation at home, just as local disputes in British communities mirrored major international conflicts and tensions. Thus, the distinction between local, national and international which was so apparent in the early years of New Labour was gradually disappearing, but greater coherence between these levels was the result of another critical shift: the emphasis on religion as a potential threat to UK security. The 2009 UK National Security Strategy (HMG, 2009b) explicitly acknowledged 'ideologies and beliefs' as potential drivers of insecurity around the world. Similarly, Preventing

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<sup>49</sup> The most obvious example of this was Prevent - the deradicalisation plank of the Counter-terrorism strategy - which engaged the departments of Communities and Local Government, Children, Schools and Families, Business, Innovation and Skills, and the Ministry of Justice, as well as the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office in the counter-terrorism initiative. The connection between religious communities at home and overseas was underlined by Prevent initiatives, and both were now subject to the same government intervention and targets.

Violent Extremism policy drew on institutional memory from challenging Northern Irish terrorism by engaging in theological debate. Once more drawing from an implicitly Christian template, Prevent policy led to increasing engagement with Muslim communities through policing and local government, leading to accusations of ‘spying’ and the perception that Prevent work was both counter-productive and stigmatizing (House Of Commons, 2010a). Prevent policy and its legacy is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

While counter-terrorism dominated the policy agenda, the Brown government also placed a renewed emphasis on localism - establishing a department for Communities and Local Government and devolving to local authorities a number of key delivery responsibilities, including Prevent and community cohesion. As Chapman (2008: 38) explains, ‘local communities would become agents of certain socially desirable goals’. Brown and successive communities secretaries Ruth Kelly and Hazel Blears presented a strong case for the role that thriving, diverse communities could play in the life of the nation. Religious voluntary organisations, of course, played their part in this - just as they were increasingly recognised as useful proxies for overseas development - but in both cases, the relationship between policy and religion was an instrumental one. Thus local authorities were measured by nationalised targets, the Prime Minister continued to emphasise national values as integrative (including intensified prioritisation of national security). It seems, then, that the Brown administration



increased the coherence of its policy position vis a vis religion at local, national and international levels via the national security narrative - thus while religion was celebrated and utilised locally, it was construed primarily as one of the problematic side-effects of globalisation. Far from an absence of religion-related policy, then, the New Labour years were characterised by the repeated relocation of religion as a public policy issue and, I would suggest, this pattern continues. Not only were many Coalition policies descendants of their New Labour predecessors (HMG/27 July 2012/a)<sup>50</sup>, it seems that religion again was relocated as a public policy issue.

Perhaps the first indication that the Coalition Government intended to adopt a new approach to religion came with the publication of a new Prevent strategy in June 2011. Refocusing deradicalisation policy around known targets and removing its overtly theological elements, Prevent 2.0 made an explicit distinction: ‘the ideology of extremism and terrorism is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not’ (HMG, 2011a:1). Not only this, the emphasis that had been placed on ‘community cohesion’ by New Labour since 2001 was rebranded ‘integration’ and removed from association with counter-terrorism. The ‘Near Neighbours’ programme, launched by Communities Secretary Eric Pickles in November 2011, aims to increase interfaith and intercultural cooperation in improving local neighbourhoods. The Coalition Government, it seems, once again

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<sup>50</sup> For discussions on the continuities between New Labour and Coalition communities policy, see e.g. Bulley and Sohki-Bulley (2012), McAnulla (2010).

relocated policy on religion within government, and in so doing, reinterpreted the role of religion in society, emphasising the common interests and shared experiences which cement cooperation rather than division.

By emphasising Christianity's cultural contribution to the UK, senior politicians in the Coalition Government portrayed religion as something that is identifiable with 'being British'. Whereas under Gordon Brown, Britishness and national values were emphasised as a means of superseding religious diversity, here we see specific historical religious values enlisted in service of national identity. Religion, then, exists in a different - relocated - position in relation to policy: the cultural role of religion embraced by the likes of Pickles and Cameron was almost entirely absent from New Labour policy which instead recognised religious diversity, complexity and multiculturalism. Yet beneath this repeated 'relocation' of religion is an important continuity. Rather than the structural secularism or 'privatisation' of religion in the UK public policy environment, suggested both by scholars and politicians, provision has been made by central government departments for the engagement of faith communities since the millennium (HMG/27 July 2012/a). In many cases this provision has included the direct funding of faith-based organisations and/or their utilisation in the provision of public services. Furthermore, it seems that the constitutional privilege afforded to the Church of England has repeatedly played the sort of

role Beaman (2003) describes in shaping an implicitly Christian approach to religious engagement from faith schools and chaplaincy to counter-terrorism. As a result, it is necessary to shift the focus of our enquiry into public sector secularism away from the structural level toward the cultural. To what extent is there a secular orientation among policy makers?

### **3.22 A secular orientation?**

Gutkowski (2012: 88) has undertaken research into the UK defence and security community and argues that a 'secular habitus' has emerged since the 1960s which has 'influenced the way senior British policy-makers, officers, and security professionals imagined and conducted the wars on terror, particularly up to 2008'. She argues that the boundaries of secularism in Britain have developed in relation to key political concepts like multiculturalism, democracy, tolerance, national identity, extremism, terrorism and insurgency and that 'these habits are not confined to this group (policy-makers) but are embedded within the embodied practices, assumptions, and aesthetics of the metropolitan middle classes' (Gutkowski, 2012: 89). Chapman (2008: 3) too has examined what he calls the 'secular activity of the formulation of public policy'. He draws similar conclusions - notably that a secular orientation has shaped public policy in determinative ways but that this orientation is not limited to the policy community, but extends particularly to the media who made it clear that Tony

Blair's public religiosity was 'a high-risk strategy: as portrayed in the media, religion evidently seriously clouded judgement' (Chapman, 2008:12). Analyses of public policy's secularism are not limited to the immediate past, however, nor to the New Labour government.

Long before the events of 9/11 and 7/7 brought religion to the forefront of public policy attention, Gavin D'Costa (1990: 418) examined the Satanic Verses controversy, suggesting that 'Britain's prized tolerant and pluralist society began to exhibit the power of its master code from the beginning of 1989'. D'Costa (1990: 419) labels this master code 'secular fundamentalism', describing it as 'a secular metaphysics with its attendant political and social baggage' and claims that the inability of author Salman Rushdie, the press and policy makers to understand the backlash against this 'blasphemous text' is characteristic of European secular modernism and the 'latent plausibility structure' of our conduct drawn from the Enlightenment which fails to recognise religious identity as first-order (D'Costa, 1990: 423-424).

Analysis of the sort undertaken by Gutkowski, Chapman and D'Costa highlights a different dimension of secularism than that expressed in the critiques of Warsi and Pickles. While the latter emphasise the impact of the secular ethos on the expression of personal religious identity, the former suggest the ways in which this ethos has influenced and shaped policy makers' conception of events and hence

policy responses to these events. In this, they have much in common with the work of Asad (2003) and Hurd (2011), both of whom articulate a vision of ‘secularism’ as a Western political doctrine: it is, says Hurd (2011:60) ‘a series of political settlements that define, regulate, and manage religion in modern politics, including international politics’.

This argument is given weight by the nature of the two-tier system of UK Government<sup>51</sup> in which attention paid to religion by elected politicians can be ‘neutralised’ by the bureaucratic system. Since leaving office, former Prime Minister Tony Blair described the internal reaction to his suggestion that he finish an address announcing the beginning of military intervention in Iraq by saying ‘God Bless Britain’. It ‘caused consternation in the whole system. A committee was convened, and we had to discuss it. I remember we had this debate on and off but finally one of the civil servants said in a very pofaced way ‘I must remind you Prime Minister, this is not America’ in this disapproving tone, so I gave up the idea’ (Ross, 2012). This anecdote suggests an institutional intolerance of religion within the administrative tier of the UK Government. It seems sensible, then, to make a distinction between politicians and the ‘Government’ as a bureaucratic whole when it comes to the culture of ‘secularism’.

Indeed, in interviews, a number of officials made a similar distinction.

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<sup>51</sup> Her Majesty’s Government is led by the Prime Minister and his team of Ministers who are all either democratically elected members of the House of Commons or appointed to the House of Lords. Government Ministers are supported by a permanent bureaucracy of civil servants and other Government employees.

One explained to me that ‘officials are very different to Ministerial level where ideological views are necessarily part of work and may form the basis of decisions’ (HMG/10 May 2012/b). Although Chapman, Gutkowski and D’Costa all point to a unifying ‘secularism’ which characterises the policy-making process, it seems to be the permanent administrative system which meets this description. Yet, evidence from my own interviews suggests that, while there are strong cultural values shaping engagement with religious issues, dynamics and communities, these values are less an expression of ‘secularism’ and more a commitment to impartiality.

While there is insufficient data to measure the religious complexion of the civil service, evidence I gathered from interviews would seem to suggest that the overall population is more diverse than we might expect. A number of officials discussed their own personal religious commitments and/or backgrounds, though many suggested that these were likely unknown by colleagues. The principle, I would suggest, is less ‘secularist’ and more ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’<sup>52</sup> and even this is changing, as one official explained ‘in the last 10 years, there is a more noticeable number of religious people....you might say more people are ‘out’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b). In fact, many officials shared similar anecdotal evidence of the religious commitments of

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<sup>52</sup> Don’t Ask Don’t Tell was the Clinton administration’s official US policy on military service for gay and lesbians. The policy prohibited openly gay, lesbian or bisexual people from military service but at the same time prohibited harassment of closeted homosexuals. This policy was ended by the Obama administration in September 2011. See the Department of Defense directive <http://biotech.law.lsu.edu/blaw/dodd/corres/html2/d130426x.htm> - accessed 31 May 2015.

colleagues, acknowledging ‘strong black Christian, white Christian and noticeable Muslim (communities)’ in one domestic department (HMG/5 July 2012/b) as well as the fact that ‘most major religions have a network’ (HMG/5 July 2012/c). In fact, one official suggested ‘the civil service shouldn’t be considered secular. There are lots of very religious people.... even powerful senior civil servants... [but they] don’t wear it on their sleeves’(HMG/5 July 2012/a). Indeed, most officials (whether they identified as ‘religious’ or not) made the distinction between professional and religious identities. While it is possible to ‘be’ both religious and a policy adviser or analyst, and while officials are permitted to perform religious rituals in a ‘modern workplace....’ (HMG/5 July 2012/c), leaving religion at the office door was considered an entirely appropriate *modus operandi* by both religious and non-religious individuals. One official explained this as ‘an internal cultural norm of assuming it’s private....it’s parked in the same box as sexuality’(HMG/4 July 2012/c).

On the one hand, it seems, the civil service is a reasonably pluralistic environment in which individuals with a variety of religious affiliations and commitments (and none) are employed. And yet, on the other, officials were at pains to emphasise that distance between these affiliations and professional responsibilities was maintained. This was equally true for one official who regularly attends church as another who was described by colleagues as a ‘secularist’. In this way, I would suggest, policy officials act neither out of an explicitly

‘religious’ nor an explicitly ‘secular’ worldview but according to a set of internal cultural values which are strongly felt. These values almost certainly include a combination of pragmatism and utilitarianism - the characteristics of technocratic governance - as one official pointed out: ‘civil servants are very good at only focusing their efforts where required’ (HMG/10 May 2012/b) and another suggested that ‘the civil service is a self-selecting elite which thinks utilitarian’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). There is a sense, then, that policy officials operate within certain cultural constraints that may impact upon their ability to recognise or engage with ‘religion’. However, it should not be assumed that this is a ‘secularist’ culture. Instead, I suggest, there are determinative values that orientate policy officials into producing policy which appears ‘secular’.

### **3.23 Secularism or impartiality?**

Since the mid-19th century, there has been in the UK a permanent cadre of officials, independent of the governing party who are appointed and promoted on merit which advises and assists the politically elected government of the day. This official cadre operates in accordance with the civil service code<sup>53</sup> which requires it to act with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. I suggest that these core values - and particularly the required commitment to

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<sup>53</sup> For information on the Civil Service Code, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code> - accessed 31 May 2015.



impartiality - are pertinent to a discussion of public sector  
'secularism'.

According to the code, two types of impartiality are required of civil servants. The first - political impartiality - requires civil servants to serve an elected government of any persuasion to the best of their ability and includes restrictions on personal involvement in political activities. There is, though, a second and more general requirement for 'impartiality' which requires civil servants to act 'in a way that is fair and just and equitable and reflects the Civil Service commitment to equality and diversity'. Specifically, civil servants must not 'unjustifiably favour or discriminate against particular individuals or interests'. It is possible that the conflation of these two types of impartiality has created a conviction among officials to avoid identifying with or engaging with any set of value convictions, including those considered 'religious'. The association of required 'impartiality' with the avoidance of religion, I would suggest, better explains the cultural resistance to engagement with 'religion' than does the accusation of secularism.

Indeed, if colour blindness is the philosophical position that ignores racial and ethnic differences between people, thereby being 'blind' to their colour, then 'religion blindness' is a conscious or unconscious attempt to ignore religious differences, which I would argue is the result of an extended commitment to ideological impartiality. Being

‘religion blind’ is less a description of ignorance about the ‘content’ or ‘nature’ of religion(s) - what has often been called a lack of ‘religious literacy’ (Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes, 2009) - and more an inability to recognise when and where religion influences actors, orientates societies and informs worldviews. Just as critics of ‘colour blindness’ as a policy position note (Loury, 2004), blindness to difference at the same time denies it significance - and this is the very position in which Her Majesty’s Government frequently finds itself. This blindness manifests itself in cultural resistance to engagement with religious actors and dynamics and is compounded by a lack of strategic capacity or coordination of religion-related policy across Whitehall,<sup>5455</sup> but should not be conflated with ‘secularism’ of the sort described by political scientists which tends to be influenced by the full constitutional separation between religion and state in the United States.

In the current era, amidst the clamour to identify and describe cultures of ‘secularism’<sup>56</sup>, particularly in relation to public policy, there is a need to interrogate and challenge these accounts and to problematise - as well as utilise - the category ‘the secular’. In particular, this

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<sup>54</sup> There was briefly a Minister of State for Faith and Communities whose role was ‘to promote faith, religious tolerance and stronger communities within the UK’ but, no cross-government policy or structure was established to support her, nor has this role been maintained after her resignation. For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/senior-minister-of-state-and-minister-for-faith-and-communities> - accessed October 25 2013.

<sup>55</sup> During the process of writing this PhD, a non-compulsory module on religion has been developed for the new so-called ‘Diplomatic Academy’ though whether it will tackle this sort of ‘religion blindness’ remains to be seen.

<sup>56</sup> For example, a new journal for ‘Secularism and Nonreligion’ was launched in 2012 reflecting widespread interest in ‘the secular’ across a range of disciplines.

research suggests that there may be value in broadly ethnographic approaches to secular cultures, particularly institutional cultures. More urgent is the challenge facing policy makers to develop appropriate policy responses in an era of global religious resurgence (Berger, 1999).

We have seen, then, that UK public policy is neither structurally nor culturally 'secular' but that religious engagement happens at multiple levels while policy makers seem to follow a pattern of avoidance of religious issues and dynamics. In what follows, I provide an example of the way religion is engaged in those 'non-discretionary' (HMG/4 July 2012/c) circumstances where it cannot be avoided. Evaluating the legacy of the first Preventing Violent Extremism Strategy (2006-2011)<sup>57</sup>, I demonstrate once more that the UK public policy machine is far from 'secular' given its extensive engagements with Muslim communities under the auspices of Prevent 1.0. Challenging the commonly held perception that Prevent 1.0 is evidence *only* of the British Government 'getting religion wrong', I identify a number of positive contributions that Prevent has made to the way British policy makers approach religious engagement. This evaluation of Prevent acts as an exemplar of the arguments made earlier in this chapter: it reveals that the relationship between religion and state in the UK is more complex than the narrative of secularisation can account for;

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<sup>57</sup> Given the current Government chose to keep the name 'Prevent' to describe their counter-radicalisation work, in what follows, I refer to historical Prevent policy (that between 2006-2011) as 'Prevent 1.0' and the later re-focused Coalition Government policy as 'Prevent 2.0'.

demonstrates the way ‘getting religion wrong’ can contribute to existing ‘religion blindness’; and illustrates the way policy makers attempt religious engagement according to strongly-held cultural values derived from institutional memory and implicitly Christian assumptions.

### **3.3 Getting religion right while getting religion wrong**

In 2011, the UK’s counter-radicalisation strategy ‘Prevent’ was reviewed and refocused by the new Coalition Government. This review responded to the myriad criticisms levelled at different version of Preventing Violent Extremism policy since the late 1990s including its ‘securitisation’ (Croft, 2012) and stigmatisation (House of Commons, 2010a) of the Muslim community, its ‘instrumentalisation’ of ‘friendly’ Muslim commentators (House of Commons, 2010a), its encouragement of ‘spying’ within communities (House of Commons, 2010a), its lack of measurable effect (HMG, 2011a) and its undermining of inter-community relationships (Birt, 2009). However, this section is not about these flaws. Nor does it seek to defend Prevent 1.0 against these very real criticisms. Instead, this section suggests that, *while it was manifestly problematic in a number of ways*, Prevent 1.0’s legacy is not entirely negative.

Drawing on interviews with serving policy officials, I suggest that Prevent 1.0 is often given as evidence of how Government ‘got

religion wrong' and has contributed to the widespread fear and suspicion of religion as a policy issue. Yet little attention is paid to the ways HMG 'got religion right' under the auspices of the Prevent 1.0 agenda. Seeking to rectify this imbalance, first, I point to the contribution of Prevent 1.0 - and broader counter-terrorism work - in dramatically increasing awareness and understanding of religions' persistence in the contemporary world and of the Islamic tradition in particular. Second, I demonstrate that as a result of Prevent 1.0, the connections between religious groups at home and overseas were recognised and that officials learned the importance of both legitimacy and consistency in religious engagement. Third, I suggest that Prevent 1.0 was almost solely responsible for creating the bureaucratic space within government for understanding and engaging with religious issues and communities, something which risks being squeezed out in the Prevent 2.0 era. Fourth, though not often acknowledged in the literature, I suggest that Prevent 1.0 actually evolved to recognise the multidimensional relationship of religion to policy issues. Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) was not just about religion as a 'threat actor' or motivator of insecurity, but actively engaged religious communities in resisting and rejecting extremism, helped to mobilise Muslim civil society and created the space for discussion and thought about the relationship of religion to public policy. As a result, I argue, Prevent 1.0 is an example of the sort of religious engagement I earlier identified. Not only does the so-called 'securitisation' of religion challenge the myth of public sector 'secularity', Prevent 1.0 both

contributed to and demonstrates the existence of the strongly held cultural values which have an orientating effect on civil servants that I have called ‘religion blindness’. I therefore suggest that while the ‘desecuritisation’ of religion and integration policy, through the publication of Prevent 2.0. has been welcomed, it may also have resulted in the relegation of religion from a priority issue of national security consequence to a marginal local or human rights concern. This trajectory is in stark contrast to the global context in which the role of religion in global dynamics threatens to outpace the government’s ability and capacity.

### **3.31 A new Prevent Strategy**

In June 2011, the Coalition Government published a new ‘Prevent Strategy’<sup>58</sup> which reflected the outcomes of a detailed review undertaken by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism in the Home Office with independent oversight. As explained in the Prevent Strategy (2.0) document, this review was commissioned to consider the effectiveness of Prevent 1.0 by examining the proportionality and focus of Prevent 1.0 policy, the scope and delivery of Prevent 1.0 , the role of institutions and delivery partners, the coordination and evaluation of Prevent 1.0. Significantly, in response to this review, the new strategy, Prevent 2.0 (HMG, 2011a: 2) ‘contains a plan to prevent

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<sup>58</sup> For the full document, see [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf) - accessed 6 November 2013.

radicalisation and stop would-be terrorists from committing mass murder' by emphasising three strands of activity: challenging the ideology of terrorism; preventing people from being drawn into terrorism; and working with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation.

In identifying these three priorities, the document makes clear that its evaluation of previous Prevent 1.0 strategy revealed it to be 'flawed' (HMG, 2011a:2), 'unfocused' (HMG, 2011a: 3) and 'controversial' (HMG, 2011a:3). Indeed, the Home Secretary's foreward explains (HMG, 2011a:1) : 'It confused the delivery of Government policy to promote integration with Government policy to prevent terrorism. It failed to confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face; and in trying to reach those at risk of radicalisation, funding sometimes even reached the very extremist organisations that Prevent should have been confronting'. However, the Coalition Government is not alone in criticising New Labour's delivery of Prevent 1.0. In fact, PVE policy has been under near continuous scrutiny since it was first made public in 2006 with wide-ranging critique broadly falling into three categories.

First, the close relationship between the related policy goals of counter-radicalisation and 'community cohesion' under the New Labour Government gave rise to accusations of the 'securitisation' (Croft, 2012) or 'stigmatisation' (House of Commons,

2010a) of the Muslim community in Britain. The Institute of Race Relations published a report (Kundnani, 2009) which claimed that Prevent 1.0 funding was being used disproportionately within Muslim communities thus ‘constructing the Muslim population as a ‘suspect community’ (Kundnani, 2009: 6). Secondly, though a ‘fresh start’ in 2009 saw Prevent 1.0 policy widened to tackle far-right as well as Islamist extremism (Travis, 2009a), an attempt to overcome the alienation of Britain’s Muslim community, from its inception, the ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ agenda seemed to be counter productive. Accusations that Prevent 1.0 policy encouraged covert ‘spying’<sup>59</sup> within the Muslim community compounded intra-community tensions rather than creating cohesion. Indeed, Birt (2009) suggested that not only were Prevent 1.0 funding arrangements at risk of enabling extremist organisations, they promoted ‘virulent envy’ between different community groups. Thirdly, as then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Dehnam, admitted ‘controversy, criticism and lack of clarity have unnecessarily limited its *effectiveness*’ (Travis, 2009b) and in September 2009 issued new guidance to local authorities which emphasised the need for ‘clear objectives, measurable impacts and comprehensive arrangements for monitoring and evaluation’ (Travis, 2009a). The measurability of Prevent activity has long proved to be difficult as acknowledged in the 2011 review (HMG, 2011a:102) meaning that

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<sup>59</sup> For example, Director of think tank Liberty, Shami Chakrabarti, called Prevent ‘the biggest domestic spying programme targeting the thoughts and beliefs of the innocent in Britain in modern times’ (see Dodd (2009)).



there has rarely been evidence available to counter the accusations and criticisms made.

While I do not seek to challenge these criticisms, and indeed, while I recognise that Prevent 1.0 in its various guises has been manifestly problematic, in what follows, I re-examine the legacy of the first phase of Prevent policy<sup>60</sup>. Drawing on interviews with serving policy officials, I suggest that the volume of criticism levelled at Prevent 1.0 has created an unhelpful climate of fear among officials when it comes to ‘doing religion’, contributing to the culture of ‘religion blindness’ I have earlier described. To challenge this culture of fear and resistance to religious engagement both at home and overseas, something which is critical in the contemporary era, I suggest it is essential to recognise the positive legacy of Prevent in increasing the UK Government’s understanding of, and attentiveness to, religious issues and dynamics. Not only this, I suggest that Prevent can be considered a case study example of the sort of issues raised in section one of this chapter - Prevent 1.0 policy was demonstrably not the product of a ‘secular’ orientation but instead involved a reciprocal relationship between the state and religious forms. Hence, while there clear hallmarks of institutional experience and implicit Christianity in the way Prevent 1.0 policy sought to engage the British Muslim community, so too has

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<sup>60</sup> I use the terms ‘Prevent 1.0’ and ‘Prevent 2.0’ to distinguish between the earlier version of the Prevent Strategy pursued between 2001 and 2011 (and made public in 2006) and the reviewed and refocussed Prevent Strategy of the Coalition Government. Though there are a number of differences between the two ‘versions’ of Prevent, I am primarily concerned with the role given to religion (both as a vehicle for radicalisation and as a means of countering radicalisation) in Prevent 1.0 which has subsequently been revised.

the state been shaped by Prevent 1.0 policy, accommodating an increasing diversity of religious identities and a greater institutional understanding of certain religious forms.

### **3.32 Petrol and matches?**

Given Prevent 1.0 policy faced myriad criticisms, it is clear that a review of both the effectiveness and legitimacy of the strategy was timely. Yet, given the resource<sup>61</sup> which had been committed to this project - and to the wider counter-terrorism agenda - over the years between 2006 and 2011, and given the structures both inside and outside of government established in support of it not to mention the volume of research produced,<sup>62</sup> there are important questions to be asked about the legacy of Prevent 1.0 for those who shaped and delivered it.

When asked about their engagements with ‘religion’ in recent years, the vast majority of the 30 serving policy officials I interviewed identified counter-terrorism policy in general and Prevent 1.0 in particular as the primary driver of their own religious engagement.

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<sup>61</sup> The Taxpayers Alliance ([http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/council\\_spending\\_uncovered\\_ii\\_no\\_5\\_preventing\\_violent\\_extremism\\_grants\\_opg\\_c2sx5hfy8ds1jjnh3nmx3ak](http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/council_spending_uncovered_ii_no_5_preventing_violent_extremism_grants_opg_c2sx5hfy8ds1jjnh3nmx3ak) - accessed 31 May 2015) used Freedom of Information Requests to ascertain that between 2006 and 2009 over £12m was given to local authorities to fund community groups through Prevent projects. A Department of Communities and Local Government report from 2008 (DCLG, 2008b) suggests that around £6 million was granted through the Pathfinder Fund to assist local authorities to tackle violent extremism at a local level. Kundnani 2009:11) quotes a now unavailable DCLG document which reveals that over £61.7 million pounds was given to local authorities for Prevent work by April 2011.

<sup>62</sup> For a good overview of Prevent ownership, delivery, activities and research see Kundnani (2009).

Furthermore, it was clear that public criticism of this policy - and a lack of evidence of its effectiveness - had created a climate of reluctance at best and fear at worst when it comes to 'doing religion'. One official suggested that Prevent 1.0 had comprehensively 'got engagement with religion wrong' reflecting a 'fundamental lack of understanding' (HMG/3 July 2012/a) in the policy community. He went on to describe a generalised fear of the power and personalism of religion in addition to disproportionate political correctness which resulted in overall downplaying of religion. Another pointed to the accusation that Prevent encouraged spying within the Muslim community as evidence that 'we don't do it (religious engagement) well' and resulted in an 'instinctive pulling away' from religion as a policy issue (HMG/4 July 2012/c). The response of policy officials to questions about religious engagement, then, suggested the internalisation of criticism about specific policy initiatives but also a generalised climate of discomfort, and even fear of 'religion' and its relationship to policy goals with one official explaining that 'government and religion go together like petrol and matches' (HMG/4 July 2012/c). All of these comments suggest that fear and avoidance of religion is another significant driver of the 'religion blindness' I have described above which pervades civil service culture.

Yet, this sort of fear is not surprising given the considerable criticism levelled at the policy community for failing to learn lessons from their entanglements with religion in the context of the Northern Ireland

Peace Process (see e.g. Croft, 2012). Croft argues that the protracted nature of the Northern Irish ‘troubles’ was evidence that everything the government did made the problem worse and suggests that adopting the same methods for countering international terrorism reflects a continued pattern of ‘securitizing’ minority identities. However, there were other lessons that policy makers learned from their dealings with terrorism in Northern Ireland. Personal and institutional experiences of dealing with religion-related terrorism in Northern Ireland played a formative role in the response to international ‘Islamist’ terrorism. Many of those I interviewed drew explicit connections between the two contexts (HMG/3 July 2012/a, HMG/4 July 2012/a, HMG/5 July 2012/a, HMG/28 August 2012/d) and there are noticeable parallels between the methods of religious engagement undertaken in Northern Ireland and under the Prevent agenda. The importance of ‘theological credibility’ (HMG/4 July 2012/a) in Northern Ireland which included ‘lobbying for government objectives using Catholic social teaching, with support from Bishops’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a) reflects the promotion of ‘credible voices’ and direct funding of ‘acceptable’ or ‘moderate’ organisations which was a significant part of Prevent 1.0 work.<sup>63</sup> What Northern Ireland contributed to Prevent 1.0, then, was not only a particular way of understanding of the relationship of religion to terrorism but also an implicitly Christian blueprint for tackling the radicalisation process by

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<sup>63</sup> See, for example, HMG (2008b:4) ‘violent extremists distort Islam in an attempt to justify their actions. We will facilitate debate and amplify mainstream voices against them. Government can help credible voices to speak out. It can promote discussion and recognize and support people and organisations who speak authoritatively about Islam.’

engaging (or supporting others to engage) in theological debate. For example, the government looked for representative institutions and speakers of the sort which could be found in the Christian traditions, but were not always available in Muslim communities<sup>64</sup>. The ‘securitisation’ of religion under the auspices of Prevent 1.0 demonstrates what I have earlier argued: far from being ‘secular’, the state has approached religious engagement via implicitly Christian assumptions.

However, officials openly admitted to me that their early engagements with Muslim communities at home and overseas under the auspices of the ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ agenda often looked and felt like ‘floundering around’ (HMG/7 December 2012/a), involving a ‘hand to mouth’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a) approach to identifying ‘friendly’ commentators. Early versions of Prevent 1.0 spearheaded by the Home Office and newly-established Department for Communities and Local Government, frequently accused of encouraging spying and stigmatizing the British Muslim Community (House of Commons, 2010) ‘showed that we don’t do it (religion) well’ and that ‘stepping into it (religion) creates problems which stops engagement’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). One official explained that, faced with the challenge of terrorism apparently motivated by religion, the Government ‘came up with the idea that the way to tackle Al Qaida’s theological and ideological mix was by having a ‘better’ idea about religion’ (HMG/7

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<sup>64</sup> The inauguration of the Muslim Council of Britain in 1997 reflected the sort of religious hierarchy the state was accustomed to dealing with (see Birt, 2005).

December 2012/a) which meant working in other countries and at home to counter radical voices. The same official went on to explain that, in these early days, the ‘policy orthodoxy was that we were not sure if religion was part of the problem, but it was certainly part of the solution’ and that the majority of engagement with the Islamic world and with Muslim communities quickly shifted to a counter-terrorism focus.

Like their critics, then, officials were able to articulate the ways in which they had ‘got religion wrong’ in their approach to counter-radicalisation. The climate of fear created by this public criticism has, I would argue, perpetuated the culture of ‘religion blindness’ across government. Yet in an era where the terrorist threat has diversified to include new actors such as ISIS and its affiliates, and where the relationship of religion to international policy priorities has started to be recognised (for more on this see Chapter 4), I would suggest that it is not only possible but essential to identify a positive legacy for the Prevent 1.0 era. First, as a result of attention paid to them as a result of the counter-terrorism agenda, the policy community dramatically increased their awareness and understanding of religious communities in general and the Muslim community in particular. Second, the identification of grievances as potential ‘causes’ of radicalisation helped policy makers to understand the interconnection between diaspora communities in the UK and their counterparts overseas and challenged the distinction between ‘domestic’ and ‘international’

policy. Third, as a result of the high priority placed on counter-terrorism and national security, significant bureaucratic space across government was given to the consideration and analysis of religious dynamics and to engagement of religious communities and organisations. Fourth, just as the process of developing, implementing and reshaping Prevent policy was helping policy makers to recognise the multidimensionality of religion's relationship to policy goals, so it helped to stimulate the mobilisation of Britain's Muslim community and its engagement with the 'state'. These four factors, I suggest, are significant not only in challenging the overwhelmingly negative perception of Prevent as a 'signature' religion-related policy but perhaps more importantly suggest ways in which religious engagement might be shaped in future. Furthermore, they reveal important lessons for sociologists of religion seeking to understand the relationship between church and state, suggesting that UK public policy, far from secularising, is involved in a reciprocal relationship (Ivanescu, 2010) with religious forms. While the state engages religious forms according to established patterns that draw both from institutional experience and from an implicitly Christian blueprint, at the same time the state itself is able to accommodate an increasing diversity of religious identities.

### 3.33 Learning from their mistakes

Although Prevent was fully and comprehensively reviewed by the Coalition Government in 2011, at which time the heavy emphasis on religious motivations for violent extremism and theological rejections of ‘distorted’ Islamic teachings were removed, in fact, ‘Prevent 1.0’ had been under near-continuous review since its first publication in 2006 and even before then. The first version of ‘Prevent’ appeared publicly in the UK Counter-terrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, which had been in development since 2003 but was finally published by the Home Office in 2006. The CONTEST strategy was - and still is - structured around ‘the four Ps’: Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue. According to the strategy, the ‘Prevent strand’ was concerned with ‘tackling the radicalisation of individuals, both in the UK and elsewhere, which sustains the international terrorist threat’ (HMG, 2006:9) which involved, among other things, ‘engaging in the battle of ideas - challenging the ideologies that extremists believe can justify the use of violence, primarily *by helping Muslims who wish to dispute these ideas to do so*’ (HMG 2006:1 - my italics). This objective was rooted in the conventional wisdom of the time about the process of radicalisation, which is described in the document (HMG 2006:10) as a ‘two stage process’: ‘an alienated individual who has become highly radicalised is not necessarily a terrorist. Only a tiny minority of radicalised individuals actually cross over to become terrorists: by financing, lending facilities to, or encouraging active terrorists, or by



actively participating in terrorist attacks'. It goes on to describe a range of potential factors which might contribute to this process including globalisation, anti-Westernism, specific events and generalised grievances (for example about Western foreign policy), alienation or disadvantage and finally 'radical ideas' though it avoids identifying any single explanation as a direct cause of radicalisation. Tackling this complex process of radicalisation, according to the document, requires addressing 'structural problems in the UK and elsewhere' (HMG, 2006:11), improving opportunities for the Muslim community and increasing 'community cohesion', deterrence of individuals through legislation and 'acting on unacceptable behaviours' (HMG, 2006:12) and, most significantly for the purposes of this thesis, engaging in 'the battle of ideas'.

While the rudiments of this 'Prevent' approach continued to be in evidence until the 2011 Prevent Review radically separated 'community cohesion and integration' work from counter-terrorism, it is nevertheless important to recognise the extent to which Prevent 1.0 - as a signature form of religious engagement by public policy makers - continued to be a 'work in progress' throughout its first decade.

Though it had been made public alongside the rest of the counter-terrorism strategy in 2006, a revised version of Prevent 1.0 appeared as early as 2007 with a Department for Communities and Local Government document 'Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds' outlining the role of 'strong' and 'confident'

communities in resisting extremism, and emphasising four community-based approaches to countering radicalisation: promoting 'shared values', supporting local solutions, building civic capacity and leadership, and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders' (DCLG, 2007:5).

When the entire counter-terrorism strategy was reviewed and republished in 2009 (as CONTEST 2) it continued to emphasise the importance of 'understanding what leads people to become radicalised, so we can stop the process' as then Prime Minister Gordon Brown explained (Brown, 2009). 'CONTEST 2' re-stated the Government's commitment to the '4 Ps', but reflected a number of subtle differences. Significantly, as the document's introduction outlined, the Strategy had been revised 'to take account of the evolution of the threat and of our understanding of the factors which are driving it. The strategy also reflects the lessons we have learned and the increasing resources we have made available for counter-terrorism' (HMG, 2009a:8). CONTEST 2, then, was the result of a process of evolution in the understanding of terrorism and its sources in which the religion-related elements of international terrorism continued to be judged as significant: 'The violent extremist ideology associated with Al Qa'ida, which regards most Governments in Muslim countries as 'un-Islamic' or apostate; claims that these governments are sustained by western states who are engaged in a global attack on Islam; and considers violent action to be a religious

duty incumbent upon all Muslims' (HMG, 2009a:11). As a result, the 'Prevent' plank of the strategy - with the defined objective 'to stop people becoming terrorists or *supporting violent extremism*' (HMG, 2009a:13 - my italics<sup>65</sup>) - continued to involve Her Majesty's Government in both theological and practical engagements with the Muslim community.

Despite this important continuity, the extent to which Prevent 1.0 was developed and evolved can be - and has been - understated. Officials explained to me a steep learning curve during the years immediately following 9/11 when there was little internal expertise on the Islamic community in particular and religion in general (HMG/4 July 2012/b, HMG/7 December 2012/a, HMG/4 July 2012/c, HMG/5 July 2012/b). The response, suggested one official, was 'what the hell?', followed quickly by 'should we engage with religion and then how?' (HMG/4 July 2012/c). Gutkowski (2012:92) has described this era as one in which 'In the absence of a detailed understanding of Islam.... senior policy makers and officers filled the gaps about what Islam might be like with secular as well as loosely, denominationally neutral Christian notions....created a new knowledge category: 'Islam'', using this to delineate between 'moderate' and 'radical' adherents. While there is some truth in this portrait of the security community, particularly in the characterisation of religious expertise across government as

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<sup>65</sup> I have italicised the part of 'Prevent' that was dropped after the 2011 Review, after which time Prevent has sought only to 'stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism'.

‘minimal to nil’ (Gutkowski, 2012:97 quoting CLG official), officials were keen to point out to me that the policy community was not alone in this. One senior official described that ‘looking externally for material was a problem....at the time, most books available tended to focus on sociological, economic and political explanations of terrorism (HMG/3 July 2012/a) and explained that both inside and outside of Government ‘very few people felt comfortable talking about it as a religious issue’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a). Without a substantial evidence base and in a climate of considerable pressure to act, both internally and from international allies like the United States, early approaches to ‘preventing violent extremism’ in fact absented religion as a significant component.

By 2006, however, and most significantly after the London bombings in July 2005 had brought the threat of international terrorism to home soil, officials had ‘developed the recognition that part of the motivation was extremism ideology based on radical interpretations of Islam’ (HMG/4 July 2012/b) and Ministers encouraged a ‘values based’ approach to countering extremism. Whatever the drawbacks of this new approach, it undoubtedly had two significant implications for the way the UK Government ‘did’ religion. There had emerged by this time a number of ‘specialists’ (HMG/4 July 2012/b) in community-facing domestic and international departments who had started to focus their attention on understanding the Muslim community. Perhaps more significantly, a number of officials involved in the

development and delivery of counter-terrorism policy were being offered training to increase their knowledge of Islam. One official remembered being ‘given a crash course in schools of thought’ as a result of which he learned about the heterogeneity of the Muslim community (HMG/5 July 2012/b), and another recalled that ‘a lot of money was spent on getting people to teach us about Islam’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). The establishment of the cross-departmental Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) in 2007 was not only intended to improve counter-terrorist communications but also to develop a ‘comprehensive understanding of intended audiences including their attitudes, ages, locations, influences and media consumption.’ (HMG, 2009a:154) by bringing together ‘specialists in audience insight and communications; marketing; digital media; anthropology; research methodology and knowledge management; and pan-Arab media’ (HMG 2009a:154). This internal research and communications capacity helped to provide an evidence-base and delivery mechanisms for Prevent activity and was supported by wider Government funding of related external research activity.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the 2011 Prevent Review itself quotes a number of pieces of research

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<sup>66</sup> This included large-scale research programmes such as the AHRC’s £6m ‘Diasporas, migration and identities’ programme (2005-2011) which explored the ‘social and cultural processes involving the movement of people, ideas and things’ (see Directors Report, p.8 [http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/assets/Final\\_report\\_Diasporas\\_Migration\\_Identities.pdf](http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/assets/Final_report_Diasporas_Migration_Identities.pdf) - accessed 14 November 2013) and AHRC/ESRC’s £12m ‘Religion and Society’ programme which, between 2001 and 2013, funded 75 separate research projects on the interrelationship between religion and society, including the development of the ‘radicalisation research’ project (<http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/> - accessed 14 November 2013) and smaller-scale consultancy work such as the commissioning of a literature review of the ‘Roots, practices and consequences of terrorism’ by the Home Office in 2006 (see [http://www.academia.edu/659695/The\\_roots\\_practices\\_and\\_consequences\\_of\\_terrorism\\_A\\_literature\\_review\\_of\\_research\\_in\\_the\\_arts\\_and\\_humanities](http://www.academia.edu/659695/The_roots_practices_and_consequences_of_terrorism_A_literature_review_of_research_in_the_arts_and_humanities) - accessed November 14 2013).

commissioned by policy makers under previous iterations of the strategy<sup>67</sup>, demonstrating the extent to which this knowledge-base is a direct legacy of Prevent 1.0. All of this suggests that, in the process of continuously evolving counter-radicalisation policy, there developed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of - and relationship with - the Muslim community. The so-called 'securitisation' of religion, then, rather than revealing secularising tendencies, in fact had a profound impact on shaping Her Majesty's Government, suggesting a reciprocal relationship between the state and religious forms of the sort Ivanescu (2010) describes in the Netherlands.

### **3.34 Home and Away**

While the diplomatic service has a long history of engaging with religious communities and dynamics in an overwhelmingly religious world (HMG/28 August 2012/a, HMG/ 13 December 2012/a), recognition of the interconnection between domestic and international Muslim communities required domestic Government departments to better understand the significance of religion at home. As the 2007 Prevent 'Action Plan' published by the Department For Communities and Local Government explains, Government was involved in 'extensive debate and discussion with many in British Muslim communities' (DCLG, 2007:5) and engaged a wide range of

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<sup>67</sup> For example, the 'select bibliography' names no fewer than 46 'open source' publications, of which 36 were produced during the years between 2001 and 2010 (the 'Prevent 1.0' era).

government departments (including the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, the Home Office and the police, the Charity Commission and the Prison Service).

Although academics continue to identify the lack of religious literacy in the policy community (Dinham et al, 2009), nevertheless it is clear that the high priority placed on Prevent in particular and counter-terrorism in general, and the vast resources committed to its delivery, at least began the conversation about the strategic significance of religion within the policy community. Although audience research demonstrated that Prevent was ‘increasingly contentious and we had started to get evidence that it was alienating’ local Muslim communities (HMG/5 July 2012/b), policy makers nevertheless started to develop awareness of the relationship between transnational terrorism, globalisation and the transmission of religion: of the ‘small villages and streets in Pakistan and Bangladesh and how they translated to communities here’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b). The first CONTEST strategy, published a year after the London bombings undertaken by British-born terrorists, underlined that the threat ‘has both domestic and international dimensions’ (HMG, 2006:3). By 2009, the Government was increasingly able to articulate the connections between ‘home and away’, acknowledging the exploitation of both ‘real and perceived grievances’ (HMG 2009a:13) in the radicalisation process, identifying the borderless internet as a significant vehicle for radicalisation and funding a range of international counter-ideology projects (HMG, 2009a:14).

Not only was increased understanding of the ‘transnational’ nature of religion - transmitted within and between diaspora communities at home and overseas - shaping counter-radicalisation policy, it required increased transparency and coordination within central Government.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the perceived success of the cross-government counter-terrorism strategy and structures were likely to have had a direct impact on the development of subsequent over-arching National Security Strategies which emphasised the ‘diverse and interconnected set of threats and risks, which affect the United Kingdom’ (HMG, 2008a:3) and the need to ‘maintain a set of capabilities, at home and overseas, to deal with those threats and risks and underlying drivers’ (HMG, 2008a:4) While critics (e.g. Croft, 2012 ) challenge the ‘securitisation’ of religion for creating problematic relationships between the Government and religious communities, as a signature religion-related policy, Prevent demonstrated that ‘securitisation’ pushes religious engagement up the policy agenda. This, it seems, is one way to overcome cultural ‘religion blindness’ as one official explained with reference to his work on counter-terrorism: ‘I have only dealt with religion where it is non-discretionary’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c ). The ‘securitisation’ of religion, while manifestly problematic

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<sup>68</sup> As the first CONTEST document explains, the counter-terrorism effort brought together ‘all parts of Government acting together and taking a joined-up approach to dealing with the complex and wide-ranging threat’. It also required the development of partnerships ‘led by the Government, and our citizens and communities. *Public awareness of the threat*, understanding of the measures needed to combat it, and active support and cooperation with the police are critical to the success of the strategy.’ (HMG, 2006: 3 - my italics)



in many ways, also resulted in a quickly increased understanding of and engagement with Muslim communities in the UK.

### **3.35 Bureaucratic Space**

This improved understanding of religious communities at home and their connection to instability overseas, developed under the auspices of Prevent 1.0, informed wide-ranging policy initiatives. While the explicit focus on religion in the context of security left the Government open to criticism, it was not only supported by an increasing literature on religion and insecurity<sup>69</sup> but was also critical in enabling the opening up of bureaucratic space for discussion of, and engagement with, religion. It was as a direct result of Prevent 1.0 that a wide range of departments were required to develop awareness of religious communities, beliefs and practices as one senior official explained ‘the development of a preventative strategy forced HMG to engage with religious issues’ (HMG/4 July 2012/b). A number of officials suggested to me that Prevent 1.0 played a significant role in teaching central government about the global and national significance of religion. In the beginning, suggested one, it was ‘surprising how little they (local authorities) knew about their Muslim communities’ – often they ‘had no idea about where or who communities were’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b). Another suggested that ‘if we’d had a better part of government that understood religion, we might have

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<sup>69</sup> See Lindsay (2014a) for a discussion of political science literature and the religion-security nexus.

been better placed' (HMG/3 July 2012/a), and yet another recalled the process of consultation with 'experts' on religion as a steep learning curve: 'if we'd have been faced with a problem of plumbing or economics, we'd have sat back....been a more intelligent customer' (HMG/4 July 2012/c).

On the one hand, as a result of the 2011 Review, 'the fact that Muslim faith is connected is deemphasised now... breaks down links to beat Prevent with' (HMG/10 May 2012/b). Yet the distinction of 'integration' and civil society development from security has meant decreased capacity for religious engagement, particularly in domestic departments. While the diplomatic service routinely engages religion in the international context (HMG/28 August 2012/a, HMG/ 13 December 2012/a), it remains the case that the 'Government institutionally struggles to deal with domestic religion' (HMG/7 December 2012/a). While most officials I spoke to were aware of global religious trends and dynamics and recognised that 'although religion may not be a fundamental motivation in Western Europe, it is an important and possibly increasingly important factor elsewhere' (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a), there remains a lack of central government structure for religious engagement and while there is 'much increased capability in understanding Islam' (HMG/7 December 2012/a), those engaged in religion-related policy remain isolated and under-resourced (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a, HMG/27 July 2012/a).

### **3.36 Mobilisation of the Muslim community**

While the system has ‘learned the lesson’ that engagement of people in communities might not be ‘best done by faith’ and has started to recognise that the implicitly Christian assumptions manifest in the identification of representatives and institutions ‘like us’ (HMG/7 December 2012/a) is problematic, there have been positive implications of Prevent 1.0 beyond central Government. Critiques of Prevent, as discussed above, have often focussed upon its stigmatisation of the Muslim community but this often belies both the heterogeneity of the community and the ways in which it has evolved in direct response to policy makers’ attention. Perhaps the most obvious example of this sort of ‘mobilisation’ is in the relatively recent evolution of the role of the ‘religious’ or ‘Islamic’ adviser to central government departments and agencies.

Although there is no data on the number of such advisers across government, anecdotal evidence would suggest that this role came to particular prominence as a result of the Prevent 1.0 agenda, when counter-radicalisation became a priority not only for community engagement, but also in conflict situations, in schools, on university campuses and within the prison population (HMG/7 December 2012/

a, HMG/5 July 2012/b, HMG/4 October 2013/a)<sup>70</sup>. One official explained to me that ‘there were more Muslims working on Prevent than I’ve ever worked with’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b), including a range of faith advisors drawn from different career backgrounds such as former local councillors, community experts and equalities and human rights advocates who would suggest the significance of religious dynamics, for example, in relation to poverty statistics: ‘I would argue its a class thing. He would say it was about being Muslim’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b).

A related, though quite different role, emerged in the form of the development of a multi-faith chaplaincy corps in the military and prisons<sup>71</sup>, which was ostensibly the result of equalities policy (see e.g. Beckford, 2012) and a pragmatic response to the diversity of the armed forces and prison populations. However, the urgency with which this multi-faith chaplaincy corps was mobilised and professionalised was likely influenced by the priority given to counter-terrorism and the Prevent 1.0 agenda as one former chaplain suggested: ‘without it (Prevent), would there be 200 Muslim chaplains in the Prison Service? Probably not’ (HMG/4 October 2013/a). Indeed, just as the Government opened itself up to greater diversity, so it helped to shape an increasingly visible Islamic civil society. This

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<sup>70</sup> For more information on these specific policies, see for example the Preventing Violent Extremism Action Plan <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocumentsFile.aspx?recordId=133&file=PDFversion> - accessed November 15 2013

<sup>71</sup> For detailed discussion of the role of chaplains, see Beckford and Gillat (2005) and Todd (2013).

observation is not a new one (see e.g. Herbert, 2003; Cesari and McLoughlin, 2005), nor was the mobilisation of the Muslim community solely the result of Prevent (see e.g. D'Costa, 1990), but overwhelmingly, Prevent has been perceived negatively.

The idea that 'government interest in Prevent reorganised communities around religion' (HMG/7 December 2012/a) is a common perception, yet little attention has been given in the literature to the very institutions and individuals engaged with and funded as a result of Prevent 1.0 policy. Advisers I spoke to, though critical of the way in which Prevent 1.0 had alienated Muslim communities, were also able to identify ways in which it had enabled and encouraged debate within and between communities and, even, challenged Muslim scholars and communities by offering new avenues and contexts for reflection and practice (HMG/4 October 2013/a). It also helped to develop the sort of 'policy literacy' within the Muslim community which I identified as critical in Chapter One, enabling representatives to explain Islamic perspectives 'in terms government understood' (HMG/5 July 2012/b). Furthermore, increased engagement with Government from the Muslim community challenged policy makers to recognise the multidimensionality of religion and broke down dominant perspectives. During interviews, officials offered what might be surprisingly sophisticated perspectives on 'religion', with one explaining that 'government really doesn't care about theology except where it has ideological overtones..... where it

affects public policy' (HMG/4 July 2012/c). There are, then, a number of positive legacies of Prevent 1.0 which have rarely been acknowledged. At the same time, there are a number of lessons from Prevent 1.0 which are of significance not only to policy makers but to scholars with an interest in church-state relations: not only does a review of Prevent 1.0 expose the implicitly Christian assumptions by which the UK state approaches religious actors, it further challenges accusations of public sector secularism by revealing that religious groups being 'engaged' themselves become implicated in shaping the state's management of religion.

### **3.4 The 'baby and the bathwater'**

Though this re-examination of Prevent 1.0 and its legacy, I have sought to suggest that, while counter-radicalisation policy pursued by the New Labour government was manifestly problematic, and while the recent review has helped change the public perception of Prevent as 'securitising' the Muslim community, there were a number of positive outcomes of Prevent 1.0 - particularly for the way religion was understood and engaged with by the policy community - which have hitherto been overlooked. First, as a direct result of the counter-terrorism agenda, there has been a dramatic increase in the policy community's understanding and awareness of religious communities in general and the Muslim community in particular. Secondly, a more sophisticated understanding of the radicalisation process challenged

the formerly held distinction between ‘domestic’ and ‘international’ policy. Third, because of the high priority placed on counter-terrorism, bureaucratic space was opened up to consider religious dynamics and to engage religious communities and organisations. Fourth, Prevent 1.0 policy helped to shape the mobilisation of Britain’s Muslim community and its engagement with Her Majesty’s Government. But there are broader lessons, too, that we learn if we consider Prevent 1.0 as a blueprint for the way HMG ‘manages God’. Significantly, it is apparent that Prevent 1.0 policy was demonstrably not the product of a ‘secular’ orientation within central government - policy makers frequently not only engaged with religious actors but engaged in theological debate to expose ‘distortions’ of Islam. In fact, it might be more helpful to describe the relationship between religion and state evidenced in Prevent 1.0 policy as ‘reciprocal’. While the approach of Her Majesty’s Government to the Muslim community bore the hallmarks of institutional experience and implicit Christianity, at the same time, the Muslim community helped to shape the state which now accommodates an increasing diversity of religious identities and exhibits greater institutional understanding of certain religious forms.

In the current era where governments of other countries are increasing their religious engagement apparatus,<sup>72</sup> it is important to recognise that although ‘the situation is much better than even 10-15 years ago...

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<sup>72</sup> For example, the US State Department established an Office for Religion and Global Affairs in 2013 while in the same year, the Canadian Government opened its Office of Religious Freedom in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

knowledge and understanding of religious perspectives is still piecemeal' (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a). In these circumstances, the fact that the policy community has extensively encountered religion under the auspices of counter-radicalisation should be recognised as an advantage rather than a drawback. While, as one official explained, experience has determined that 'religion has evolved to have far less of a role than before in counter-terrorism' (HMG/7 December 2012/a), policy makers must avoid throwing the metaphorical 'baby out with the bathwater'. It may be that too much religious engagement was done in the name of counter-terrorism, but it remains the case that not enough is done overall.

In this Chapter, I have suggested that the British policy context is demonstrably not secular. First, while it has repeatedly been relocated, public policy engagement with religion has been in evidence at least since the Millennium. Furthermore, a more positive construal of the relationship between religion and policy was conceived by the Coalition Government. Secondly, I suggested that policy making should not be described as secular but rather as evidence of a 'religion blind' culture in which policy makers' commitment to impartiality, as well as fear of 'getting religion wrong', causes them to avoid engaging with religious actors and dynamics where such engagement is perceived as 'discretionary'. Finally, I gave an account of one area where religious engagement was described as 'non-discretionary', demonstrating that there are important lessons to be learned from



historic approaches to preventing violent extremism. Far from secular, then, the UK Government is extensively involved in both the mobilisation of religious communities in the UK and in ‘managing God’ in ways which are consistent with our Christian heritage and constitution, equalities legislation and the ‘impartiality’ required of civil servants. While this chapter has focused on the relationship of domestic policy to religion, in Chapter Four I explore some potential new avenues for religion-related policy in the international context and consider the extent to which they support sociological theories about the globalisation, the resurgence of religion and the emergence of the ‘post-secular’.

## **Chapter Four: The Casualty of Globalisation? Religion and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy (or How are UK Foreign Policy Makers Managing God?)**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Three, I considered current UK public policy on religion in the light of contemporary sociological narratives and argued that the accusation of public policy's 'secularism' is misplaced, given the vast array of religion-related policy that has been in evidence since the Millennium and even before. Highlighting a range of examples of religion-related domestic policy, I argued, a common pattern emerges. Far from being secular, the UK Government is extensively involved in both the mobilisation of religious communities in the UK and in 'managing God' in ways which are consistent with our Christian heritage and constitution, equalities legislation and the cultural values implicit in the Civil Service Code.

In this Chapter, I turn to the foreign policy context. Here, I note, different sociological narratives are in evidence – narratives that focus on the characteristics of globalisation including the waning of the nation-state and the logic of 'post-secularism'. According to

Christopher Hill (2003), the changes wrought by globalisation have relegated foreign policy to nothing more than a historical practice. In the era of international relations, neo-realism has emerged as the model by which theorists understand agency in the international arena. According to this model, the international system has its own logic with the agency of nation-states diminished; new transnational and even global actors (Petito and Hatzopoulos, 2004) emerge.

Contemporary narratives of religion, I argue, have contributed to this characterisation, presenting international relations theorists with a paradigm 'transnational' or 'non-state actor' (Haynes, 2007), and are thus implicated in the marginalisation of 'foreign policy' within international relations scholarship. Yet, I go on to demonstrate that my own research into British religion-related foreign policy reveals that understanding religion-related international policy requires us to re-engage with the sort of foreign policy analysis advocated by Hill.

Starting with an exploration of international religious freedom, I demonstrate that - while it responds to global circumstances - it is significantly shaped by the domestic constitutional context. Using this as a starting point, I go on to consider a number of recent religion-related international policy initiatives, demonstrating that they too draw from, and are shaped by, the domestic context. These examples, I argue, demonstrate that it is necessary to recognise the domestic sources of foreign policy and to understand the cultural and structural patterns that shape the agency of the nation-state.

## 4.2 Why religion has been bad for foreign policy

Christopher Hill has suggested that foreign policy has been neglected by international relations theorists who wrongly consider it to be a historical practice no longer relevant in the era of globalisation. At the same time, religion is being 'brought into' (Fox and Sandler, 2004) the discourse of international relations theory after decades of marginalisation. In this section, I suggest that these two movements might be related. First, I explore the relationship between globalisation and international relations demonstrating that the literature overwhelmingly recognises globalisation as a challenge to the nation-state at economic, democratic and territorial levels. Next I consider the characterisation of religion in international relations literature. Religious actors, I argue, have fitted neatly into the frameworks of international relations scholarship as 'non-state', 'transnational' actors, or contributors to what Thomas has called 'world civil society' (Thomas, 2001:50). It is exactly the proliferation of these actors - and their perpetuation of neorealist international relations models which emphasise systemic and structural influences rather than domestic strategies or motivations – which Hill has argued have undermined foreign policy, reducing it to a dwindling number of diplomatic issues (Hill, 2003: 3). Religion, it seems, is implicated in the marginalisation of foreign policy within international relations. Yet, I argue, sociological accounts of globalisation - and specifically

Robertson's account of the relationship between religion and globalisation - complicates the issue. Religion is both a response to and contributes to the forces of globalisation in ways which cut across and serve to undermine the autonomy of the national society. This, I argue, serves as a basis for contributing constructively to the sort of foreign policy analysis Hill advocates and opens the doors for my own analysis of the domestic sources of UK foreign policy.

#### **4.21 Globalisation and international relations**

Globalisation is a complex phenomenon and it is beyond the scope of this section to explore its full premises. However, for the purposes of this chapter, it is worth making some exploratory comments about the relationship between globalisation and both international relations and religion. First, globalisation has fundamentally challenged international relations as a discipline, it 'defies traditional conceptions of levels of analysis in political science and international relations' (Cerny, 1996: 620). Described as 'vague' and 'wooly' (Strange, 1996: xii-xiii), Scholte (2005:81) has suggested that 'there can be, and are, many globalisations.' Nevertheless the idea of 'globalisation' remains central to accounts of global change in the late twentieth and early twenty first century, such that literature concerning the subject abounds. It is described at once as promoting 'societal convergence built around common recognition of the benefits of markets and liberal democracy' (Hurrell and Woods, 1995:449 and at

the same time as what Marshall (1996:195) has called ‘perpetually restructuring capitalism’ which is both exploitative and which perpetuates existing global and national inequalities. There is further debate about the extent to which globalisation is an autonomous force or whether it is something which is ‘contingent upon political dynamics and frameworks’ (Clark, 1998:484). Finally, there is debate about whether globalisation is characterised as change (Scholte, 1997:430), or whether it is regarded as continuity (Marshall, 1996). In each account, suggests Clark, there seems to be some agreement that ‘At the very least, degrees of internationalisation and interdependence may have been causally related to the advance of globalisation’ (Clark, 1998:484.)

#### **4.22 Globalisation and the nation state**

One common theme of globalisation discourse (Therborn, 2000) is that which points to globalisation as having an inverse relationship to state potency. That is to say, as Timson (undated:2) has suggested, globalisation ‘may broadly describe the nation-state becoming de-prioritised as the central unit of importance in studying world politics in favour of focussing on a global level of processes instead.’ While there is debate about the extent to which globalisation is a recent phenomenon (Wallerstein, 2000), it seems that the rise of neoliberalism in the post-cold war era and the consequent proliferation

of international institutions and intergovernmental organisations, has had a number of implications for the nation state.

The rise of globalisation as a paradigm for understanding the world has emerged in a context where, as Cerny (1996: 617) suggests, ‘the Westphalian or realist understanding which posits a priori that the key actors in international relations are states... is being challenged..’

While there is debate between those who argue that globalizastion has reduced and even diminished the potency of the state and those who suggest that the decline of the state has been overstated (see e.g Clark, 1998), importantly as Timson (undated: 2) acknowledges, globalisation usually refers to forces not working against the nation state but forces which transcend it.

Predominantly, globalisation is described as an economic process - the so-called ‘strong globalisation thesis’ (Hirst et al, 2009:16). According to this perspective, external economic forces place demands on domestic governments which compromises state autonomy (Held and McGrew, 2007: 25). While Cerny (1996:627) rejects the idea that globalisation has created a single ‘playing field’ upon which economic activity happens, he nevertheless admits that the multiple playing fields which do exist ‘are no longer co-terminous with the traditional convergence between Second Industrial Revolution production structures, on the one hand, and the Weberian bureaucratic state on the other...’. Increasingly, then, the state’s role is to enforce decisions

which emerge in circles beyond its structures at transnational and global levels, suggesting a reduction in its potency as a force in international affairs. The irony of this situation, suggests Cerny (1996: 634-5) is that given the process by which former welfare states have pursued a policy of 'increased marketisation', the state itself has been an agent in the process of globalisation yet 'as states have attempted to promote competitiveness in this way, they have - seemingly voluntarily - given up a range of crucial policy instruments...states are seeing their political capacity and political autonomy eroding in a way which cannot be recuperated.'

Furthermore, in the circumstances of globalisation, it has been suggested that the sustainability of territorially based democratic institutions comes into question (Clark, 1998: 480). State regulation is often rendered powerless in the face of transnational corporations and international non-governmental organisations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund which 'are frequently seen as interfering with the sovereignty and autonomy of states and promoting a global corporate agenda' (Goodhart, 2001: 527). Furthermore, the increasing interconnectedness of the world due to communication and transport has made borders porous and created the circumstances for the emergence of the 'transnational' actor in global politics. The state's role as 'economic and political gatekeeper' (Bisley 2007: 62) is rendered increasingly problematic in these circumstances. Indeed, while economic globalisation has been at the forefront of the



discourse, in reality globalisation has thrown up in the air traditional political scientific conceptions of order such that there is now questioning of the 'idea of a national economy (within IPE), of the viability of the state as provider of security (within security studies), of the moral identity of the state (within normative IR theory) and of the sustainability of democratic institutions on a territorial state basis (within political theory)' Clark, 1998:480.

#### **4.23 Religion as a transnational non-state actor**

Allied to the dramatic decentring of the nation-state in international relations theory has been the emergence and rise of the so-called 'non-state' actor (see e.g. Reinalda, 2013). After the Cold War, the 'cosmopolitan worldview' challenged the state-centrism of international relations further as individuals rather than states became the principal analytical unit (Bretherton, 1996). Independent of state control, the 'non-state actor' shifted the premises on which international activity took place and reshaped the way international political outcomes were reached - significantly the number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) grew from 2000 in 1972 to more than 5000 in 1992 (Haynes, 2001: 145). While domestic 'civil society' was territorially limited, the emergence of what Lipschutz (1992) has called 'global civil society' typically features the movements of transnational non-state actors cutting across the activity of national societies. Importantly, as Attina (1989)

suggests, this 'international social layer claims primacy over the diplomatic layer'. It would appear, then, that the emergence of transnational actors as a specific component of the movements of globalisation has implications for the nation state.

It is highly significant, then, that the category 'religion' has largely been brought into international relations scholarship in precisely this role. While, as Haynes (2001:146) acknowledges, 'theoretical literature on transnationalism has devoted little concentrated attention to religious phenomena',<sup>73</sup> nevertheless in the body of literature which is dedicated to the nexus between religion and international relations (see e.g. Fox and Sandler, 2004, Thomas, 2005) it is widely acknowledged that 'it is by recognizing religious groups or organisations as one of the types of non-state actors that religion has frequently been brought back into the theory of international relations' (Thomas, 2005: 98). As Thomas elaborates, there are many problems associated with using the terminology 'non-state' and 'transnational' to describe religious actors - not least because it often perpetuates a particular Western conception of 'religion'. However, religion conceived as a system of ideas fits neatly with the 'transnational' paradigm alongside major ideologies like feminism or Marxism. As such, religion takes its place alongside others in global public space 'a densely packed, cross-cutting arena of key individuals,

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<sup>73</sup> Though it should be acknowledged that the Roman Catholic Church was recognized as a non-state actor at an early stage in the debate - see for example Vallier (1971).

states, and non-state actors that form various types of transnational solidarities and transnational communities as part of a global or transnational civil society' (Thomas, 2005:108). It is in this way, I argue, religion has played its own role in the marginalisation of the nation-state in international relations.

Haynes (2001) has undertaken to empirically determine the impact of transnational religious communities on state sovereignty by considering the cases of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland during the 1980s and in African democratisation. He claims that neither case represents the Church seeking to undermine state sovereignty but, instead, both contexts should be interpreted as reflecting the dual processes of globalisation and nationalisation. The Catholic Church faced tensions between its own claim to universality and the distinctly national peculiarities of each situation. Haynes characterises the Church's increasing political engagements over legitimate forms of authority as reflecting at once, the globalisation of the Catholic Church and at the same time, its nationalisation in particular contexts, and rejects the claim in either case that transnational religion undercut state sovereignty. Nevertheless, Haynes acknowledges 'national churches ceased viewing themselves as 'integrative community cults' of the nation-state, and instead adopted new transnational global identities permitting them to confront the state' (Haynes, 2001: 151). Furthermore, not only has religion – conceived of as a 'transnational' and 'non-state' phenomenon – contributed to the narratives of

globalisation, it has itself benefitted from other drivers of

globalisation:

Global networks of religious activists exist who communicate with each other, feed off each other's ideas, collectively develop religious ideologies with political significance, perhaps aid each other with funds, and, in effect, form transnational groups whose main intellectual referent derives from religious dogma which is of much greater relevance to them than the traditional ideological mobilisers, such as nationalism, communism, fascism or liberal democracy....Over the last few decades, interpersonal communications have been greatly facilitated by the mass use of the telegraph, telephone, personal computer, email, and fax machine. This communications revolution helped stimulate a globalisation of ideas which governments could not control... (Haynes, 2001: 157).

While both Haynes and Thomas point to wider and more sophisticated analysis of the relationship between 'transnational' religion and the state, for the sake of this chapter, it is sufficient to recognise that the rise of the 'non-state' actor has challenged the state-centricism of international relations theory and that religion - conceived of as a transnational non-state actor - has played its part in this. But the changes wrought by globalisation - originating in neoliberal economic programmes - are not the only challenge presented to traditional political scientific models.

#### **4.24 The end of the state and the marginalisation of foreign policy**

According to Christopher Hill (2003), the art of foreign policy has been neglected by international relations theorists who consider it to be a historical practice no longer relevant in an era of globalisation. In

this context, he suggests, foreign policy has been reduced to a dwindling number of 'diplomatic' issues and agency is found either in international structures (markets, power balances) or in actors other than the state. International relations theory has favoured models of realism - the assumption that states pursued clear interests in a rational fashion - and more recently neo- realism which holds that the international system reflected a balance of power with its own logic of anarchy (Waltz, 1979). As a result, in the late twentieth century, foreign policy itself was rarely discussed or analysed as it was assumed that patterns of power in the system determine events.

For Hill, a combination of factors have impacted on the way we understand foreign policy. These factors include: the end of the Cold War - the death of a set of ideas as well as a transnational ideology; globalisation - often considered to have rendered foreign policy redundant in the face of global markets and 'global civil society'; and the era of humanitarian intervention which, through international human rights norms, enables ethical challenges to sovereignty. However, he argues, this combination of factors should not be interpreted as making foreign policy redundant. Rather, foreign policy is newly implicated in a range of concerns which mean it can no longer be isolated from the rest of government as 'states need some form of external strategy, and machinery, for managing their external environment' (Hill, 2003:14).

Advocating 'foreign policy analysis' (Frankel, 1963), Hill (2003: xix) argues that international activity is not merely a series of processes but is a system of action in which 'actors constantly redefine themselves through interaction with others'. By contrast with realist and liberalist international relations models, foreign policy analysis recognises the interconnection between domestic and external sources of behaviour. Foreign policy analysis, then, can provide a common language for understanding foreign policy which, in practice, falls between a number of different academic disciplines: 'foreign policy needs liberating from the narrow and over-simplified views that are often held of it, and IR as a subject needs to move forward in reconstructing its notions of agency after the waves of attack on realism in recent decades..' (Hill, 2003:2) Hence, rather than defining foreign policy as international relations models have frequently done as limited to marginal 'diplomatic' issues, where agency is found beyond the state in the market or systemic power balances, Hill (2003:3) provides a new definition of foreign policy as 'the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations'. The blurring of the boundaries between domestic and international issues - now widely recognised in international relations theory - makes foreign policy more rather than less significant, given foreign policy is not just action or an expression of power, but is action in pursuit of objectives. Therefore 'foreign policy must always be seen as a way of trying to hold together or make sense of the various activities which the state or even wider

community is engaged in internationally. In that sense, it is one way in which a society defines itself, against the backcloth of the outside world' (Hill, 2003:5).

### **4.3 The domestic sources of foreign policy**

Elsewhere Aron (1966: 17), prefiguring Hill's approach, has described the relationship between domestic and external factors thus: 'foreign policy becomes crucial both as an expression of statehood, and as a means of brokering what is now a simultaneous stream of internal and external demands upon government'. Rather than merely being a response to systemic pressures, as neo-realist international relations theorists would have it, external activity is as much an expression of domestic concerns, hence foreign policy's role is 'is to mediate the impact of the external and the domestic and to find ways of projecting a particular set of concerns in a very intractable world' (Hill, 2003: 31). While the categories 'domestic' and 'international' are useful in describing institutions and the allocation of resources, Hill argues that they exist on a continuum and that 'foreign policy can never be abstracted from the domestic context out of which it springs' (Hill, 2003: 37).

In light of the shifts wrought by globalisation, it has become impossible to deny the interconnectedness of 'home' and 'away'. As Wendt (1999:2) argues 'foreign policy behaviour is often determined

primarily by domestic politics'. So too Hill argues that even realists can no longer suggest that international dynamics alone determine outcomes. Quite contrary to the theories of nation state decline which have emerged as a result of globalisation, a number of models have emerged which speak to the continued importance of the nation state and domestic concerns in shaping international activity. Indeed, as Hill points out, interest in the domestic sources of foreign policy long predates globalisation - in fact, arguments about the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy date back to the 1920s when Eckart Kehr and Fritz Fischer identified particularly 'Prussian' characteristics in German foreign policy. By the mid 1960s, the phrase 'domestic sources of foreign policy' became common parlance (see Rosenau, 1967), but there is no single explanation of this phenomenon - in some instances it describes the way domestic politics constrains foreign policy, in others it describes proactive inputs. Robert Putnam (1988) has proposed what he calls 'two level game theory' which exposes the Janus-face of decision makers who play a game simultaneously on two boards. In this model, international negotiations between states consist simultaneously at the intra-national or domestic level and at the international level.

For Hill, the relationship between domestic and international is complex: in some circumstances, domestic society may act as a constraint upon foreign policy decision making through parliaments, pressure groups or the press but in other circumstances, domestic



culture is shaped by past foreign policy. Critically, he points out that the constitutional structure of a state not only frames the domestic context but also has an impact both on the way the state does foreign policy and on who does foreign policy. In a similar way, Doyle (1983) has suggested that there is a link between the nature of a regime and its foreign policy - specifically, he argues that democratic states are innately cooperative.

Advocating 'foreign policy analysis' - a model which recognises foreign policy less as a series of processes and more as a system of action - Hill sets out to consider the interplay between domestic and external sources of behaviour in contrast to realist/liberalist dominated international relations which marginalize foreign policy and explain action purely in terms of systemic factors at international level without any reference to the domestic context. Crucially, 'foreign policy analysis can and should be open, comparative, inter-disciplinary and range across the domestic-foreign frontier... it should not be positivist, in the sense of assuming that 'facts' are always external and disconnected from actors' perceptions and self-understandings' (Hill, 2003:10) In what follows, I take on this challenge offering an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the relationship between religion and UK foreign policy, suggesting that this relationship traverses domestic and international and is dramatically shaped by our own constitutional settlement and self-understanding.

The changing relationship of external to domestic matters, argues Hill, not only makes foreign policy newly relevant but promotes debate about the relationship of foreign policy to agency and about the relationship between structure and agency. The debate about the extent to which agents are shaped by their structures or vice versa (see e.g. Wendt, 1999 and Hay 1995) helps us to understand foreign policy as neither purely positivistic nor entirely relativistic, but instead as a 'complex process of interaction between many actors, differentially embedded in a wide range of different structures' (Hill, 2003:28). Crucially, argues Hill, it demonstrates that actors are not completely free to act because their 'freedom' is affected by their domestic environment, which influences the way they understand the world. This conception of foreign policy - as a model of the relationship between structure and agency - reminds us of a different account of globalisation than the ones we have already described.

#### **4.31 An alternative model of the religion-globalisation debate**

Contrary to accounts that underplay the significance of the nation state, Roland Robertson (1989) has argued that the prevalence of national societies is a distinctive feature of globalisation. There is, he points out, 'nothing to suggest that the nationally organized society, more specifically the state, is about to wither away' (Robertson, 1992: 184). Instead, suggests Robertson, globalisation involves a paradoxical process - as there is no single model of the ideal society to

which national societies can conform, they each create their own national identity and it is the interaction of these national identities which enables concern about the 'universal'. Robertson calls this process the interpenetration of the 'particularism of the universal (the rendering of the world as a single place) and the universalisation of particularism 'the globalized expectation that societies... should have distinct identities' (Robertson, 1989:9). For Robertson (1992) there are, therefore, four major reference points in understanding globalisation: national societies, individuals, the world system of societies and humankind. In his so-called 'model of globality' (1992: 26), he outlines what he considers to be the crux of globalisation, 'comparative interaction of different forms of life' (1992:27). At the heart of this model are a number of processes of relativisation - by which he proposes that 'challenges are increasingly presented to the stability of particular perspectives...' (1992:29). 'In a world which is increasingly compressed...' writes Robertson (1992:98) 'in which its most 'formidable' components - nationally constituted societies and the inter-state system - are increasingly subject to the internal, as well as external constraints of multiculturality...the conditions of and for the identification of the individual and collective selves and of individual and collective others are becoming ever more complex'. Success in this context is generated by the successful negotiation of universalism and particularism such that 'the particularisation of universalism - involves the idea of the universal being given global-human concreteness;...the universalisation of particularism - involves

the extensive diffusion of the idea that there is virtually no limit on particularity, to uniqueness, to difference, and to otherness' (1992:102). Viewed in this way, resistance to globalisation can be characterised either as opposition to the world as a single homogenized system or, importantly, as opposition to the world as 'a series of culturally equal, relativized, entities or ways of life' (1992:102).

Importantly for this thesis, this account of globalisation hinges upon a particular conception of the relationship between nationalism and internationalism. As Smith (1979:2) has explained 'At the root of the 'national ideal' is a certain vision of the world...According to this vision mankind is 'really' and 'naturally' divided into distinct...nations. Each nation has its peculiar contribution to make to the whole, the family of nations'. In other words, suggests Robertson, particularism develops alongside universalism; the two are not incongruent.

Not only does Robertson recognise the continued significance of the national society, so too he exposes mainstream sociology's relative indifference to extra-societal issues. Even despite the influence of Spencer over the establishment of a tradition-based Japanese identity and of Durkheim's ideas over the foundation of the Turkish republic in the 1920s, Robertson argues that traditional sociologists were largely 'ill equipped to deal with inter-societal let alone global

matters' (1992:110). Critically for us, he suggests, this was manifest in a general acceptance of 'something like a dominant ideology of common culture thesis at the level of nationally constituted societies (1992:110). Sociology, then, has been complicit in undermining the particularity of national societies. Contrary to this portrayal, and of accounts of globalisation taken from the political sciences, which emphasise the demise of the nation state, Robertson both points to the significance of the particular as a dimension of globalisation and also clears the ground for us to recognise that there are critical differences between nationally constituted societies which 'have been differentially formed in interpenetration with significant others (Robertson, 1992:113). This particular finding is important for this thesis. In sections 4 and 5 of this chapter and in chapter 5, I outline the domestic sources of UK and US foreign policy, pointing to significant cultural and structural differences between Western nations that influence their approach to the religion-foreign policy relationship. Specifically, in what follows in this chapter, I demonstrate the determinative influence of the British church-state settlement and domestic cultural dynamics over religion-related foreign policy.

#### **4.32 Constituting 'the particular'**

Elsewhere, Robertson (1991) has described Parsons account of the particular development of American society as being crucial to understanding how it is able to engage the rest of the world in a

unique way (Robertson, 1991: 138). He suggests that Parsons' account of the particular development of American society emphasises the notion that Western cultural phenomena take on increasingly universal significance, moving beyond Weber's hermeneutical context to describe evolution towards a single global system. Yet, at the same time, it is in this 'system of modern societies' (Parsons, 1971) that the United States emerges as 'the highest point yet reached in the evolution of systems of human action' (Robertson, 1991: 139). What we get from Parsons, then, is recognition both of the global system and yet of different - we might say 'particular' - types of cultural formation within that system. Significantly, Parsons makes reference to the role of religion in the evolution of these particular societies - most notably the United States. It is the unique form of religion-society relationship found there - a combination of privatised faith commitments with a moral sphere governed by a civil religion - which makes the United States the most advanced form of society.

Robertson, in his work with Chirico (1985), has also argued that, while religion contributes to globalisation, it is also utilised to underline national identity through civil religious forms. Robertson and Chirico (1985) then turn to religion to understand the idea of 'global order' that has emerged in the current era. This is a challenge for social scientists attuned to the mere 'societal' level. Robertson and Chirico (1985: 222) argue that 'the virtually worldwide eruption of religious and quasi-religious concerns and themes cannot be

exhaustively comprehended in terms of focussing on what has been happening sociologically within societies'. Though there are some societal clusters which may provide meaningful insights, instead, they argue, there is a need to take a global perspective. Importantly, Robertson and Chirico critique Wuthnow's (1980:60) account of new religious movements as primarily shaped by 'the instabilities present in the larger world-system'. In an echo of the debates already described in the political sciences, Robertson and Chirico 'seek to promote a way of thinking about the modern world which transcends the old internal v. external...' by emphasising the simultaneity of 'trans-societal', inter-societal and 'intra-societal', primarily with reference to 'outward 'flows' from societies' (Robertson and Chirico, 1985: 224). They do so by focussing on the relationship of religion to state, arguing that there have been simultaneous processes of secularisation and desecularisation: the state has enlarged its 'sphere of operation' but has at the same time 'become embroiled in quasi-religious matters on two fronts: one intra-societal, the other extra-societal'. Specifically, they point to a range of 'deep life' matters including birth, death, sexuality which have brought the state into contact with religious issues and dynamics as well as international issues of human rights, inequalities, national identities and conclude 'the state has become more and more concerned internally and externally with what Parsons calls 'telic matters'' (Robertson and Chirico, 1985: 224-225).

There are, then, two features of globalisation which open up religious or quasi religious concerns. Globalisation removes the security of the individual-society relationship opening up questions both about what a good society looks like and what mankind is. In this sense, the relativisation process creates insecurities which religion can fill. Furthermore, the globalisation process leads to cleavages within societies, particularly resistances to the processes of relativisation as well as to questions about the identity of the society: 'at the collective societal level there is thus a thrust in a quasi-religious direction as some take it upon themselves to define in politico-religious terms what 'their' society 'ultimately stands for' and what is sacred about it' (Robertson and Chirico, 1985:238). There is also a concern for the legitimacy of the world order hence there have emerged a range of theologies of liberation and increasing interest in 'world theology'. There is, then, a conjunction of societal-civil religion and world civil religion which describes the role of religion in the globalisation process: 'religion is centered in the process of globalisation by virtue of both the religious or quasi-religious matters raised as a result of universalistic tendencies involving mankind and relations between societies and by the particularizing responses to universalistic tendencies' (Robertson and Chirico, 1985: 239).

Robertson in his solo work and his collaboration with Chirico presents us with an account of globalisation which is radically different to that which has dominated political science literature, and in which religion



has become complicit in the negation of the nation state and the marginalisation of foreign policy. Here we see religion as no less of a driving factor in the narrative of globalisation but it takes this role in three distinct movements: first, understanding the role of religion can no longer be done merely by reference to a single societal model, there is a need to move beyond the confines of traditional sociology and develop an account of inter-societal dynamics; however, secondly, while these inter-societal dynamics open up consideration of universal questions and rights so too, thirdly, do they demand that societies define themselves in politico-religious terms. Religion's role in globalisation, then, both requires us to understand globalisation as an 'inside-out' phenomenon but, in doing so, underlines and underscores the continued existence and potency of the national society. This dramatic reversal from the 'outside in' ways of understanding globalisation that appear in the political science literature is, I argue, a better place to start to understand the relationship between religion and foreign policy as it is currently in operation in the UK and the US.

We have seen, then, that there is one narrative of globalisation in which religion - as a transnational force or non-state actor - helps to undermine the nation state and contributes to the marginalisation of foreign policy. However, both Hill (2003) and Robertson (with Chirico, 1985; 1991; 1992) have presented a corrective to these accounts. For Hill, the interconnectedness of home and away gives the domestic sources of foreign policy new relevance and for Robertson,

religion is centred in the globalisation process as much for its helping to define national societies as for opening up universal questions. In the next section, I explore the UK's pursuit of international religious freedom in light of these issues, suggesting that it is evidence of the deep interconnection between domestic circumstances and foreign policy.

#### **4.2 On religious freedom: foreign policy as an expression of church-state relations**

During the first years of the Coalition Government, the pursuit of international religious freedom emerged as a new foreign policy priority. Then Minister of State Baroness Warsi's delegation to the Vatican in February 2012 resulted in a joint communiqué on 'working together to combat intolerance and discrimination based on religion, wherever it is manifest' and, in April 2012, then Foreign Secretary William Hague himself committed the Government to 'Protecting religious freedoms and preventing discrimination on grounds of religion or belief.' Though 'freedom of belief' has long been a part of core Human Rights legislation, it was only under the Coalition government<sup>74</sup> that its profile was raised to that of an explicit human rights priority. But where has this renewed emphasis on religious freedom come from? What is its significance and what motivated it?

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<sup>74</sup> While my interviews were undertaken during the Coalition Government, it is worth noting that the Conservative Party manifesto (Conservative Party, 2015) made a commitment to continue to pursue international religious freedom though, unlike the Labour (Labour Party, 2015) and Liberal Democrat (Liberal Democrats, 2015) manifestos, it made no commitment to augmenting existing structures.

Interviews with Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) officials (HMG/23 August 2012/b, HMG/ 23 August 2012/a, HMG/28 August 2012/a) revealed that ‘freedom of religion and belief’, was not only one of the Foreign Secretary’s identified global human rights priorities, but was a subject to which a range of Ministers devote considerable time and energy. A small hub team has been established in the Multilateral Policy Directorate of the FCO to drive policy and strategy on freedom of religion and belief (and women and child rights) as part of the broader human rights remit. This hub acts as a source of advice based on the ‘presumed competence’ of country desks and staff in post to make human rights in general, and religious freedom in particular, part of all country plans. In layman’s terms, this means that those responsible for developing Government policy toward a specific country or region are required to incorporate policy which promotes religious freedom in that area and to monitor and measure levels of religious freedom, especially where it is a particular concern.

The pursuit of International Religious Freedom has long been an objective of the US government, and there are echoes of its approach in the work currently being undertaken by the Foreign Office. So too does the international context, in which there is egregious persecution on the grounds of religion, where we face the ever-present and recently diversified threat of international terrorism and are dealing

with the new challenge of the post-Arab Spring era, make it impossible for the government to ignore ‘religious questions’. Yet evidence drawn from interviews with Foreign Office officials, as well as analysis of key statements and policy initiatives would suggest that there are also important domestic factors which have motivated the government’s renewed focus on what Tony Blair (2012) has called ‘the proper place for religion in democracy’.

In this section, I will explore the significance of each of these factors, arguing that while both the global context and US influence have likely played a significant role in the development of UK religious freedom policy, a comparison of international approaches to the advancement of ‘religious liberty’ reveals a more complex picture: that foreign policy has deep and formative connections to the domestic context from which it emerges, and in particular to the relationship there between religion and society. Importantly, I suggest, contrary to the ‘outside in’ narratives of international relations theory, the UK’s pursuit of religious freedom looks more like an example of international agency as the sort of ‘inside-out’ process described by Hill and Robertson and one in which religion plays a significant role in defining rather than undermining the nation state.

#### 4.41 The global context

Until relatively recently, international relations theorists have tended to ignore religion. Petito and Hatzopoulous (2004) suggest that the secularism of international relations is a genetic disposition, and Philpott (2002) identifies the 1980s and 1990s as periods when religion was almost entirely absent from consideration by international relations theorists.

Philpott (2009) now recognises that 'talk of religion has risen'. For some, this role is evidence of just how dangerous religion is, just how incompatible with the values of freedom, democracy (Baruma, 2010), and with our security (Juergensmeyer, 2003; Kepel, 1994). For others, religion plays a more ambivalent role, offering solutions to conflict, models for successful diplomacy and stabilisation (Appleby, 1999; Johnson, 2003) and its value should be better recognised and harnessed (Johnson & Sampson, 1994; Seiple & Hoover, 2004). Most importantly, there is emerging a range of 'constructivist' attempts to come to terms with religion's role which challenge and redefine the intellectual frameworks of international relations, inextricably tied to the modern distinction between church and state (Fox & Sandler, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Snyder, 2011; Hurd 2011). Part of the broader 'post-positivist' movement in international relations theory, these constructivist approaches widen the scope of international relations theory to include the behaviour motivation and activity of non-state

actors and utilise non-rational methodology by looking for meaning, 'thick' description and interpretation. As we earlier described, religion is now the subject matter of political science but its location is significant: it is associated with the 'globalisation' narrative which has made the non-state actor a significant player in the international context - this means that there is a tendency for theorists and policy-makers to locate religious agency outside the structures of the nation-state.

Of course, these analytical developments have not occurred in a vacuum but are both a response to global events and have helped shaped our conception of those events and response to them. In recent decades, the global context has increasingly required Western policy makers to engage with religious issues and actors in ways they have been unaccustomed to. The so-called Islamic Revival, dating back to the 1970s, has undoubtedly shaped both the policy and intellectual context. Not only did the 1979 Iranian Revolution confound policy makers and international relations theorists (Ammuzegar, 1991) alike, given it was not prompted by financial crisis, nor by war or class struggle, but seemingly by some combination of political and religious motivations. A range of subsequent issues including the Satanic Verses controversy in the UK, the headscarf incident in France<sup>75</sup> and, of

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<sup>75</sup> The so-called 'affaire du foulard' refers to a controversy which emerged in France in 1989 over the right of girls to wear Islamic veils in French public schools. It was sparked on 18 September 1989 when three girls were suspended for refusing to remove their hijab. This complex and controversial issue has raised questions about the principle of laicite and its compatibility with religious freedom. For more discussion of the issues raised see Jones (2009).

course, 9/11 have not only coincided with but contributed to perceptions of the 'desecularisation of the world' (Berger, 1999). So too has the West's response to these incidents - including the pursuit of counter-terrorism policy at home and overseas, the counter-insurgency in Afghanistan, and events in Syria and Iraq brought Western policy makers into contact with religious issues and actors in previously unprecedented ways.

Notably, the Arab Spring created a new challenge for Western governments who had associated democracy with the differentiation of church and state: how to work with a religious democracy? As one senior foreign office official explained to me 'The National Security Council is taking the matter seriously...considering how Islamist the Muslim Brotherhood is and whether it is a secular organisation with extremist margins that can be separated or whether Islam will be central' (HMG/3 July 2012/a). This sort of response is characteristic of the UK policy establishment, which has struggled to understand when and where 'religion' is a policy issue and has historically marginalized or ignored it, as one official explained to me 'we have never done this (religion) before as we have tended to see religion as something that might upset existing relationships' (HMG/3 July 2012/a). However, there seems to be a developing conception of what has been called 'proper place for religion in democracy' (Blair, 2012) and an increasing number of external policies now incorporate some religious dimension (for more on this see section 3).

A commitment to human rights and the protection of religious minorities certainly seem timely given the complex range of ‘religious issues’ facing contemporary policy-makers. Neorealist international relations scholars would almost certainly argue that the FCO is merely responding to systemic pressures in developing this new agenda. However, there is almost certainly something else going on - Lord Howell, discussing developments in Egypt, explained that ‘the treatment of religious minorities will be a valuable litmus test of whether we are watching a truly liberalising democratic process unfolding in the Middle East region’ (Howell, 2011), and the current Ambassador to the Holy See, Nigel Baker (2012), blogged to the same effect on July 2 2012, suggesting that religious freedom is ‘an area of work that remains a key test of the health of any pluralistic democracy’. This suggests that religious freedom policy is not merely a matter of ‘negatively’ protecting human rights but a ‘positive’ promotion of a particular model of state governance – an approach which is shared by counterparts in the United States.

#### **4.42 The American precedent**

Our transatlantic allies have been pursuing religious freedom via foreign policy since 1998 when the controversial International Religious Freedom Act was passed (the US approach to religious



freedom is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). This Act mandated the establishment of an Ambassador-led Office of International Religious Freedom in the State department and the publication of an annual report on religious freedom around the world and on countries of concern.

Though different administrations have pursued each of these responsibilities with varying degrees of vigour (and Obama was particularly strongly criticised for his delay in appointing an IRF Ambassador), there is now what UK officials describe as a ‘mammoth bureaucracy’ in the US supporting IRF work, though ‘they weren’t necessarily having impact in relation to what they were spending’ (HMG/23 August 2012/b). There are, then, important differences between the two countries in their pursuit of religious freedom - most significantly, the UK adopts a ‘devolved responsibility’ approach using existing posts and policies to advance religious freedom while the US has developed its own bureaucratic structures in the form of the ‘IRF Office’. Despite these differences, the Foreign Office’s policy approach is significantly influenced by the US precedent. Officials explained to me that there is regular exchange and engagement with the US from officials at all levels (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a) and that Foreign Office staff in British embassies overseas are encouraged to consult the US annual report on religious freedom to identify countries of concern. In fact, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office seems to use the US example as an informal

‘benchmark’: officials reflected on the extent of ‘on-going debate’ about the approach including ‘whether there’s enough welly’ (HMG/23 August 2012/b) going into it and whether the UK should employ an ‘envoy or ambassador’ as is the case in the US.

However, there is one critical point of distinction, identified by officials, which I consider to be particularly important: in the US, their religious freedom policy operates within a legislative framework which couches a policy that seeks to protect the human rights of religious minorities overseas in the language of domestic politics. One of IRFs most prominent advocates in the US, former diplomat Thomas Farr, argues that it is a policy which should be mainstreamed throughout the foreign policy apparatus and that diplomats working to achieve it overseas should ‘recall the relative success that their own country has had in balancing the competing authorities of religion and state’ (Farr, 2010: 48). Similarly, a recent report on religious freedom (Georgetown Symposium, 2010:3) identifies the range of different issues which fall under the auspices of the US ‘religious freedom agenda’, including about belief, practice, proselytization and charity work and draw a direct parallel between it and the operation of religious freedom in US law which includes the right ‘to make religiously-informed arguments about public laws and policies, within due limits’.

While it is clear that there are strategic international reasons for the pursuit of religious freedom - including the fact that (as noted by the Georgetown symposium) many countries of strategic interest to the US for economic or security reasons (e.g. Iran, North Korea, China, Saudi Arabia) also suppress religious freedom, there is nevertheless a strong sense of connection between this international policy and the domestic US context. In fact, the subject of religious freedom is both a highly contentious and yet highly consistent part of US public policy debate and there are strong parallels between the debates about the pursuit of religious freedom overseas and the 'correct interpretation' of the first amendment at home (a full discussion of these debates can be found in Chapter 5).

There are then, deep and formative connections between the pursuit of religious freedom through US foreign policy and its socio-political significance at home. And these connections are known to UK policy officials who frequently draw a distinction between the UK and the US on these specific grounds. One senior official described disagreements about 'how we define ourselves' (HMG/28 August 2012/a), another commented on the 'clash of cultures' between the UK and US over certain religiously-sensitive issues such as the death penalty (HMG/28 August 2012/c). There was a strong sense from UK policy officials that they identified the role of religion in politics as an area of considerable distance between the countries - one explicitly

suggesting officials distance themselves from religion because ‘we want to avoid becoming American’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c).

Given this antipathy towards what is perceived as there being ‘too much religion’ in US foreign policy, it might be that rather than explaining the Coalition Government’s prioritisation of religious freedom as a result of the US influence, we might instead consider how much the UK approach mirrors the American model in a different way. There are three dimensions of the Foreign Office approach, I argue, which demonstrate that the UK’s religious freedom policy is also a product of its domestic context. First, I suggest, there are continuities between a broader Government agenda on religion and the shape of religious freedom policy; second, I will demonstrate that the management of religious freedom overseas mirrors our approach at home; and third, drawing on both of these, I will suggest that there is a shared concept of religious freedom, and ultimately, religion which is at the heart of both.

#### **4.43 Managing religion**

In December 2011 David Cameron (2011a) called the UK a ‘Christian country’, a marked change from the official policy of ‘not doing God’ under New Labour and part of a broader and more positive approach to religion than has been seen before. Government Ministers and officials seem more confident in speaking publicly about religion –

both as a cultural resource (e.g. Hope, 2011), as a source of personal motivation (Bowcott and Morris, 2012), and as having a positive role in society:’ adherence to a faith based discipline brings groups together and thereby strengthens community cohesion; and it provides in many cases a motivation to do good works for the benefit of all’ (Grieve, 2012).

Although my research has revealed a complex picture within government, reflected in wider society, in which a range of ideas about the role religion should play in public life are in evidence, there is nevertheless a clear message emanating from Government policy and rhetoric that ‘not doing God’ is no longer an acceptable position. Moreover, I suggest, there are several ways that this new ‘religion positive’ approach also seems to be reflected by the decision to prioritise international religious freedom. First and foremost, it involves close and strengthening bilateral relationships with religious institutions. Officials explained, in particular the building of formerly neglected relationships with the Church of England was a priority (HMG/28 August 2012/a, HMG/ 23 August 2012/a). So too has it involved ongoing communication (including a joint communiqué) with the Holy See. Secondly, it has necessitated broad engagement with religious civil society organisations and representatives beyond the ‘usual suspects’, from Christian Solidarity Worldwide to the National Secular Society (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a). In fact, the Secretary of State’s advisory group on human rights includes Joel

Edwards of evangelical lobby organisation Micah Challenge. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, it has been characterised by clear statements of UK values. The FCO human rights report (FCO, 2011a: 54) explicitly identifies ‘freedom of religion and respect for religious plurality is at the core of British society’. In this, it reflects the language the Prime Minister used in the so-called ‘Munich speech’ (Cameron, 2011b) of February 2011, in which he explained his views on the presence of extremists even within democratic societies as being the result of a failure to ‘provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong’, and of toleration of ‘segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values’. In a clear articulation, the Prime Minister explained: ‘I believe a genuinely liberal country does much more; it believes in certain values and actively promotes them. Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, equal rights regardless of race, sex or sexuality. It says to its citizens, this is what defines us as a society: to belong here is to believe in these things’.

It is apparent, then, that the UK’s pursuit of religious freedom reflects a broader attempt by the Coalition Government to engage religion as a public policy issue. Not only this, I suggest, there are strong echoes in religious freedom policy of the way religion is managed in the UK. Notably, the UK’s religious freedom toolkit<sup>76</sup> uses our own church-state settlement as an example: ‘no-one in the UK is discriminated

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<sup>76</sup> Officials explained to me that this toolkit had been developed under the previous Labour administration but has been mainstreamed more recently.

against because they do not belong to a State church. All people in the UK, whatever their religion or belief, enjoy the same freedom of religion or belief' (FCO, undated: 12). Though some religious communities might contest the reality of this, and while it points to the heterogeneity of western church-state settlements, this statement foreshadows similarities between the management of religion at home and our approach to religious freedom overseas. Both, for example, involve an 'equalities' approach to religious freedom: 'religion and belief' has been a protected characteristic in UK since 2003 and the current Equality Act (2010) and applies to both employment and the provision of goods and services. The UK's approach to the governance of religion draws heavily from human rights legislation and both conceive of 'freedom of religion or belief' as an individual right to be protected. As a result, there is a tendency to manage religion (and clashes between religious freedom and other rights) with reference to law, something which has been increasing in recent years across Europe as noted by Ganiel and Jones (2012). The UN's International Charter of Civil and Political Rights places two requirements on states regarding religious freedom - it must be mandated by law and the only appropriate exemptions are on the ground of public safety, public order, health and morals. Just as UK law has developed at pace since the Satanic Verses controversy, so the international approach to human rights involve reliance on transnational legal models and structures.

In fact, not only does our international 'religious freedom' policy reflect the church-state relationship at home, it is entirely dependent on a concept of religion that originates there. The religious freedom toolkit advises officials that religion or belief is defined in terms of belief in transcendent deities and/or the cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance of beliefs. This means that druidism, veganism, pacifism, the Divine Light Mission, Scientology, Krishna Consciousness Movement, humanism, atheism and agnosticism all fall within the protection of this freedom. Indeed, the measurement of religious freedom also reveals some interesting assumptions about religion, most notably that 'freedom of belief' is monitored by the freedom to carry out a set of activities including to change or discontinue one's religion; to express one's beliefs and to criticise the beliefs of others in a non-violent manner; to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief and to establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels. This is, however, subject to limitations including public safety, order and the protection of other rights and freedoms. This tension between religious freedom and public order make religious freedom a highly complex policy to pursue and, in practice, often involves a distinction between 'absolute' and 'limited' elements of religious freedom (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a). There is a clear sense that government policy promotes the right to 'believe' as absolute and not to be contravened in any circumstances. But, the manifestation of religion is 'limited'



and can be curtailed in certain circumstances (specifically, where conflicts over other rights emerge and where such manifestations are perceived to be a threat to the political or legal order).

The emphasis, then, is placed on a conception of religion as a private, individual belief system, a conception which has been challenged in recent years by analyses of non-Western experiences which have emphasised the communal, active and pre-rational elements of religious identity (see e.g. King, 1999). This would suggest that the interpretation of 'religious freedom' is culturally contingent rather than universal, something which makes it a problematic addition to human rights norms. Indeed, policy officials seem to recognise exactly this tension, suggesting that religious freedom 'is hard to argue against in general but difficult to agree on specifics' (HMG/28 August 2012/a) and, critically, that while multilateral legal approaches are 'the only thing that delivers legitimacy' (HMG/28 August 2012/a) they may not be the only way to achieve religious freedom. Similarly, the religious freedom toolkit (FCO, undated: 8) acknowledges the limits of a legal approach: 'In order to enjoy both rights, there has to be tolerance. Religious believers cannot impose their views on others, as this would violate their human rights, and vice versa. States have an obligation to uphold the rights of all persons within their jurisdictions, and sometimes this will involve restricting rights for the common good.'

Both the concepts of tolerance and the 'common good' are sociological rather than legal concepts, their interpretation and

application in different contexts will vary considerably. As Ganiel and Jones (2012) explain, the tension between religious freedom and other rights is unlikely to be resolved by legislation and, as such, is ‘an issue for which a society’s public culture on what constitutes acceptable treatment of religious subjects is likely to matter more than the letter of its law.’

Given this, it may not only be the case that insufficient attention is being paid to the connection between domestic church-state settlements (and the interpretation and management of religious freedom there) and the way in which religious freedom is pursued overseas, but that these connections will be important also in contexts to which we seek to transport religious freedom, suggesting that there is a need to underpin religious freedom strategies with deep sociological and cultural analysis. While Davie (2002: 3) argues that the influence of constitutional arrangements points to European exceptionalism, it might be the case that UK model of religious freedom, based as it is on a particular church-state settlement and the management of religious diversity might offer us a comparative advantage<sup>77</sup> over our US allies in certain contexts given it demonstrates that religious establishment and religious freedom can go hand in hand.

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<sup>77</sup> The notion of ‘comparative advantage’ originated in economic theory where it describes gains that individuals, companies or nations might make due to differences in their ‘factor endowments or technological progress’ (Maneschi, Andrea (1998). *Comparative Advantage in International Trade: A Historical Perspective*. Cheltenham: Elgar. p. 1.). It has, however, been extended to different contexts: for example the 2010 UK National Security Strategy describes as ‘our areas of comparative advantage’ as ‘the particular strengths and skills we can bring to bear’.

The example of religious freedom policy highlights the deep connections between our church-state settlement and one particular signature foreign policy initiative. But what of foreign policy more generally? In the next section, I consider the emergence of a range of religion-related foreign policy initiatives. Having now established that the religion-state background of the UK government impacts upon how the government perceives and engages with religion globally, I suggest it is possible to use this as a way to challenge the notion of the ‘post-secular’ which - like globalisation - has become an increasingly dominant narrative in accounts of the religion-society-state relationship. Highlighting Beckford’s (2012) critique of the ‘post-secular’, I suggest that recent foreign policy engagements with religion are less evidence of the ‘post-secular’ and more part of a long history of the state’s ‘interpellation’ of religious identities. This has important implications for the way we understand the relationship between religion and global dynamics, challenging narratives of globalisation and religious change and once more putting emphasis on continuity and the domestic sources of foreign policy.

#### **4.5 Post-secular foreign policy?**

As explained in Chapter Two, since the 1990s, scholars in a range of disciplines in the social and political sciences, have utilized the expression ‘post-secular’ to describe a set of circumstances which

traditional secularisation theories have not been able to adequately explain. For some (e.g. Stark, 1999), the 'post-secular' is evidence of the failure of secularisation theories which had been the most widely utilized accounts of religious change throughout the 20th century. For others, the 'post-secular' is better described as an evolutionary stage after secularisation in which secular as well as religious values are being taken seriously (see e.g. Knott, 2010).

What 'post-secular' narratives have in common - and indeed, what they share with other influential analyses such as the 'deprivatisation' of religion thesis (Casanova, 1994), 'desecularisation' or 'counter-secularisation' paradigms (Berger, 1999) and accounts of 'religious resurgence' (e.g. Thomas, 2005) - is that they all offer accounts of religious *change* prompted by global dynamics. In what is perhaps the most famous articulation of the 'post-secular', Habermas (2008) suggests that increased public visibility of religion and/or increased public policy engagement with religion has taken place in inverse relation to the differentiation of spheres and the subjectivisation of religion. This range of 'post-secular' narratives, then, share common elements: they point to changes in either the numerical or public significance of religion in the world to which public policy makers are having to respond. Yet what if the opposite were true? Might it be the case that domestic, rather than global, circumstances are shaping the way policy makers engage with religion?

In this section, I consider whether the emergence of religion-related UK foreign policy is evidence of the ‘post-secular’. While interviews with serving UK Government officials suggest religion-related policy initiatives are a response to changing global dynamics, echoing the narratives of ‘post-secularity,’ I suggest that attention should be paid to religious *continuity* as well as *change* and to domestic, as well as international, sources of foreign policy. Extending Beckford’s (2012) argument that increased public policy engagement with religious actors in the UK is evidence of the state’s ‘interpellation’ of religious identities to the foreign policy context, I demonstrate the extent to which both domestic policy engagements with religion, and the domestic church-state settlement, have helped to shape religion-related foreign policy. This discussion, then, once more underlines the continued significance of national society in the globalised era and suggests that religion - far from contributing to the marginalisation of the nation state and foreign policy - actually helps to shape distinctively national foreign policy responses.

#### **4.51 Religious resurgence and the ‘post-secular’**

The ‘post-secular’ has been used by social and political scientists in a variety of ways. Neuhaus’s early description of ‘post-secular America’ (1982) describes the collapse of the dominance of secularism in the public sphere, though more recent works (e.g. Hurd, 2009) continue to identify ‘secularism’ as a political doctrine which is

at odds with an increasingly religious world. Others too present contradictory accounts of the 'post-secular' offering it either as a description of the failure of secularisation theories to account for religious change (e.g. Martin, 1969) or as an evolutionary extension of secularisation processes (Knott, 2010). Perhaps most significant for this section are those for whom the 'post-secular' describes a significant change which requires a policy response - in which the public resurgence of religion places new demands in the public sphere where the religious and the secular now coexist (see e.g. Taylor 2007). Two commonalities emerge from such accounts: first, the contemporary era is one in which considerable religious change is taking place, usually as a result of the dissolution of public/private boundaries; and second, that Western public policy makers are having to respond to such religious change.

John Carlson (2009:51) has described the US military's attempts to 'fill the...religious gaps' in a globalised era where 'they routinely operate within populaces or locations that recognize no clear line of demarcation between private individual faith and secular public life' (2009:52). These realities, Carlson argues, are symptoms of a 'post-secular landscape' which requires formerly 'secular institutions' to adjust to 'new realities' (2009: 51). Importantly, then, Carlson uses the 'post-secular' not only to describe the globalised context in which religion seems to resist 'privatisation' but also to describe the changes taking place within the military to come to terms with that context.

Hence, the process by which the military negotiates a move away from limited 'secular models' toward greater institutional ability to 'engage the complexities of religion in ways that are attentive to the nuances, challenges and dangers' (2009: 55) is characterised as 'post-secular'.

Like Carlson, Bettiza (2013) contextualises changes which are taking place in American foreign policy with reference to broader trends.

Here, however, Bettiza makes reference both to global dynamics and to intellectual currents. The twin 'post-secular turn in world politics and the social sciences', he argues, has meant the 'realisation among social and political theorists that religions are not only still alive and thriving in today's world, but they have also become increasingly politically salient worldwide' (2013: 13) and this, in turn, has led 'American foreign policy experts and IR scholars to advocate for the desecularisation of American foreign policy' (2013:20).

In the UK, the 'post-secular' label has also been applied to describe the attempts of policy makers to come to terms with the presence and vitality of religion in the world (see e.g. Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes, 2009). Under the Coalition Government, there were active attempts to invigorate religious or 'faith based' organisations and communities using the motifs of 'social capital' (Halpern, 2004) and 'civil society' (Casanova, 1994) and Ministerial rhetoric has emphasised not only the continued significance of religion in

contemporary society, but has sought to actively engage with religious communities and dynamics in the achievement of public policy goals at local, national and even international levels.<sup>78</sup> Yet the overwhelming majority of scholarly attention has focussed on the local and national picture leaving comparatively little analysis of the religion-foreign policy relationship.

This is not to suggest that such analysis is completely absent. There is, for example, a relatively long history of discussion of the relationship between religion(s) and international development, including a number of significant outputs from the large-scale ‘Religions and Development Programme’ funded by the Department for International Development as well as more recent contributions (e.g. Tomalin, 2013). Macro-level discussions of religion and international relations have also been forthcoming, pointing to a range of ways in which publically engaged religion has challenged the practice and theory of international relations. Thomas (2005: 83) argues for the inclusion of religion in international relations theory via a ‘narrative’ approach in which religion is recognized less as a dependent variable and more as a contributor to ‘the constitutive rules, norms and practices that help give meaning to the actions of states and provide the reasons why states act the way they do in international society’. Haynes (2007)

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<sup>78</sup> For example, on 16 December 2011, David Cameron called the UK ‘a Christian Country’, highlighting what he considered to be the ‘positive role’ religion can play in society. The following February, Baroness Warsi emphasised ‘the importance of the Established Church and our Christian heritage’ (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/baroness-warsi-speech-in-the-holy-see> - accessed 22 June 2013).



advocates the introduction of religion to international relations theory through the prism of the ‘soft power’ concept. However, while he recognizes the significance of ‘values, norms and ideals’ in the making of foreign policy, he falls short of undertaking such analysis of UK foreign policy, focussing instead on European external relations as a whole (2007:267). With a few notable exceptions, then, little has been written about the religion-foreign policy or religion-diplomacy relationship in the UK. Seeking to contribute to the conversation, my own original interviews have enabled me to better understand the way policy makers contend with, and articulate, engagements with religious actors. Moreover, they coincided with the emergence of religion-related UK foreign policy in the form of four international initiatives.

#### **4.52 The emergence of religion-related UK foreign policy**

First, and perhaps most significantly, a Minister for Faith and Communities was briefly appointed. In this role, Baroness Saida Warsi - a major critic of what she describes as ‘militant secularism’ in the public sector, had a number of notable successes in raising the profile of religion within Whitehall, including the announcement of London as a centre for Islamic finance<sup>79</sup>. Though she lacked the political

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<sup>79</sup> On 29 October 2013, at the World Islamic Economic Forum, held in London, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would be the first non-Muslim country to offer an ‘Islamic bond’ which would help make London ‘stand alongside Dubai as one of the great capitals of Islamic finance anywhere in the world’ (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24722440> - accessed 17 January 2013). Significantly, Saida Warsi has been at the forefront of this agenda and, the same day, announced the establishment of ten Chevening Scholarships (for overseas students to study in the UK) in Islamic Finance.

capital to initiate any major structural or institutional change,<sup>80</sup> her appointment opened up bureaucratic space for dialogue across government and gave impetus to work on international freedom of religion or belief and religious literacy among policy makers and diplomats. It is, however, significant that her successor as Minister of State in the Foreign Office did not have the 'Faith and Communities' portfolio, nor has a Minister for Faith and Communities been appointed in the new Conservative Government.

Secondly, as discussed in Section 2, though 'freedom of belief' has long been a part of core human rights legislation (including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights), under the Coalition Government its profile in the UK was raised and a hub team established within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to drive policy and delivery on this and other human rights (HMG/ 23 August 2012/a). Importantly, this team has also been responsible for the development of training to improve the 'religious literacy' of diplomats and policy makers.

Thirdly, elsewhere there are signs of 'awakening' to religious issues and dynamics. In June 2012, a long-awaited 'Faith Partnership Principles' paper was published by the Department for International

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<sup>80</sup> Saida Warsi was Conservative Party Co- Chairman between May 2010 and September 2012 and the first Muslim woman to serve in a UK Cabinet. However, after controversies over parliamentary expenses and a minor breach of the Ministerial Code, she was shuffled from the Chairmanship to a new post as Senior Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She later resigned this position over a disagreement on Government policy towards Gaza.

Development (DFID). This document outlined plans for greater engagement of ‘faith groups’ by the British Government, reflecting a commitment made by then Secretary of State Andrew Mitchell in 2011.<sup>81</sup> Although the ‘Faith Partnership Principles’ (DFID, 2012) focuses on DFID’s core priority of reducing poverty, it reflects a willingness to engage with religious communities and organisations in ‘building resilience and peaceful states and societies’, ‘reducing certain types of conflict’ and ‘changing beliefs and behaviours’ (DFID, 2012: 3). Furthermore, it identifies the three ‘partnership principles’ of transparency, mutual respect and understanding, responding directly to concerns about the intentions of religious organisations and to critiques of the ‘instrumentalising’ nature of Government engagement with faith-based organisations. While the impact of this document on practical development engagements is unclear, it suggests that there is a combination of bureaucratic space and political will for religion to be taken seriously in the Department for International Development.

Finally, the same is true in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) where the recent appointment of a ‘religious adviser to the Chief of Defence Staff’, represents a conscious attempt to avoid ‘making the same mistakes’ as in recent conflicts both by preparing soldiers to act ‘more responsibly’ in different cultural settings and by ‘ensuring that the

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<sup>81</sup> On 7 February 2011, then Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell addressed the General Synod of the Church of England, speaking about the contribution NGOs and faith-based organisations make to development. During the speech, he announced the establishment of a ‘steering group which will work together with those who lead the faith communities, to try to work out how we can take this partnership further’. For full text of the speech, see Report of Proceedings, February 2011 <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1240726/feb%202011%20consolidated%20with%20index.pdf> - accessed 1 April 2014.

MOD considers issues of religion and culture before entering conflict' (HMG/4 October 2013/a).

Not only this, my own interviews with serving policy officials from a range of externally facing Government departments reveal a gradual process of realisation that 'although religion may not be a fundamental motivation in Western Europe, it is an important and possibly increasingly important factor elsewhere (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a).

A range of international events - not least the Arab Spring - brought the relationship between religion and foreign policy to the forefront as 'we were suddenly confronted with peoples wanting to self determine (with reference to religion) in a way we hadn't anticipated' (HMG/4 July 2012/a). It seems, then, that policy makers in central Government departments now constitute a more informed or prepared audience for diplomatic reports about religious actors and dynamics, as one suggested 'I have been struck by how strong the response has been on religion in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office...one thing nobody questioned was whether it was a sensible topic' (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a). Policy makers have come around to the idea that 'there is a need for greater understanding of faith communities whose boundaries of politics and religion are not the ones we're familiar with' (HMG/3 July 2012/a).

Global dynamics, then, are putting the UK's experience of religion-state boundaries into sharp relief in ways that are resonant with

Habermas' notion of the 'post-secularity'. Not only this, policy makers I interviewed echoed the sort of 'post-secular' narratives described by Carlson (2009) and Betizza (2013) in the US context: increased policy attention to religion is portrayed as a challenge to the 'secularism' of existing practices, and policy makers pay increasing attention to religion as a 'public' rather than private phenomenon<sup>82</sup>.

#### 4.53 Post-secular in question

However, in his analysis of the 'post-secular' as it applies to religion and domestic policy in the UK, Beckford (2012) reflects on the extent to which the increased visibility of public religion in the UK reflects *continuity* as much as *change*. The combination of equalities legislation, immigration and social enterprise among faith-based organisations, he suggests, has brought public policy makers in the UK into contact with a wider range of religions than might have traditionally been the case. Nevertheless, he suggests, this reflects the 'enduring mutual embrace of statutory and religious interests' (2012: 16) rather than a new 'post-secular' era. The current context is simply one in which a greater range of religious identities are 'interpellated

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<sup>82</sup> It is worth noting that, while policy makers described what might be called the conditions of post-secularity, none during my interviews actually utilised the expression 'post-secular' nor was there evidence of any engagement with the academic debate on the subject. At best, 'post-secular' narratives offer a sort of shorthand to describe an operating context in which engagement with religion was becoming increasingly necessary.

<sup>83</sup> than has been traditionally the case. It is possible, I would argue, to extend this analysis to the international context. Each of the developments identified by Beckford, in fact, has an international counterpart. Or in other words, each of the initiatives I have identified as constituting the ‘emergence’ of religion-related UK foreign policy have significant domestic connections and precedents.

While Baroness Warsi’s post as ‘Senior Minister’ in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office could be interpreted as evidence that UK foreign policy was briefly ‘post-secular’, in fact, this post was shared with the domestically focused Department for Communities and Local Government. This ‘double-hatted’ role emphasised the connection between religion-related policy initiatives at home and overseas which is borne out by further evidence. Beckford (2012:15) identifies the ‘confluence of communitarian and neoliberal currents’ as helping to create a ‘faith sector’ in the delivery of public services in the UK. In style and content, the Department for International Development’s ‘Faith Partnership Principles’ mirrors this development, helping to mobilise religious groups as part of both the national and international ‘faith sector’. Similarly, while the promotion of international religious freedom has come to significance in a global context of the ‘rising tide’ of religious persecution (Pew Forum, 2012), as established in Section 2, it draws on a blueprint of ‘religious freedom or belief’

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<sup>83</sup> Popularised by Althusser (1984) the philosophical idea of ‘interpellation’ describes the process by which an ideology - expressed through social and political institutions - addresses an individual creating an identity and making him/her the subject of that ideology.

designated by the 2010 Equalities Act which identified ‘religion or belief’ as protected characteristics under UK Law. Finally, while the Ministry of Defence has only recently appointed a religious adviser, this sort of arrangement has been commonplace in domestic government departments - notably the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Communities and Local Government - during the last two administrations (HMG/4 October 2013/a, HMG/5 July 2012/b).

#### **4.54 Religion and diplomacy**

It is important to recognise, then, that while my interviews revealed the extent to which policy makers are able to describe narratives of religious change described by accounts of ‘post-secularity’ and global religious resurgence, the emergence of religion-related foreign policy reflects two important continuities. First, though they have not always been standardised or institutionalised, religion-related engagements are a routine part of diplomacy. As one official explained, working in post requires regular engagement with religious representatives (HMG/23 August 2012/b). Though unprepared for an encounter with religion in Afghanistan, another official explained that meetings with what we would call ‘political parties’ were, in fact, ‘almost completely religious’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b) and that in fact working on the ground required an understanding of ‘tribal, ethnic and religious differences’.

Similar experiences were shared by a number of those I interviewed, such that one explained that ‘working overseas gives interesting and varied perspectives on the role of religion’ (HMG/28 August 2012/a). In fact, diplomatic work in a vast array of countries was described as religion-related. Officials described, for example, the blurring of lines between politics and religion in Russia (HMG/5 July 2012/b) and extensive engagement with the Holy See where policies coincide including in Somalia, Syria, the Middle East, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Libya (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a). This sample barely scratches the surface but reflects the diplomatic reality that it is almost impossible to avoid religion in most regional contexts.

Secondly, international policy priorities have brought diplomats and policy makers into contact with domestic religious groups. The Department for International Development, for example, has appointed an ‘advisory board’ of UK faith-based representatives (DFID, 2012); officials working in counter-terrorism described the ‘interconnectedness’ of religious communities at home and overseas (HMG/4 July 2012/b); and policy makers working on human rights (HMG/23 August 2012/b; HMG/ 23 August 2012/a) cited a number of UK faith-based organisations with whom they regularly engaged in the promotion of religious freedom overseas.

Though diplomats have historically faced a considerable challenge in trying to ‘translate’ religious issues and engagement into language



understood by Whitehall policy makers after what was described to me as a 20 to 50 year legacy of avoiding religion (HMG/ 13 December 2012/a), it is clear that encounters with religious actors are commonplace for diplomats working overseas. Yet this is not the only continuity. In fact, the relatively long history of domestic policy engagement with religion has likely also influenced the religion-foreign policy relationship in the UK.

#### **4.55 Religion and domestic policy**

An indicative mapping reveals that there has been, and continues to be, widespread engagement with religious issues and organisations in the domestic policy arena. Considerable academic attention has been paid to the relationship between religion and public life in the UK since the 1980s (see e.g. Woodhead and Catto, 2012). What this reveals is just how common it is for the UK Government to fund, commission and engage with religious organisations and communities in support of public policy objectives.

Across a range of public policy areas - from community integration and counter-extremism to education and social welfare, the British Government has directly funded and commissioned religious groups and organisations. This approach has been both criticised and welcomed - often depending on the social acceptability of the public policy objective and the implied celebration or criticism of religion -

suggesting that it is the real or perceived impact of religious engagement on religious groups and organisations rather than on the system of Governance which is at issue. There is, however, an established pattern of religious engagement by the UK Government which, I would suggest, has been extended to the international context.

As outlined in Chapter 3, over the course of the last three administrations, the relationship between religion and public policy seems to have been repeatedly re-envisaged. During the Blair administration, from the establishment of a Home Office ‘faith unit’ to the management of citizenship and integration, religion was increasingly recognized as a source of social division. With the movement of the ‘faith unit’ to the newly established ‘Department of Communities and Local Government’, under Prime Minister Gordon Brown, religion was increasingly drawn upon as a narrative and source of social cohesion while being construed, at the same time, as a transnational source of division and conflict in counter-terrorism and security policy (see e.g. Chapman, 2008). More recently, the Coalition Government has shifted the focus of religion-related policy from minority communities to the unifying heritage of ‘Christian Britain’. Consistent with the increasing reliance on voluntary - including faith-based - provision of welfare, health and education services, the removal of theological elements of deradicalisation programs, and the

defence of Christian traditions<sup>84</sup>, Coalition Government policies focussed almost exclusively on religion's positive contribution<sup>85</sup>.

While these shifts may seem to suggest that the religion-policy narrative over the last 15 years has been marked by considerable change, in part the result of a lack of strategic or 'joined up' approach to religion<sup>86</sup>, I would suggest that it reflects a more fundamental continuity.

As Loughlin (2013: 1) explains, contrary to the fixed constitutions which govern many Western democracies, the British constitution has continued to develop organically and in response to economic, political, social and cultural dynamics and, as a result, has evoked 'bewilderment and sometimes even derision'. This process of

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<sup>84</sup> For example, on February 18th 2012, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles defended the right of Local Councils to begin meetings with prayer effectively overturning a High Court Ruling, explaining 'We will stand for freedom to worship, for Parliamentary sovereignty, and for long-standing British liberties.' For more on this incident, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/eric-pickles-gives-councils-back-the-freedom-to-pray--2> - accessed 12 March 2014.

<sup>85</sup> There are two significant exceptions to this. First, in aftermath of the suspected murder of Lee Rigby, an British army soldier in May 2013 by two men claiming 'the only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers' (see transcript in the Daily Telegraph, 23 May 2013 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10075488/Woolwich-attack-the-terrorists-rant.html> - accessed 1 June 2013), the Prime Minister established an 'extremism task force' to review counter-radicalisation policy. Second, in light of a recent decision by a London judge to allow a woman to stand trial while wearing a full-face veil but not to give evidence with her face covered s 'the ability of the jury to see the defendant for the purposes of evaluating her evidence is crucial', Liberal Democrat Home Office Minister Jeremy Browne has called for a national debate on the wearing of veils in public explaining that while 'We should be very cautious about imposing religious conformity on a society which has always valued freedom of expression', but that there may be circumstances where a full-face veil is not appropriate (for the full story see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-24112067> (accessed 20 September 2013).

<sup>86</sup> Although a number of Government departments employ 'faith advisers' and there are specific officials with responsibility for engagement with religious communities and organisations vis-a-vis particular policy goals (e.g. integration, religious freedom, international development), there is no coordination of effort at working or senior level.

evolution and adaptation has interacted with a changing - and increasingly religiously diverse - population meaning that domestic policy engagements with religion over the last twenty years have repeatedly been characterised by a unique ambivalence: policy makers have at once sought to galvanize the socially cohesive potential of religion while at the same time 'manage' increasing religious diversity.

These twin objectives have been necessitated by the interaction of religious pluralism with the constitutional arrangements which govern the United Kingdom, in which the constitutional monarch acts at once as Head of State and Supreme Governor of the Church of England; where parliament retains a degree of authority over the Church of England; and where the Prime Minister holds a nominal responsibility for senior church appointments. Though, in practice, the Church of England has increased its ability to self-govern, it remains both established and the 'official' state church, and 26 Church bishops currently sit in the second legislative chamber as so-called 'spiritual peers' which seek to be a voice for people of faith (see e.g. Fox, 2008)

<sup>87</sup>. As Beckford (2012:16) describes, these arrangements mean there has long been a 'mutual embrace' between religion and state in the UK, extending to a network of faith-based organisations involved in delivering public services such as education and social welfare. In an

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<sup>87</sup> For more information, see 'The Lords Spiritual', Church of England: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/the-church-in-parliament/bishops-in-the-house-of-lords.aspx> - accessed 6 July 2015.

era of increased religious pluralism, then, successive Governments have sought to extend to religious minorities the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by the majority. Not only this, religion has been made a ‘protected characteristic’ according to British Law.<sup>88</sup> Both of these developments, while enabling and empowering religious communities and organisations on the one hand, on the other, subject religion to a degree of national management and intervention (Back et al, 2002).

These domestic circumstances, I would suggest, have influenced the shape of recent religion-related foreign policy initiatives by providing a blueprint for policy makers seeking to ‘do God’ in different contexts. As Beckford (2012:13) explains, given our constitutional settlement and the array of ways in which religion is implicated in public service provision, ‘it is clear that the British state is not secular at any level - national, regional, or local’. I would suggest that ‘international’ be added to this list.

#### **4.6 Religious Continuity**

In this chapter, I have traced the emergence of religion-related UK foreign policy and considered whether it is evidence of the ‘post-

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<sup>88</sup> The 2010 Equality Act codified a range of anti-discrimination legislation and includes a requirement for all protected groups equal treatment by, employment in and access to both private and public services. Protected characteristics are identified in the act as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. For more on the Act, see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> (accessed 31 August 2013).

secular' era which many commentators describe. While policy makers themselves use language which is characteristically 'post-secular', I have suggested religion-related foreign policy initiatives draw from a longer history of domestic policy engagement with religion as well as from extensive diplomatic encounters with religious actors. As a result, I argue, the emergence of religion-related UK foreign policy is less evidence of the sort of global religious change described by 'post-secular' narratives and more evidence of continuity with domestic policies and precedents, both of which draw from and are influenced by our unique church-state settlement.

The argument that foreign policy draws on our constitutional church-state settlement is one that has featured throughout this chapter. This argument has a number of significant implications. First, this evidence would suggest that Beckford's (2012) idea of 'interpellation' might apply as much to the international policy context as it does to the domestic one: this has significant implications for the way we understand 'civil society' mobilisation which looks less like 'resurgence' or 'de-privatisation' and more like a reflexive activity of certain states. Secondly, in light of this, the idea that religion - as a transnational force - has contributed to globalisation and the disappearance of state autonomy comes under scrutiny. It is clear that, in important and instructive ways, existing domestic arrangements have helped to shape the emergence of religion-related foreign policy in the UK. Rather than reaching for the idea of global or national

‘post-secularity’ to explain the way British foreign policy makers have started to ‘manage God’ in the international context, we are called to recognize the domestic sources of international policy. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, then, we are called to consider whether the label ‘post-secular’ might be more problematic than its widespread usage would suggest and requires us to challenge its application on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, it is to the other side of the Atlantic that I turn in Chapter Five.

## **Chapter 5: Both Religious and Secular (or How Are US Policy Makers ‘Managing God’?)**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Four, I considered whether the label ‘post-secular’ adequately described the way foreign policy makers in the UK are ‘managing God’. I suggested that - contrary to the narratives of religious change provided by post-secular theorists - the UK case was evidence of continuity between religion-related foreign policy and domestic policy, both of which are influenced by our church-state arrangements. In this Chapter, as a foil to the UK situation, I offer an account of the American experience of the religion- policy nexus.

I begin by outlining the most significant ‘post-secular’ narrative to emerge as an explanation of the American context. While rational choice theories of religion contend that a religious ‘marketplace’ exists in positive correlation to religiosity in the United States, I point to a radically different way to understand the relationship between ‘freedom’, ‘choice’ and ‘religion’ in American society and make two observations. First, I explore the fate of ‘religion’ in recent electoral and domestic politics. Here, I suggest ‘religious freedom’ repeatedly acts as a source of both division and constraint, in that it provokes debate but at the same time provides boundaries beyond which debate



cannot go. In so doing, I suggest, 'religious freedom' acts as a source of cultural renewal, refocusing attention on core cultural values. In fact, I argue, 'freedom' might have a different relationship to religiosity than that defined by supply side models in that it is woven into something of a 'sacred narrative'. As a result, I argue, the rational choice paradigm becomes less an analytical tool for understanding religion in *societies* and more a reflection of something sacred in one specific *society*. Secondly, interpreting my own interview data with US Government officials and civil society representatives, I demonstrate that increased engagement with religion by the US Government is mediated through the First Amendment and therefore results in increased *secularism* (vis privatisation) rather than increased *religiosity*. What emerges from the American data, therefore, is a more complex picture than a single theory of religion-state can account for, and certainly more nuanced than the simple expression 'religious America, secular Europe' ( Berger et al, 2008) would suggest. As in the UK, I demonstrate the domestic church-state settlement influences religion-related foreign and domestic policy in ways which demonstrate that the US policy context is at once *structurally* secular yet *culturally* religious.

## **5.2 The God Gap**

While the role frequently played by religious dynamics in global affairs has brought religion-state relationships back to the forefront of

academic attention (Berger, 1999; Fox and Sandler, 2004; Petito and Hatzopoulos, 2004), in critiquing Western models as insufficiently attentive to religion, political scientists all too often conflate vastly different modern church-state settlements by reference to the ‘secularising’ effect of the Treaty of Westphalia (see e.g. May et al, 2014: 332-333)<sup>89</sup>. Yet, for some time, comparative analyses of religion and society in the US and Europe have repeatedly revealed a significant ‘God Gap’. Indeed, as described in Chapter Two, the two theoretical approaches which have dominated the sociology of religion during the twentieth century - secularisation theory and rational choice theory - have been predicated and developed based on the fundamental *differences* between the religious complexions of the United States and Europe.

Drawing on numerical data on religious affiliation and on the public visibility of religion in the United States, historically, scholars identified it as an ‘exceptional’<sup>90</sup> case which has resisted the modern trend toward increasing secularisation. By contrast, Northern

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<sup>89</sup> For a longer discussion of the Treaty of Westphalia and its legacy see Chapter 6.

<sup>90</sup> In his landmark two volume text ‘Democracy in America’ (originally published in 1835 and 1840:36) Alexis De Tocqueville suggested that that ‘The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one’. Since then, the idea of American exceptionalism has come to incorporate a range of characteristics such that Roberts and DeCuirci (2012) ask ‘Why has the myth of American exceptionalism, characterized by a belief in America’s highly distinctive features or unusual trajectory based in the abundance of its natural resources, its revolutionary origins and its protestant religious culture that anticipated God’s blessing of the nation—held such tremendous staying power, from its influence in popular culture to its critical role in foreign policy?’. Later, as Casanova (2006:17) explains, it became fashionable for European sociologists of religion to appropriate the motif of American exceptionalism to point to differences between it and the European context.

European data suggested a continued downward trend in religious affiliation that provided the basis of classic secularisation theory (Bruce, 2002). More recent accounts present the European experience as exceptional both in relation to the US (Stark, 1999, Warner, 1993) and the rest of the world (Davie, 2002).

In my interviews with UK officials about the relationship between religion and foreign policy, one message sounded loud and clear: ‘we want to avoid becoming American’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c). Though most of those I interviewed suggested that there had been little evidence of religion in their own dealings with colleagues in the United States, most still sought to point out what they considered to be the extensive influence of religion in American foreign policy. Some were able to connect this to their own experience - for example, in relation to the counter-insurgency in Afghanistan, one official noted that a US military officer had explained to a number of ‘incredulous’ UK officials that ‘what these people need here is the Bible’ (HMG/5 July 2012/b). Another suggested that there are disagreements between the two countries on ‘how we define ourselves’, noting that there are occasions where ‘we expect a rational response but get an emotional one’ (HMG/28 August 2012/a). Some were also able to identify specific areas of disagreement such as the death penalty, gun control and criminal deportation rights (HMG/28 August 2012/a, HMG/28 August 2012/c).

Most, then, acknowledged significant transatlantic differences in the religion-policy relationship. For example, one official lauded the ‘secularity’ of the UK Civil Service and suggested that America was a ‘classic example where it (religion) skews the agenda horribly’ (HMG/24 July 2012/a). Another argued that the level of conversation on the subject of religion and foreign policy is ‘more mature’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a) in the US because ‘the floor level of assumptions about religion in the US is higher’. Importantly, the same official went on to suggest that this might be because ‘British leaders tend not to worry about the religious constituency like the US ones do’ (HMG/3 July 2012/a) and another explained that, unlike the US, ‘we have been reasonably successful at keeping electoral politics away from religion’ (HMG/4 July 2012/c).

Indeed, my interviews with American officials and civil society representatives also drew on ideas of a ‘God Gap’, here expressed in terms of the ‘secularism’ of British politics. When asked about the difference between the US and the UK, one civil society representative explained concerns that ‘Europe seems to be going in the French direction’ in which secularism is characterised as ‘anti-religion’ (USCS/7 May 2013/a\*). One former Government official suggested that ‘civil society as a phenomenon is probably more well developed in the US than in European countries’ (USCS/26 March 2013/b\*). He went on to suggest that the European Convention on Human Rights has meant that ‘religious liberty has been lost in

continental Europe' given 'equality trumps conscience', a point that has been articulated on this side of the Atlantic by Roger Trigg (2013). There is, then, a persistent *perception* that when it comes to public policy, it is a case of 'religious America, secular Europe' (Berger et al, 2008).

### **5.3 Being In, Being Out**

At this point, it seems worthwhile for me to comment on a significant point of difference between my UK and US fieldwork. While I had intended to replicate exactly my UK fieldwork in the United States, it quickly became apparent that the range of sources of relevance was much greater in the US. It would come as no surprise, for example, to Steiner (1987) that a far greater number of civil society representatives, public intellectuals and 'advisors' came forward to be interviewed in the United States than in the UK. In part, this was the result of my position (where I had been an 'insider' to the UK policy community, I was forced to approach most of my potential US interviewees with an introduction from a UK counterpart or, on many occasions, cold), but it likely also was due to what Steiner calls the 'open and shut' nature of decision making in American and British foreign policy. Calling diplomacy 'Janus-faced' in engaging in the international arena while at the same time operating 'in a domestic context which shapes the national interest and the choice of options' (Steiner, 1987:1), Steiner outlines noticeable differences

between the foreign policy process in the US and the UK. The former, in which the US President has the primary initiative, is characterised by the inclusion of a wider range of actors such that he ‘can pick who he wishes for this office (the State Department), bypass the department of state at will, engage in personal negotiation and use his own agents abroad’ (Steiner, 1987: 6-7). By contrast, in the UK, most obviously the Foreign Office, and more recently the Cabinet Office have acted as centralising forces for foreign policy making such that ‘the moulding of a national interest is a far more complex and open process in the US than in the UK’ (Steiner, 1987:16).

I would suggest that there are important implications of this relative openness for the relationship between religion and foreign policy. First, as Steiner demonstrates, the separation of executive and legislative powers in the US both limits the President’s actions and brings a wider range of players into the process meaning that lobby groups, congressional caucuses and the media play a significant role. This is certainly noticeable in my selection of interview subjects, which included what I have called ‘civil society representatives’ from Congressional staffers to lobby group/think tank analysts in addition to Federal Government Employees. In the UK, my interviews were limited to Government officials, many of whom reported consulting external sources but usually in an informal and ad hoc way. The relative openness of the US policy community to outside influences, it seems, might explain the perception held by UK officials about the

extensive influence of religion on policy making in the US. In the course of my research, I was frequently made aware of two noticeable departures from my own experience of work in Government: while there is a cadre of permanent officials, a system of political appointments for senior positions in the US gives the President the opportunity to reward with appointment those who have been helpful in a successful election campaign and to appoint representatives of important constituencies. This has the effect of creating what one former Government official described as a ‘revolving door’ (USCS/26 March 2013/b\*) through which people move in and out of diplomatic or policy careers. The result is a large pool of those with some policy experience or expertise in the wider epistemic community where ‘policy people will get academic positions without academic credentials to share their experience and teach something practical’ (USCS/26 March 2013/b\*).<sup>91</sup> This contrasts significantly with the UK where all my interview subjects were career civil servants, often drawing on considerable experience and creating significant institutional memory.

#### **5.4 Religious America, Secular Europe?**

The relative ‘openness’ of the US foreign policy machine (which makes it more likely that religious voices will be represented in the

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<sup>91</sup> According to Peter Haas (1992:3) an epistemic community is ‘a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.’

diplomatic process), then, is yet another reason why it is necessary to point towards constitutive differences between the American and British foreign policy context. Yet, while I have suggested that a picture is emerging of 'religious America, secular Europe' (Berger et al, 2008), it might be necessary to complicate that picture. As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, the UK policy context is demonstrably not 'secular', does not marginalise religion but rather is extensively engaged with religious communities and dynamics at home - and increasingly overseas - in ways which are consistent with and draw from the relationship between state and church in Britain. The UK policy machine, I suggested, is structurally religious but culturally 'religion blind'. In this Chapter, I introduce some of the evidence derived from my American interviews and that too suggests a more complex situation than conventional wisdom might suggest.

As I explained in Chapter 2, the dominant 'post-secular' narrative relating to religion and society in the United States is the so-called 'rational choice' model (see e.g. Warner, 1993). This paradigm is predicated on the idea that religious liberty creates a free marketplace in which religion thrives. As Davie (2002:36) explains, it is as though 'the principle of voluntarism ..[is].. the fundamental reason for the continuing vitality of religion in American civic life'. Rational Choice models are distinctive in the sociology of religion both because of their deductive methodology and because they challenge long established narratives of secularisation. But they are also significant



for us in that they challenge the notion of a single 'Western' experience of religion and state and, in so doing, undermine simplistic international relations models. However, while the 'religious economy' paradigm has made important gains for the sociology of religion (not least in elevating its core subject matter from the micro to the macro level), the connection of pluralism to religious mobilisation in a linear upward slope (Finke and Stark, 1992) may be problematic in the context of the religion-policy nexus.

Davie (2002:36) importantly derives from rational choice theory that constitutive differences between American and European experiences of religion relate to the differing constitutional arrangements in these contexts. She suggests that the difference can be characterised as 'voluntarism..compared with a relatively immobile state Church'. This much I would agree with. Yet, what supply side models also do, Davie notes, is align voluntarism or 'religious freedom' with increased levels of religiosity. While this positive correlation may seem to describe the relationship between 'freedom' and public religiosity in the United States, it may be less successful in accounting for the relationship between religion and public policy making. In what follows, I suggest, rational choice models which posit a positive and direct correlation between 'freedom' and 'religiosity' do not adequately reflect what is going on in domestic and electoral politics. In fact, it is necessary to introduce a theoretical alternative to both secularisation and rational choice theories which is, I suggest, useful in helping us to understand

a different way in which ‘freedom’ and ‘religion’ seem to be inter-related in the US polity. Hence, I refer to a recently revived conversation about the theory of ‘civil religion’, an established alternative to both secularisation and rational choice models, which emphasises the endurance of ‘sacred’ values in American society.

### **5.5 Land of the free? Religion and domestic politics in the US**

In the 2012 race for the Republican presidential nomination, religion was a much discussed factor, not least because of the range of faith backgrounds being represented. What looks like religious diversity among the candidates in the Republican nomination process actually reveals the narrow scope of ‘pluralism’ in political leadership: this ‘diverse’ group comprised four Christian candidates - one Mormon, two Roman Catholics and one Southern Baptist. While the general acceptance of Catholic candidates indicates a greater appetite for pluralism in political leadership than in the pre-Kennedy era, the extent of this pluralism should not be over emphasised. Indeed, the extent of scrutiny to which front-runner Mitt Romney was exposed, as a result of his declared Mormon faith, reveals that the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of conscience is quite noticeably limited when an individual enters public life.

The sheer number of opinion polls taken on the subject of the candidates’ religious affiliation is a testament to the significance of the

issue<sup>92</sup>. According to the Gallup data<sup>93</sup>, 22 per cent of Americans would not vote for a Mormon candidate (compared to 7 per cent for a Catholic and 9 per cent for a Jewish candidate). Further, a Washington Post-ABC News poll in June 2011 found that 20% of Republicans would be less likely to vote for a candidate who was Mormon<sup>94</sup>. It is not clear exactly what aspect of Mormonism offends public sensibilities. A recent BBC documentary<sup>95</sup> revealed that problematic associations with polygamy and underage marriage in the breakaway ‘fundamentalist’ Latter Day Saints (LDS) community may be a factor. So might the so-called ‘cultish’ practices of the LDS community, and perceived lack of biblical basis for their beliefs. Importantly, however, Romney defended himself based on the principle of religious liberty: ‘The great majority of Americans understand that this nation was founded on the principle of religious tolerance and liberty. Most people do not make their decision based on someone's faith’ (McGreal, 2012). That said, there is considerable evidence that Romney sought to underplay his Mormonism during the campaign and instead to emphasise that he is a man of faith, using generalised theistic rhetoric. His decision to discuss his faith at one event was

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<sup>92</sup> This is in stark contrast to the 2015 UK General election where there was very little discussion of religion, something which is evidenced by the Field’s (2015) short round-up of data - see <http://www.brin.ac.uk/news/2015/religion-and-the-general-election/> - accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>93</sup> See Chingos and Henderson (2012)

<sup>94</sup> Full polling data can be found at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/postabcpoll\\_110311.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/postabcpoll_110311.html) - accessed 20 June 2015

<sup>95</sup> This World: The Mormon Candidate, BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01f87w2> - accessed 20 June 2015

acknowledged as a rarity<sup>96</sup>. Even in these circumstances, rather than a mark of difference, he chose to emphasise the way his religion connects him to the American people: “This gentleman wanted to talk about the doctrines of my religion. I’ll talk about the practices of my faith’.

It seems that Romney’s invocation of religious liberty, combined with his public presentation as a man of faith and values persuaded voters. His success in the Republican primaries suggested that his ‘different’ faith was less of an issue than it has been in the past<sup>97</sup>. Indeed, the idea that his Mormonism was a major political weakness declined as he successfully directed attention towards common values. As James Richardson (2012) in *The Guardian* noted: ‘Romney has largely managed to assuage evangelical concerns by merely emphasising the shared ethics of faith, family and freedom.’ The significance of this, I would suggest, must not be underestimated. Romney, assisted by a major LDS public relations initiative ‘I am Mormon’, has managed to align Mormonism with mainstream American beliefs and values in a way which suggests that it is now no longer only a numerically significant symbol of religious pluralism, but also now considered to be a legitimate religious position for a potential President. Given US

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<sup>96</sup> Town Hall Meeting, Moore oil, Milwaukee Wisconsin, April 2 2012 - see articles from NBC news <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46938512/ns/politics-primaries/t/wisconsin-romney-offers-rare-insight-mormon-faith/#.T3wfCI4WXLY> wall street journal [http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2012/04/02/romney-is-asked-on-faith-and-interracial-marriage/?mod=google\\_news\\_blogmaking](http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2012/04/02/romney-is-asked-on-faith-and-interracial-marriage/?mod=google_news_blogmaking)

<sup>97</sup> The public’s lack of acceptance of the Mormon faith is widely recognised as one cause for Romney’s unsuccessful run for the Republican candidacy in 2007 and his father’s against Nixon in 1968.

Presidents' religious affiliations have, in the past, extended only a limited way along the Christian spectrum,<sup>98</sup> this might be considered a notable breakthrough. What it also demonstrates, I would suggest, is the way in which the ideal of religious liberty exerts influence over the American population.

The Romney case is evidence not only that the President's religion is a significant electoral issue, but also that it must be of a particular character and quality. According to one Gallup poll<sup>99</sup> (June 2012), 43% of the American electorate would not support an atheist candidate: it would be inconceivable for a Presidential Oath not to be sworn 'so help me God', or for a speech to be ended without the words 'God Bless America'. This is highly significant, for it points to a deep connection between religion and national identity and might suggest that the President's religion is most significant to the electorate not in terms of its theological or doctrinal position, but because it is sort of test of his commitment to American values. As one of my interviewees explained: 'in terms of a candidate for office, their faith is considered to reflect something bigger - being religious is part of being American' (HMG/ 21 March 2013/a).

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<sup>98</sup> The actual breakdown is as follows: 11 Episcopalians, 8 Presbyterians, 4 Baptists, 4 Methodists, 4 Unitarians, 3 no formal affiliation, 2 Disciples of Christ, 2 Dutch Reformed, 2 Quakers, 1 Catholic, 1 Congregationalist and 1 United Church of Christ.

<sup>99</sup> For the full polling data see <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155285/atheists-muslims-bias-presidential-candidates.aspx> - accessed 20 June 2015

Spickard (2014), Casanova (2006) and Warner (2000) have all drawn attention to the value of Will Herberg's (1956) idea of the 'American Way of Life' as critical in understanding religion and immigration in the United States. In fact, Herberg's is a classic text in the sociology of religion and is recognised as offering a particularly important insight into the development of religious congregations in situations of pluralism. As Herberg (1956: 87) himself explains, religion plays a crucial sociological role in American society: 'over and above conventional religion, there is to be found among Americans some sort of faith or belief or set of convictions, not generally designated as religion but definitely operating as such in their lives in the sense of providing them with some fundamental context of normativity and meaning'.

This expression of a version of 'civil religion' theory, I suggest, can help us to understand the role 'religious freedom' plays in United States government policy and electoral politics. 'Religious Freedom' has become part of what Herberg (1956) calls the common religion, the 'American Way of Life' that is a normative structure of ideals, aspirations, values, beliefs and standards. Going beyond the scope of traditional civil religion theory (e.g. Bellah, 1967, Parsons, 1966), Herberg (1956: 90) argues that the American Way of Life has been able to incorporate resistance identities, demonstrating that it is organic, responsive and 'genuinely operative in their lives'. Does increased receptivity to Romney's Mormonism not reflect exactly this

sort of organic renegotiation of the American Civil Religion?

Herberg's account of the American Way of Life is an instrumental one, in which belief in God underpins and furthers US sacred values - it is a religion based on activism and service, not on theology or doctrine. In discussing his missionary background and his work with American communities, Romney aligned himself with exactly this American tradition, seemingly presenting Mormonism not as a source of 'difference' but as a legitimate and natural expression of his American values.

In the same way, political figures from the past have sought to use religious expression to demonstrate suitability for office, making explicit connection between theism and national values. In the midst of a sex scandal that would mar his presidency, Bill Clinton was conspicuously photographed outside the Foundry United Methodist Church, Bible in hand. In the same spirit, quiet evangelical Jimmy Carter was elected to 'redeem' the presidency after the disgrace of the administration under Nixon and Ford. More recently, in the midst of political and economic crises, then presidential candidate Barack Obama was repeatedly construed as a Messianic figure, 'a potential saviour that might come and absolve the country of all its sins.'<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The words of Chicago art student, David Cordero, who created the 'Blessing' sculpture of Obama. Of other artistic and linguistic representations of Obama as Jesus, most significant is 'The Truth' by Michael D'Antuono which was due to be unveiled in New York City to celebrate his 100th day in office but was considered insulting to Christians.

Yet, perhaps the most contentious issue concerning religion and Presidential politics in recent years has actually concerned President Obama but has cast him in a rather different light. Despite his professions of Christianity and conspicuous attendance at church, a minority of the American public remain unconvinced about the President's religious affiliation<sup>101</sup>. Like Romney, Obama has spoken of his Christian faith in terms of action and service, presenting Jesus as a role model, a symbol of interfaith friendship<sup>102</sup>, as a servant<sup>103</sup>, and as a teacher<sup>104</sup>. This does not seem to have been universally convincing, as John Feffer (2012) argues. Continued attempts to 'expose' Obama as Muslim - including at official Republican party events involving John McCain and Rick Santorum - seem to revolve around his being 'too soft' on Muslims, despite a strong record on counter-terrorism and national security. Feffer (2012) suggests this is a political tool: desperate Republicans have focused on spurious arguments about race and religion because their traditional area of

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<sup>101</sup> According to a Pew Forum Poll (August 18 2010) 18% of those questioned consider Obama to be Muslim and only 34% believe that he is a Christian - see <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/08/18/growing-number-of-americans-say-obama-is-a-muslim/> - accessed 20 June 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Obama makes reference to Islamic story of Isra in which Moses, Jesus and Mohammed pray together, 4 June 2009, Cairo. See full text of speech <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-keynote-speech-egypt> - accessed 20 June 2015.

<sup>103</sup> In a speech given at Notre Dame University, (17 May 2009), he explained that the idea of 'service' had brought him to Christianity and expressed admiration for Jesus' good works. For full text of speech, see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-notre-dame-commencement> - accessed 20 June 2015

<sup>105</sup> In a speech on economic policy at Georgetown University in April 2009, Obama invoked the Sermon on the Mount, saying "we cannot build this economy on the same pile of sand". For full text see [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Obama\\_Economy\\_Georgetown.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Obama_Economy_Georgetown.html) - accessed 20 June 2015.



comparative strength - national security - has been a particular success for Obama. Whether this is the reason for the prominence of religion in the 2012 election is open to question; that Islam (unlike the three communions - Protestant, Catholic, Jew) which all participate in Herberg's Common Religion) is incompatible with American values, it seems, is not. The President, as leader of the nation, is responsible at once for protecting the constitutional separation between church and state and yet must himself publicly declare, practice and espouse values based on faith; he must be, as one interviewee told me 'Pastor in Chief' (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*), at once embodying the ideal of religious liberty, and at the same time being a person of 'faith'. This dual role, I would argue, epitomises the unique contradiction that governs the way American policy makers 'manage god'.

The debate about candidates' religious faith, then, is an example of the practical outworking of the first amendment, but at the same time, reveals it to be part of a more complex fabric: a sort of national sacred narrative. In my MA thesis (Lindsay, 2011), I suggested that the work of both Parsons (1966) and Bellah (1967) was critical in helping us to understand the relationship of religion and national security in the American context given - through theories of civil religion - we are able to recognise a process by which the profane is 'sacralised'. Indeed, building on Parsons' work, Tiryakian (1982) has suggested that the Puritan ethic in the US had effectively caused the breakdown of the dualism between 'this' and 'other' worlds which had previously

been characteristic of Christianity. This had the effect of extending the earthly horizon, making the sacralisation of the mundane possible.

Contrary to the assumption of classical modernists such as Marx and Weber, this demonstrated that America was not experiencing disenchantment, but simply an altered horizon upon which the sacred/profane distinction operates with the result that America itself has been sacralised and Christian motifs such as mission and service have been assimilated into the civil polity.

And I am not alone in re-making the case for civil religion theories to explain the American context. A number of recent re-interpretations focus on comparative assessments of different expressions of civil religion (Markoff and Regan, 1982), and recognise civil religious phenomena as emerging at key historical moments, characterised by the tension between local and nationalising identities (Gorski, 2010; Markoff and Regan, 1982; Crook, 2010). In fact, with Crook (2010), I suggest, the challenges posed by globalisation are giving new credence both to the description of the United States as a civil religious culture and to the emergence of civil religion as a legitimating aspect of secular democracy.

Hence, I would argue that motifs of 'freedom' and 'choice' have been assimilated into the civil polity and civil religion theory can help us to frame the relationship between 'freedom' and 'religion' in the American context. The principle of 'religious freedom' appears to act

simultaneously as a guarantee of pluralism and at the same time a constraint which ensures coherence within diversity to the extent that, as Herberg (1956: 247) suggests, ‘this underlying unity... sets limits within which their conflicts and tensions may operate and beyond which they cannot go’. In other words, pluralism and its associated tensions are critical to - and formative of - national life, but they are contained and continually expressed in terms of the relationship between church and state. What civil religion theory offers us is a way to recognise that the relationship between ‘freedom’ and ‘religion’ in American society should not only be understood numerically (as secularisation theories would suggest) or deductively (as rational choice theorists would have it) but substantively: in this sense ‘freedom’ is less a condition of religious vitality and more a ‘religious’ or ‘sacred’ value.

### **5.51 Culture War...**

‘Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith - and I don’t care what it is’ (Henry, 1981:41). The words of President Eisenhower were particularly resonant in the run-up to the 2012 Presidential election, where religious values - and particularly religious liberty - took centre stage in key policy debates. While Republican candidates Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Rick Perry and Rick Santorum all declared that God asked them to run for

higher office, they - and others - have accused Obama of imposing an altogether different set of values in the policy arena.

As part of Obama's controversial effort to increase access to and provision of healthcare to lower socio-economic groups, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) represents a significant reform of health care legislation in the United States, making it mandatory for all Americans not already covered to purchase a minimum level of health insurance. Attacks on the 'unconstitutional' nature of this policy have abounded. According to Lambert and Pelosfky (2011), the majority of US states have enacted lawsuits against the Federal Government challenging various aspects of the Act. While the reasons for these challenges are numerous, significant among them are those which seek to focus the debate on the question of religious liberty and the relationship between church and state.

Part of the PPACA mandate includes a requirement that all healthcare providers - including faith-based organisations - offer contraception, abortion and sterilisation as part of their services. While the 'individual mandate' allows individuals to opt out of the purchase of health insurance for religious reasons, even Catholic health providers who have serious doctrinal opposition to such provision, are forced to offer these services. As a result, the policy - labelled 'Obamacare' - is perceived as contravening religious freedom. According to sympathetic commentators (drawn largely from Catholic and

evangelical Christian constituencies), forcing faith-based health providers to offer preventative services as part of mandatory health insurance is a direct violation of the First Amendment. It is ‘an unprecedented and untenable abrogation of religious freedom in the United States’ say Kevin Vann and Kevin Farrel<sup>105</sup>, two Catholic bishops from North Texas who suggest that ‘this is part of a pattern in the United States that has degenerated from the recognition of religion as good and salutary to our society to religion being subjected to punitive discrimination’.

In fact, fears that Obama leads from a position of ‘aggressive secularism’ have achieved mainstream appeal. Romney, the Republican candidate who faced Obama on election day, has criticised ‘Obamacare’ as representing an ‘attack on religion’, and commentators accuse Obama of seeking to introduce European models of social welfare in to the United States, and with them, European secularism<sup>106</sup>. Legal scholar, Thomas M Messner, quoted in the National Review Online (Lopez, 2012) summarises the argument: ‘the HHS mandate is about whether government should force individuals and institutions to purchase or provide insurance plans that include goods and services that violate deeply held religious and moral beliefs. In short, the HHS mandate is about freedom in general

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<sup>105</sup> Full text of the Bishops Joint Statement can be found here: <http://www.knowingisdoing.org/2012/01/26/a-clear-catholic-message-regarding-the-hhs-ruling/> - accessed 20 June 2015

<sup>106</sup> See for example the article by William Inboden: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/01/23/is-the-white-house-trying-to-turn-america-into-france/> - accessed 20 June 2015

and religious freedom in particular.’ The degree to which such a complex debate can be reduced to a single issue is characteristic of US political rhetoric, thus while there are numerous other issues - legal and moral - involved in the debate over healthcare (it is a debate which has dominated presidential politics for generations) - its presentation in terms of religious freedom remains front and central. Populist right-winger Bill O’Reilly (2007) uses the expression ‘culture war’ to paint Obama’s ‘secular progressivism’ - associated not just with universal healthcare, but also gay marriage, alignment with Europe and secularism - as ‘contemptuous of American values’ - using his interpretation of the first amendment not only to challenge a specific policy, but to cast wider aspersions about Obama’s suitability.

Yet, at the same time, supporters of the Act also make appeals to religious liberty in defending Obama, presenting the legislation as inspired by the very essence of the First Amendment: ‘as our nation becomes more pluralistic and welcomes those with different faiths; as we sharpen our understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity; and as we see issues of conscience play out on both sides of the reproductive rights debate, we struggle to discern where religious liberty is under assault and where it is growing in strength and understanding’ (Steenland, 2012). According to them, the PPACA is a necessary protection of the establishment clause, a symbol of pluralism and a guarantor of religious liberty even for those affiliated to non-Judaeo-Christian traditions or no religion at all.

This sort of debate that polarises the electorate is far from new. In fact, it echoes conversations through the ages in which the relationship between religion and public policy in the US has been continually re-expressed in terms of the First Amendment, and specifically, tensions between the free exercise of religion and the establishment clause. The ‘grey area’ in which the ‘wall of separation’ between Church and State was erected has frequently been the subject of national controversy over issues ranging from prayer in school<sup>107</sup> to the Pledge of Allegiance<sup>108</sup>. Debates repeatedly revolve around interpretation of the first amendment which both grants the liberty to exercise religion (or lack of religion) freely and at the same time seems to condemn this exercise in any public institution as unconstitutional because it could be construed as ‘endorsement’. This tension has been particularly pronounced in recent years, and especially since the 1980s, given matters of personal morality have increasingly featured in public policy debates. Yet cases such as the famous John Scopes trial over the teaching of evolution in the 1920s, reveal that these matters are

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<sup>107</sup> Since two landmark cases in 1962 (*Engel vs Vitale*) and 1963 (*Abington School District vs Schempp*) public schools in the US have been banned from conducting religious observances based on the prohibition in the First Amendment that ‘congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion’ i.e. the establishment clause. However, there have been numerous cases brought since the 1960s which have sought the reintroduction of school prayers based on the ‘free exercise’ clause in the first amendment. - see Makula and Mabunda (1999) *Lee v. Weisman*. *Great American Court Cases*. Ed. Mark Mikula and L. Mpho Mabunda. Vol. 1: Individual Liberties. Detroit: Gale, 1999. *Gale Opposing Viewpoints In Context*. Web. 7 Sep. 2011

<sup>108</sup> see <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,266658,00.html> - on the case of *Elk Grove Unified School District vs Newdow* when an atheist went to court to prove that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional due to the ‘under God’ phrase.

perennial and fundamentally connected to the relationship between religion and American society.

Indeed, I would suggest that these debates are an essential - and constitutive - part of American socio-political culture. While they seem to reflect divisions in American society, the terms and scope of the debate are contained. As Herberg (1956) noted, this ensures that there is unity even amidst diversity: the 'sacred' value of religious liberty constrains the public policy debate, creating a space for the periodic renewal of the sacred narrative and focussing the nation on matters of national values and identity. While, in his structural-functional account of social systems, Parsons has been accused (see e.g. Wrong, 1961 and Holmwood, undated) of paying insufficient attention to the role of conflict within the system, given both sides engaged call upon the First Amendment, my evidence would suggest that what looks like a 'culture war' is in fact an on-going negotiation over a set of principles which both sides accept. In this respect, the *sacralisation* of 'religious freedom' is a critical and constitutive part of America's *secular* democracy.

### **5.52 ..or cultural renewal**

According to Senator Joseph Lieberman (Democrat, Connecticut), the International Religious Freedom Act is rooted in the First Amendment. In his speech introducing the Act to into the Senate on October 8



1998<sup>109</sup>, Lieberman explained that the Act honoured the fact that ‘this nation, founded under God, with freedom of conscience, of religion as its cornerstone is prepared to do what it can to extend those values reasonably, ostensibly around the world...’.

Given the centrality of ‘sacred’ values, including religious liberty, in American political life, it should be unsurprising that there has been widespread bipartisan support of the use of American foreign policy in support of international religious freedom. Indeed, former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (2007: 88) has herself acknowledged that, though the Christian right in the US has largely been responsible for bringing private and personal issues of morality to the international stage, there is considerable consensus in the US and ‘both the political left and the Christian right agree that ‘moral values’ should be near the centre of US foreign policy.’ It is, however, the expression of these ‘moral values’ that tends to cause controversy. The Act was passed unanimously at the time, but has provoked debate and division since its inception.

At stake in these discussions has not been the principle of religious freedom, but whether the Act should be interpreted positively or negatively. Arguments such as those advanced over the Obamacare issue reappear in this context, where proponents of a stronger IRF policy (e.g. Farr and Hoover, 2009) argue that the current

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<sup>109</sup> For video of the full speech made to the Senate see <http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4487898/international-religious-freedom> - accessed 7 April 2015

arrangements focus too heavily on persecution and seek to achieve the freedom of religious prisoners rather than seeking to foster the principles of religious freedom more generally as part of the democracy promotion agenda. IRF, they suggest, is not only marginalised within the State Department (the IRF Ambassador is of junior rank and located within the Human Rights and Democracy division) but is not sufficiently integrated as support to broader priorities such as counter-terrorism and national security. On the other hand are those who advocate IRF, but express concern about the strong association of IRF advocacy with both the Christian Right in the US and with accusations of cultural imperialism which make IRF policy counter-productive. Indeed, this division is noticeable in my interview data. Among those participants in my US fieldwork, some members of the international religious freedom lobby had started to focus their attention on domestic matters as one former Government official explained: 'it has become apparent that there are problems with religious freedom in Western Europe and data suggesting religious freedom is also problematic in the US' such that they are now part of the 'religious freedom project' (USCS/26 March 2013/b\*). Other members of the IRF lobby sought to distance international efforts from domestic partisan politics as one civil society representative explained: 'some people have tried to connect international religious freedom to the domestic agenda.... but this link needs to be broken' (USCS/24 April 2013/a\*).

Indeed, the Report of the Task Force on Religion and the Making of US Foreign Policy (Appleby and Cizik, 2010: 12) reveals extensive and notable disagreement on the matter of the future direction of IRF policy. All parties involved in discussion agreed that IRF is a central part of US Foreign Policy and needed to address not just persecution but must include ‘the right of religious individuals and groups to advance their values publicly in civil society and political life’.

However, as is now a familiar refrain, the First Amendment emerged as a sticking point. Some Task Force members argued for IRF to be integrated strategically into foreign policy, but with recognition that its pursuit may be subsumed by other strategic priorities, for example in bilateral relationships with China. Others, contrarily, argued for the centrality of IRF in a way which creates a foreign policy establishment, as well as international context, which is more comfortable dealing with religion. In other words, the former recognise IRF as an objective but do not seek to integrate religious motives or activities into the development of foreign policy, while the latter argue the opposite. The core of this disagreement, then, revolves around the precedent set by the First Amendment: does it enable ‘a constructive tension between church and state’ or create ‘a separation between religion and the act of governing?’ (Farr and Hoover, 2009: 32). Once more, it seems, America’s feted ideal of religious liberty acts as a policy constraint, limiting debate about the relationship between religion and foreign policy to a fight over whether the first amendment guarantees freedom ‘from’ religion or freedom ‘of’

religion. Yet at the same time, this sort of debate - as we have seen in the domestic context - is less 'culture war' and more 'cultural renewal' given that it offers an opportunity for the rehearsal of well established positions and focuses attention on the 'sacred narrative' within which religious liberty plays a central role.

### **5.53 Religious freedom or sacred economism?**

In electoral, domestic and international policy, then, we have seen the role that 'religious freedom' plays in at once provoking debate and in so doing, renewing America's civil religion. The 2012 Presidential election, debates over Obamacare and on-going tussles over international religious freedom policy all epitomise a recurring phenomenon in US social and political life whereby the nation's sacred values come under scrutiny only to be renewed. But how far can existing sociology of religion models help us in understanding this context where 'freedom' is at once a policy constraint and at the same time a sacred value? Evidence drawn from the domestic and electoral context demonstrates that there is a deep *cultural* religiosity that accompanies *structural* secularism in the American polity. Rational choice models posit a direct causal relationship between religious freedom and high levels of religiosity. However, in the context of civil religion, rational choice theory looks less like a theoretical explanation and more like a reflection of the sacred narrative.

In arguing for a Durkheimian 'religious sociology', Alexander (1988: 192) suggests that political contexts can be understood in symbolic terms. Using the example of the Watergate scandal, he argues that political office can be likened to sacred power which - at key crisis moments - is 're-transcendentalized'. In these periods of effervescence 'the classificatory system of collective symbols can sometimes be drastically changed.... the relation of social actors to these dominant classifications is always shifted and transformed. Cultural myths are recalled and extended to contemporary circumstance. Social solidarities are reworked.' We might suggest, as a result of the analysis presented here, that religious freedom plays a key role in these crisis moments: it provides a guarantee of difference and therefore of energetic debate, while at the same time it is part of a unifying cultural narrative.

Ultimately, then, religious liberty is a guarantor of both pluralism and unity, something uniquely constitutive of the American experience. But it may constrain the religion-policy relationship at a more strategic level. Both sides of the 'establishment clause' debate in IRF policy agree that disagreement over the First Amendment has resulted in the inability of the policy establishment to engage effectively with religion: 'the separation of church and state affects the way we approach the issue of religion in political affairs and has contributed to its marginalization' (Appleby and Cizik, 2010: 26). Not only, then, does religious liberty constrain specific policy debates, both domestic

and international, it limits the way the relationship between religion and policy is conceived. This has highly significant implications for further research. It suggests that, like in the United Kingdom, the domestic context, as well as the global environment, is a significant influencer of foreign policy, making the culture-policy relationship an important factor. So too does it indicate the uniqueness of American political and social life which is characterised by both macro-level structural secularisation and at the same time macro-level cultural religiosity. Finally, and most importantly here, it has implications for the way we understand religion in American political and social life.

First, it re-states, rather than challenges, the ‘exceptionalism’ or ‘uniqueness’ of the American religion-society relationship, demanding that we revisit the contributions of Bellah (1967) and Parsons (1978) who explain the public visibility of religion in America is not necessarily the result of ‘deprivatisation’ (Casanova, 1994) or ‘resurgence’ (Thomas, 2005) but an expression of macro-level secularization (via the first amendment). Notably, Parsons (1978: 201) called religious freedom ‘not an index of religious indifference, but of consensus on the religious principles involved’. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it enables us to re-interpret rational choice theory not as being in opposition to secularisation theory (per decline of beliefs) or as in inverse relationship to secularisation (as supply sides suggest) but in a different position altogether, independent of the premises of secularisation theory. Here rational choice theory becomes

a natural expression of the very First Amendment principles which we have seen constrain public policy debate in the United States - an expression of what we might call 'sacred economism'. The ideal of religious freedom, and its expression via the analogy of the market should less be considered an explanation of religious vitality and more a reflection of the 'sacred' values inherent in American culture.

### **5.54 Civil religion in the context of the secular**

It is evident, then, that the religion-policy nexus in the US operates in the context of a civil religious culture which frames electoral, domestic and foreign policy. Religious freedom operates as a civil religious value, which, at once is the subject of and at the same time constrains public policy debate on a range of issues and is, ultimately, a source of cultural renewal. Given this, I have suggested that rational choice models of religious vitality need to be inverted to explain the 'religiosity' of American political culture: rather than predicating increased religious vitality based on the relative freedom of the religious marketplace, religiosity is inherent in that religious freedom as it is a civil religious value. This civil religious culture may well be what UK officials were describing when they spoke of the differences between American and British political culture. Indeed, one unclassified Foreign Office (2011b) paper shared with me on 'Religion in North American Politics and Foreign Policy' itself suggests that 'the genius of the US system is that diversity is balanced

by common adherence to Americanism and this prevents social conflict from getting out of hand' (FCO, 2011b:1). It goes on to explain that 'what the US does have is a civic religion in which allegiance to Americanism, defined as a set of ideas rather than a territorial entity, substitutes for an official religious perspective' (FCO, 2011b:4). The perception that the US is a civil religious culture, then, is not only a way to understand the relationship between 'freedom' and 'religion' in the US, but offers a useful prism through which Foreign Office officials can understand the religion-state relationship there. Yet the paper also acknowledges both the pragmatic 'realism' (FCO, 2011:6) of Obama in his foreign policy and the steady increase in the number of religious 'nones' which has doubled in the past three decades (FCO, 2011:2).

It is, we are reminded, important to recognise the secular context that structures the cultural 'religiosity' I have described. In fact, although my UK interviewees were keen to point out what they considered the undue influence of religion over American policy, it was also common for those I interviewed to claim that they had 'never had a conversation about or including religion with US counterparts' (HMG/4 July 2012/b) and that 'on a practical level, religious beliefs have never been part of the conversation' (HMG/3 July 2012/a). Exploring and explaining the apparent combination of overt religiosity in American politics with little practical evidence of religion at the working level represents the analytical core of this chapter. In what



follows, I demonstrate that - at a working level - the impression of 'religious America' given by rational choice models is inadequate. So too is Casanova's theory of religious mobilisation - the deprivatisation thesis - found wanting to explain what is going on in the context of American foreign policy. Instead, I suggest, it is necessary to acknowledge that a process of secularisation or 'reprivatisation' is going on when American foreign policy makers 'manage God'.

### **5.6 Deprivatisation or reprivatisation? Religion and the State Department**

Though the debate about religion and public policy has proliferated since 9/11<sup>110</sup> and Madeleine Albright (2007: 9) suggests 9/11 was the most significant factor in 'adjusting the lens' through which diplomats understand the world, Casanova (1994: 3) has identified the 1980s as the era in which religion 'went public'. He identifies the emergence of the moral majority in the US, the Iranian Revolution and Salman Rushdie controversy along with the opening up of the Soviet Union all as symptoms of religion 'leaving its assigned place in the private sphere'. While I agree with Casanova that it is necessary to go back further than 2001 to understand the contemporary religion-public policy relationship in the United States, using a contemporary case study - the establishment of the Office for Religion and Global Affairs - I will offer an alternative to Casanova's 'deprivatisation' thesis,

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<sup>110</sup> As Philpott (2009:184) exclaimed: in the last decade, 'talk about religion has risen'.

suggesting that what has actually occurred in the US is a dual movement of religious engagement through re-privatisation.

In his landmark text, 'Public Religions in the Modern World', Jose Casanova (1994) changed the landscape of the study of secularisation by untangling three commonly conflated propositions. While he recognises that institutional 'differentiation' of spheres has largely taken place in Western societies, he suggests that the empirical decline of religious belief and practice has taken different courses in different contexts. In doing so, he cleared useful ground for a comparison of European and American versions of 'secularisation theory' which had, hitherto, often been talking past one another. Perhaps most importantly for this section, he articulated a new position in the conversation by challenging a third dimension of secularisation theory - the 'privatisation' of religion or its confinement to the private sphere. Significantly, for Casanova, the post-secular era is characterised as one in which religion has rejected its relegation to the 'private' sphere and has re-emerged as a major force in world politics (Casanova, 1994).

In his 2000 article, Haan identifies a number of 'problems' with the deprivatisation thesis. His main concern is to demonstrate that the religion-state relationships in both Poland and Turkey are evidence of the sort of 'privatisation' Casanova considers to have been one dimension of classic secularisation theories. But, importantly, his

article makes a decisive point that 'privatisation is a fundamental feature of the dominant liberal model of modernity in at least two senses. First, private interest and ownership of the means of production are the dominant principles of capitalist economic organisation. Second, though strong versions of secularisation theory are untenable and religion does not disappear, it is largely confined to the 'private sphere' (Haan, 2000: 14). Furthermore, he suggests with reference to Weber, it is likely that these two dimensions of privatisation are related.

In this section, I suggest that evidence I have gathered supports Haan's argument. Drawing on evidence from interviews with serving and former US Government officials and with a range of public intellectuals and 'civil society' representatives, I suggest that what Casanova considers to be a sign of 'deprivatisation' - the involvement of religious groups in 'civil society' - is actually a symptom of religious 'privatisation'. Using the example of the newly established State Department 'Office of Religion and Global Affairs', I suggest the increased visibility of religion in the form of policy makers' *engagement* of religious actors and dynamics has taken place through a process of privatisation (or perhaps *re-privatisation*).

### 5.61 A religious ‘awakening’

In the time I have been researching for my PhD, the foreign policy establishments of the UK and the US have made significant strides in their understanding of, and engagement with, religious dynamics.

What began as a thesis about a niche lobby of conservative Christians in the United States - and almost no advocates in the UK - has blossomed into a still small but increasingly mainstream diplomatic activity and popular academic subject. Perhaps the singularly most significant development has been the establishment of a new Office for Religion and Global Affairs in the US State Department with a remit to ‘to engage more closely with faith communities around the world, with the belief that we need to partner with them to solve global challenges’<sup>111</sup>. The new Office will task State Department colleagues to ‘go out and engage religious leaders and faith-based communities in our day-to-day work.’

The culmination of what was described to me as an institutional ‘awakening’ (USG/15 May 2013a, USCS/24 April 2013/a\*, USCS/26 March 2013/a\*, USCS/25 July 2013/a\*) of the State Department to the global significance of religion, this office has been hailed as a ‘singular, historic’ (Kerry, 2013) initiative. For the first time in history, US diplomats and foreign policy makers are being encouraged to

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<sup>111</sup> See Secretary Kerry’s remarks at the launch of the office (then called the Office for Faith Based Community Initiatives <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/212781.htm> - accessed 2 April 2015.

engage with and actively influence religious communities and organisations overseas. Yet, Olmstead (2013) reflects concerns raised by a number of scholars about the constitutional implications of this ‘great leap faithward’ (Birdsall, 2013a) posing the question: ‘How much can the state interact with various faith groups without violating the Establishment clause?’.

In this section, I set out to answer this question by demonstrating the three ways in which the new Office represents an outworking, rather than a betrayal, of religious freedom. First, I acknowledge that recent developments have emerged out of Hillary Clinton’s ‘dialogue with civil society’, an approach to religion-related foreign policy that starts with a particularly American understanding of the relationship of religion to state. Secondly, though this Office is led by a ‘religionist’ in the form of seminarian Sean Casey, its mission is evidently outcome-oriented rather than value-led. Finally, I trace a trajectory of the development of religion-related policy in which increasing engagement with religion is contrarily characterised by increasing secularisation. In each of these ways, I argue, the new Office reflects an extension of the guiding principles of the First Amendment - albeit a new interpretation of them - and demonstrates the uniqueness of the American combination of high public visibility for religion with structural secularism.

Although I undertook my American fieldwork between March and June 2013, before the August announcement of the new Office, this initiative was very much ‘in the pipeline’ and therefore on the minds of serving federal government officials. As one explained to me, the Working Group on Religion and Foreign Policy ‘has developed a White Paper with a number of proposals including the establishment of an office for religious engagement’ (USG/15 May 2013a). This was, the same official went on to explain, part of ‘a major cultural shift’ to a position where ‘there is consensus that religion matters’ (USG/15 May 2013a). The immediate policy context into which this Office has emerged was one in which ‘major changes have taken place’. Although one civil society representative explained that ‘the political community is not that effective at engaging with or talking about religion’ (USCS/24 April 2013/a\*), there had been an ‘awakening’ in various government agencies such that ‘there is definitely a sense that understanding what is happening with religion in a country is seeping into national security policy’ (USCS/24 April 2013/a\*).

Though in general, ‘there has been considerable intellectual development post 9/11’ (USCS/7 May 2013/a\*), most of those I spoke to - within and outside Government - explained this increased awareness of religion as a relatively recent development and a direct result of Hillary Clinton’s ‘dialogue with civil society’ initiative (USG/15 May 2013a; USCS/24 April 2013/a\*; USG/7 May 2013/a.)

As one serving official explained to me ‘the strategic dialogue with civil society set up under Hillary Clinton formalised a long-existing process for the engagement of NGO’s’ (USG/7 May 2013/a), while a civil society representative explained to me that ‘The Clinton initiative...and the working groups were massively significant - there is a real sense that their recommendations were being listened to’ (USCS/24 April 2013/a\*). In fact, suggested another former Government official, as a result of the dialogue with civil society, when it comes to religion, the state department ‘is now probably the most progressive department in the US administration’ (USCS/26 March 2013/a\*). So too have Birdsall (2013) and Mandaville (2013) both described work ongoing ‘behind the scenes’ in the Obama administration which demonstrates the extent to which it has ‘taken religion seriously’. On the surface, then, this institutionalisation of religious perspectives through the lens of ‘civil society’ looks a lot like Casanova’s (1994) model of the deprivatisation of religion. But how far is this the case?

While the sort of institutionalisation of religious perspectives through ‘civil society’ which is evidenced might be interpreted in support of Casanova’s thesis, in fact, it could be argued that the extension of ‘dialogue’ between policy makers and civil society reflects exactly the sort of privatisation described by classic secularisation models. First and foremost, the State Department is still considered to be a ‘secular’ environment as one official explained to me: ‘the State Department is

open to people of any and no faith, but it can be considered a secular institution in that its objective is secular - beliefs are not allowed to infuse work' (USG/7 May 2013/a). He went on to explain that he has a role in 'educating people on why the state department can't fund work to promote moderate forms of Islam overseas - constitutionally, the US Government cannot influence or promote faith of any kind' (USG/7 May 2013/a). Another former official cast the net wider, explaining that 'the foreign policy world is secular' (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*). There is a sense, then, that despite increased efforts to engage religion, structurally, the State Department remains a 'secular' space.

Furthermore, though the leader of the new Office is a person of faith, his mandate is deeply pragmatic and outcome-focused<sup>112</sup>. The Director of this new Office, Dr Sean Casey, has explained that 'As religious leaders and faith communities shape their environments, they also have an influence and shape our own foreign policy concerns here in the United States. It's essential for the United States to understand them and to bring them into our diplomacy and development efforts.'

<sup>113</sup> Indeed, in the course of a dialogue between the US and UK

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<sup>112</sup> One former US government official explained to me that Dr Casey's appointment itself was significant - while he is a person of faith, he is also a scholar of religion and as such he - like Melissa Rogers his counterpart in the White House - would be well schooled in the limits of the First Amendment and would be 'constitutionally minded' (USCS/29 March 2015).

<sup>113</sup> See 'Remarks at the Launch of the Office of Faith-based community initiatives' <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/212781.htm> - accessed September 1 2013



Governments on religion and foreign policy<sup>114</sup>, it has become apparent that the new Office has three strategic priorities for its religious engagement: development and stabilisation, countering violent extremism and the promotion of religious freedom.<sup>115</sup> As such, the new office promotes understanding of, and engagement with, religious communities, organisations and dynamics in support of a broad range of strategic foreign policy priorities and represents a pragmatic response to global circumstances rather than what Casanova calls the ‘renormativization of the public economic and political spheres’ (1994:6). Indeed, Shaun Casey himself placed a commitment to the First Amendment at the head of his priorities. When launching the office he explained: ‘First of all, we will ensure that our engagement efforts will be consistent with the United States Constitution and other laws, both in terms of the spirit and letter of the law.’<sup>116</sup>

There has been strong political will in support of greater engagement with religious dynamics and communities throughout the two terms of the Obama administration. There is a sense, then, in which the establishment of the new office is the product of a strong political will

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<sup>114</sup> As I explained in Chapter 1 of this thesis, I have organised and participated in two State Department-Foreign and Commonwealth Office roundtables which have sought to identify and discuss religion-related policy on both sides of the Atlantic and to learn transatlantic best practice.

<sup>115</sup> See ‘Notes from the UK- US Roundtable on International Religious Engagement’: June 14, 2013, London

<sup>116</sup> See ‘Remarks at the Launch of the Office of Faith-based community initiatives’ <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/212781.htm> - accessed September 1 2013

from the current administration and a natural outworking of a conscious attempt to engage religious minorities (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*), identified by Obama in his famous Cairo speech.<sup>117</sup> As such, it might be considered an attempt to recalibrate foreign policy after George W Bush's 'war on terror' was identified as crusade-like<sup>118</sup> and was criticised as being counter-productive.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, there are signs that current efforts to engage religious groups overseas are a response to previous eras of 'deprivatisation' rather than evidence of it.

### **5.62 The emergence of international religious freedom**

We have already heard that, though controversial, the International Religious Freedom Act was passed unanimously in 1998. This Act required the creation of three mechanisms for the advancement of religious freedom as a core foreign policy objective: the establishment

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<sup>117</sup> On 4 June 2009, in one of his first speeches as President, Barack Obama pledged a 'new beginning' for the relationship between the West and Islam. He recognised that 'the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalisation led many Muslims to view the west as hostile to the traditions of Islam' but suggested 'I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition.' (Full text of the speech can be found at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-keynote-speech-egypt> - accessed 28 December 2013).

<sup>118</sup> G.W Bush himself described the War On Terror as a 'crusade' on a number of occasions, including in reacting to the events of September 11 2001 and again on the day of national mourning (16 September 2001) when he explained 'This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while.' (See Waldman and Pope 2001).

<sup>119</sup> In both the UK and the US, the expression 'GWOT' or 'Global War on Terror' was widely used during the Bush and Blair administrations but both of their successors - Obama and Brown - changed the language used to describe counter-terrorism policy due to the perceived alienation it created. In July 2007, as the Economist recognised, 'the language of war (and the conduct of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) has alienated much of the world, among them Muslims who believe incorrectly that the West has been waging a 'war on Islam' for decades, if not centuries. Such vocabulary reinforces the propaganda of al-Qaeda, which claims to be fighting a global jihad to defend Islam against 'Crusaders and Jews' - see <http://www.economist.com/node/9441305> (accessed 28 December 2013).

of an Office for International Religious Freedom (IRF Office) within the State Department which would publish an annual report on religious freedom and the appointment of an International Religious Freedom Ambassador; as well as the establishment of an independent commission (USCIRF) which would operate ‘as part think-tank, part watchdog to observe religious freedom around the world and to observe what the government is doing to promote it’ (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*). The International Religious Freedom Act was ‘a remarkable piece of legislation which was passed quickly as a mark of post-cold war foreign policy’ (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*), creating bureaucratic space both within and without the executive branch of Government for the consideration of religion in relation to international policy. However, the fact that this Act was passed unanimously conceals a complex and controversial history.

In fact, it emerges that although the International Religious Freedom Act was passed unanimously in 1998, it was actually the result of compromise between conflicting positions on the ‘right’ piece of legislation to enact. Hertzke (2006) describes the history of the Act, explaining that there was considerable tension between the religious lobbies and Republican Party who favoured an alternative Bill (the Wolf-Specter bill) which would protect persecuted Christians overseas and others, including the President, who argued for the broader ‘international religious freedom’ legislation which was eventually passed on the grounds that the automatic sanctions for perpetrators

implied in the Wolf-Spector Bill could actually increase persecution and that this Bill offered a de facto foreign policy preference to Christians.

While the Act sought consciously to avoid this sort of preference, in fact this has been the beginning rather than the end of the conversation. A number of those I interviewed explained that ‘one of the challenges faced by religious freedom advocates is the perception that they are primarily interested in the persecution of Christians abroad’ (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*), and that this extends to the IRF Office where ‘there have been concerns in the past about the emphasis on the persecution of Christians’ (USG/25 April 2013/a). These concerns, it seems, were exacerbated during the term of the second IRF Ambassador, John Hanford (2002-2009), appointed by President Bush, who ‘promoted a particular perspective which emphasised protection of Christian minorities’ (USG/7 May 2013/a).

As Hertzke describes, then, the emergence of international religious freedom first as an American foreign policy and later as a ‘universal’ right originated in ‘lobbying for the faithful’ (Hertzke, 1988). Under Hanford, a number of evangelical Christians were appointed to the State Department office and the leadership of USCIRF was overtly connected with the congressional religious lobby which sought to tackle the persecution of Christians overseas. Beyond the Government machinery, the promotion of religious freedom also seemed to be

dominated by religious right ‘culture warriors’, as one civil society representative explained, the IRF Office has been marginalised and the pursuit of religious freedom ‘has suffered because many people outside the government are promoting the religious freedom narrative as a way to challenge the ‘evil’ of secularism (USCS/7 May 2013/a\*). It seems, then, that this early flagship ‘religion-related’ US foreign policy was shaped by religionists flexing their muscles in the political sphere. Yet, as this policy has developed - and as a result of new leadership - the pursuit of international religious freedom has undergone a sort of internal ‘secularisation’ such that the traditional religious freedom community now criticises state department structures as ‘secular’ and ‘considers itself to have lost one of their own in Hanford who was driven by faith to promote religious freedom’ (USG/7 May 2013/a). We might reasonably suggest, given this history, that the emergence of international religious freedom as a policy priority in the late 1990s reflects the sort of ‘deprivatisation’ of religion described by Casanova given the political mobilization of the Christian lobby (as described by Hertzke, 1988). Yet recent developments seem to suggest a different trajectory.

### **5.63 The ‘secularisation’ and ‘securitisation’ of international religious freedom**

First, I want to suggest that the pursuit of international religious freedom has been ‘secularised’ in that it is no longer dominated by the

Christian evangelical lobby but by a broader, more ecumenical and 'secular' human rights lobby. As a number of those I interviewed explained (USCS/26 March 2013/b\*, USG/25 April 2013/b, USCS/27 March 2013/a\*, USG/7 May 2013/a, USG/15 May 2013a), under the Obama administration, a more 'inclusive' approach to religious freedom has been adopted and 'the official mandate for the state department's IRF office is that the US is a nation that protects and defends human rights' (USG/7 May 2013/a). The emphasis on religious freedom as a human - and individual - right reflects a 'secularised' -or more specifically a 'privatised' - approach to religion than that envisaged during the previous era. Quite different than machinery for the protection of God's Children (Hertzke, 2006) envisaged by the traditional religious freedom lobby, a human rights approach to religious freedom places all religions and none on a level playing field. Not only is this approach to religious freedom the one which has been adopted by the UK Government in recent months (see Chapter Three), it also reflects the tenor of international human rights legislation.

However, the refocusing of IRF away from the protection of Christians towards a more ecumenical - we might say 'marketisation' approach - has not rescued IRF structures from their marginalised position in the State Department. Many of those I interviewed reflected concerns that human rights is rarely a strategic priority given 'generally, policy power is concentrated in regional directorates and

thematic issues are fighting to get in' (USG/7 May 2013/a). The result is that religious freedom 'is often deprioritised where there are other strategic interests' (USCS/27 March 2013/a\*). The same conclusion has been reached by a number of significant commentators - including the 2013 Government Accountability Office<sup>120</sup> report on the International Religious Freedom Act which assessed the effectiveness of the agencies involved in promoting religious freedom. According to the report, while all agencies are undertaking the responsibilities required of them by the act, interaction between agencies is not optimal. Furthermore, it reports that NGO representatives questioned argued for 'greater inclusion of civil society and other non-state actors and further empowerment of U.S. government entities' (GAO, 2013:2). However, while many of those I interviewed recognised the marginalisation of the IRF office and Ambassador as problematic (USG/7 May 2013/a, USG/15 May 2013a, USCS/26 March 2013/b\*, USCS/24 April 2013/a\*), two different explanations were given for this marginalisation. First, a number of those I spoke to considered the background of the Office - and particularly the domination of religious freedom advocacy by the religious right - as the primary cause. Concerns about the emphasis on protecting Christians overseas (USG/25 April 2013/a) were frequently identified. On the other hand, an alternative explanation was given with reference to the cultural secularism of the state department, described as 'top down and pragmatic with a tendency to view religion as private' (USCS/26

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<sup>120</sup> The full report can be found at: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-196> - accessed 2 January 2013

March 2013/b\*). As such, it seems there is a debate going on between two ‘vastly different understandings of religious freedom and the congressional mandate’ (USG/7 May 2013/a) such that ‘there is no middle ground in RF.... it tends to be advocated by religious groups with parochial interests or by non-religious human rights advocates who are considered ‘secular’.

Yet despite these different interpretations of the First Amendment (which are constitutive of the sort of cultural renewal I have already described), both groups are broadly supportive of a recent shift in the conceptualisation of religious freedom which has raised its profile considerably. Often drawing on evidence provided by the Pew Research Centre,<sup>121</sup> a number of those I interviewed narrated a process which might be described as the ‘securitisation’ of religious freedom. As one former official explained ‘humanitarian rationales for religious freedom are not enough - a better approach is to see it as a national security issue which has implications for counter-terrorism, stability and the promotion of democracy’ (USCS/26 March 2013/b\*). Another civil society representative shared this view arguing that ‘some are increasingly conscious of the link between restrictions of religion overseas and terrorism and violence...the more this connection is established, the more politicians will become active in the religious

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<sup>121</sup> In September 2012, the Pew Research Center published its report ‘The Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion’. Not only did this report highlight that the number of countries with significant restrictions was on the increased, it also demonstrated the link between restrictions on religion and social instability. See <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/09/20/rising-tide-of-restrictions-on-religion-findings/> - accessed 19 June 2015.



freedom caucus<sup>122</sup> (USCS/24 April 2013/a\*). Not only, it seems has religious freedom undergone an internal process of secularisation, but it is increasingly being instrumentalised as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. While some shared concerns about this approach (USG/25 April 2013/a, USG/25 April 2013/b), others were pragmatic, with one official suggesting ‘in practice, it is also apparent that governments that abuse citizens are inherently unstable, can become hotbeds of extremism and therefore become strategic challenges’ (USG/7 May 2013/a). Another made the direct connection between this ‘securitized’ understanding of religious freedom and the development of new arrangements in the State Department for religious engagement, suggesting that ‘the National Security Council now recognises religion as significant in human rights, humanitarian assistance and conflict’ (USG/15 May 2013a).

This reconceptualisation of religion as a means to an end rather than an end in itself has enabled both religionists and secularists to unite around a shared commitment to religious freedom as a ‘model’ for good governance, as one official explained ‘the only US policy position on religion is that everyone has the right to believe, worship and assemble as they wish’ (USG/15 May 2013a). Religious freedom, as a basis for religion-related US foreign policy, it seems guarantees the continuation of a unique paradox of American public life:

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<sup>122</sup> A ‘caucus’ is a term used in American politics to describe a collection of supporters of a particular political movement.

increasing engagement with religious actors is achieved through secularisation.

What we have seen in this examination of religion-related foreign policy in the United States is that a process of secularisation - vis the First Amendment - goes hand in hand with increased policy attention being paid to religion. Not only does this demonstrate that, as in the UK context, religion-related foreign policy draws heavily on domestic constitutional arrangements, it also directly contradicts the rational choice argument that 'freedom', 'choice' and 'religion' are always in a relationship of direct proportionality. In the case of the State Department, religious freedom and engagement with a plurality of religious forms is characterised not by a culture of increasing religiosity but instead by a process of secularisation.

The policy-religion nexus in the US, then, is considerably different than that in the UK. Though both draw extensively on their domestic church-state settlements in shaping religion-related public policy, the outcomes of these influences are dramatically different in ways which undermine the presentation of a single 'western' identity as is common in international relations scholarship. Yet so too have important 'post-secular' narratives from the sociology of religion been challenged by this evidence. The moniker 'religious America, secular Europe' (Berger et al, 2008) has been challenged both on the grounds of the structural religiosity of the UK policy context as well as the

structural secularism of the US context. More specifically, in light of the American evidence, I have suggested that rational choice theories of religious vitality are not applicable in this context. Firstly, evidence of an American ‘civil religion’ makes rational choice less a descriptive theory or alternative to secularisation and more a normative model which is active *in the context of* secularisation. Secondly, the fact that engagement with an increased plurality of religious forms by the State Department is characterised by a process of secularisation challenges both rational choice theories which posit a stable state of religious demand and Casanova’s deprivatisation thesis which describes the re-emergence of public religion. In fact, as the appropriation of civil religion and secularisation theories would attest, it is impossible to identify a single theoretical paradigm through which to understand the way American policy makers ‘manage God’ given we must describe American policy as at once both highly *culturally* religious and yet highly *structurally* secular.

## Chapter 6: *Theory and Practice*

### 6.1 Introduction

This thesis has sought to make one small contribution to overcome what is a dearth of analysis on religion and foreign policy in the UK.

In his article ‘What to read on religion and foreign policy’ Chris Seiple (2009) names eight texts introducing the subject of religion and foreign policy yet none of the volumes identified was written by a British scholar or practitioner.<sup>123</sup> In this thesis, however, I have sought to provide both a practical and theoretical account of the relationship between religion and UK foreign policy, using the better developed (both in scholarly and policy terms) American context to draw comparisons.

In Chapter One, I described the historical absence of reflection on the religion-international policy relationship in the UK, first drawing on my own experience as a government official and secondly, with reference to the relatively well developed conversation going on in the

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<sup>123</sup> While, Thomas’s (2005) text was written from a position at the University of Bath, he is nevertheless of American origin and writes of the global and international picture rather than the specifics of British foreign policy. So too does Haynes (2007) focus on the European rather than British picture in his ‘Introduction to International Relations and Religion’

United States on the subject. In Chapter Two, I provided an overview of the scholarly context within which this thesis sits. I described the emergence of ‘post-secular’ narratives in two distinct fields - the political sciences and the sociology of religion – each of which seeks to explain the relationship between religion and society in the contemporary era. The combination of the two dominant post-secular narratives, I suggested, left us with a picture of Western homogeneity in the confrontation with religious change; a picture which I suggested the material presented in this thesis would challenge. Developing this, in Chapter Three I explored the usefulness of the label ‘secular’ - drawn both from both the social and political sciences and from policy makers themselves - to describe the British policy context. I concluded that the relationship between religion and state in the UK context is more complex than a narrative of ‘secularisation’ can account for. Despite this, however, in Chapter Four, I drew attention to the limitations of narratives of globalisation and the post-secular, drawn from the political sciences, to describe religion-related UK foreign policy and argued that it is necessary to recognise the domestic sources of foreign policy and to understand the way both structural and cultural patterns shape the agency of the nation-state (see Hill, 2003). Further to this, in Chapter Five I turned to the American context, to consider how far the label ‘religious America, secular Europe’ could be applied to the foreign policy context and suggested, contrary to the assumption that America is ‘more religious’ than Europe, that a trajectory of increased engagement with religion in the

State Department could be characterised as ‘secularising’ in that it remains firmly rooted in the First Amendment separation of Church and State.

In what follows, I bring together the evidence gathered both from my UK and US interviews and the analyses in each of the preceding chapters to reflect more broadly upon the ways in which religion-related foreign policy challenges some common assumptions evident within the political sciences and the sociology of religion. Specifically, I focus on three main areas. First, I consider the way the Treaty of Westphalia - the settlement of the Wars of Religion in the seventeenth century - has been treated in International Relations scholarship. Second, I return to the literature analysed in Chapter Two. Here, I draw on my original research evidence to demonstrate the limitations of either purely cultural or purely structural models as able to independently explain what is going on in either the UK or the US context. Drawing on Archer’s (1988, 2012) model of ‘morphogenesis’, I offer a new way to understand the relationship of religion to foreign policy which is a more nuanced and comprehensive account than narratives of the ‘post-secular’, ‘religious resurgence’ or ‘secularisation theory’ are able to offer, given it at once describes Western heterogeneity and at the same time provides analytical space for religious continuity. Third, I turn from the theoretical to the practical to describe the ways in which I have sought to make my work not only policy-relevant but impactful. Here, I suggest that this

thesis, and the outcomes of two workshops I have organised in respect of its core concerns, demonstrate that, even where there is apparent change, when foreign policy makers start to engage with religion, there is a fundamental continuity in the ways they ‘manage God’.

## **6.2 Rethinking the legacy of Westphalia**

Between 1644 and 1648, the Westphalian towns of Munster and Osnabruck hosted negotiations towards a European settlement of the so-called ‘Wars of Religion’. Often known by the shorthand the ‘Treaty of Westphalia’, these agreements established a new world order based on the concept of the sovereign nation-state whose domestic governance would be protected from the influence of external actors. In this section, I consider the legacy of the Treaty of Westphalia on the relationship between religion and foreign policy. First, I describe the way the Treaty of Westphalia has been treated in international relations scholarship, demonstrating that it has been cited as initiating an era of secular international relations that needs to be abandoned in a new era of religious resurgence. Second, I suggest the so-called ‘Westphalian synthesis’ is given as evidence of the likeness of Western states, all of whom apparently accord to the same principle of ‘secular’ politics in a system of sovereign nation states now under threat in a context of globalisation. In light of both these factors, international relations scholars seem to describe the current era as a

kind of abandonment of the Treaty and its premises, though I shall now utilise conclusions drawn from my research to challenge this received wisdom about the Treaty of Westphalia in three ways. First, I emphasise that the Treaty subjected religion to national authority, something which continues to be in evidence today in the religion-related foreign policy of the US and the UK. Second, as demonstrated in Chapters Three, Four and Five, there are constitutive differences between Western nations when it comes to religion-related policy, which undermine the presentation of the West as a homogenous entity. Third, I argue that, far from disappearing, nation states seem to be newly relevant in the current era of religious resurgence where religion-related foreign policy operates on an ‘inside-out’ rather than ‘outside-in’ pattern. All of this suggests, then, that far from being abandoned, the legacy of the Treaty of Westphalia is very much in evidence in contemporary politics and international relations.

The so-called ‘Treaty of Westphalia’ has taken on considerable significance in debates about the relationship between religion and international relations - and indeed in debates about the relationship between religion and state. Indeed, May et al (2014: 332-3) speak of the ‘fetishisation’ of Westphalia and describe a common narrative associated with it:

[T]he peace treaty ended decades of religious wars which had erupted in Europe over doctrinal differences between Protestants, Catholics and Calvinists in the wake of the Reformation. The Peace of Westphalia recognised the



imperative to divorce the powers of the state from the duty to uphold any particular faith. In this narrative, Westphalia is viewed as the instigation of the gradual process of functional differentiation between state and religion which evolved and deepened in the following centuries.

What this description of the ‘common narrative’ suggests is that international relations scholarship has come to recognise the Treaty of Westphalia as resulting in the secularisation of international affairs. As Bellin (2008:318) suggests, it is as though ‘The historical experience of Westphalia indelibly associated the removal of religion with the establishment of international order...’. Calhoun et al (2011:15) echo this account suggesting that ‘the conclusion of these wars with the 1648 Peace of Westphalia is often cited as the beginning of a secular state system in Europe and thus of modern international relations, understood as a matter of secular relations among sovereign states’. But it is not only a secular vision of international relations which seems to have been the legacy of Westphalia. As Wilson (2012:48) describes it, ‘religion gradually became a private, individual matter and the apparently secular institution of the modern state took the place of religion in the social order.’ Conventional wisdom, it seems, emphasises the secularising effects of the ‘Westphalian synthesis’ (Philpott, 2002) both on international and domestic politics often at the expense of three other ‘strands’, i.e. the proscription of intervention (states no longer interfere with religion-politics relationship in other states); restrictions on religious authorities exercising temporal functions nationally and any internationally; and the promotion of pluralism (states should less vigorously promote the

welfare of particular religions). Bellin (2008: 318) not only suggests that the Treaty of Westphalia created a secular world order, but also that it 'planted an enduring suspicion of injecting religion into international affairs'.

It follows, then, that in an era of apparent global religious resurgence, this 'Westphalian synthesis' is being challenged. Hurd (2009:3), epitomising the common narrative, describes the contemporary context as one in which we are witnessing 'the emergence of a series of post-Westphalian, post-secular conceptions of religio-political authority'. As such, May et al (2014:339) argue that 'there is a need to reassess the long-assumed conception that religion is absent from or irrelevant to IR'. Indeed, I shared this perspective in my MA thesis: first, I explained that 'in absencing religion from public life, the Treaty of Westphalia not only resulted in the creation of the category 'religion' as a privately and voluntarily held set of beliefs, but also in the creation of 'international relations' as we know it, based on a vision of the world as a network of autonomous and secular nation-states.' (Lindsay, 2011: 20). I then went on to describe the range of constructivist approaches by which religion was being 'brought into' international relations in ways that 'challenged' the 'otherness' of religion and the 'secular polity' characterised by the Treaty of Westphalia. In approaching my PhD research, then, I drew on this inheritance, expecting to see in the foreign policy of two such 'secular

polities' evidence of the abandonment of the premises of Westphalia.

Yet what I found was something quite different.

I described in Chapter Three that the UK is demonstrably far from being a secular polity. In fact, I argued, its constitutional 'religiousness' has had a notable influence over domestic policy. I described the way successive UK governments have engaged with religion in ways which have 'relocated' rather than 'marginalised' it. Next, I demonstrated that, from the expansion of faith schools to so-called 'community cohesion' and counter-terrorism initiatives, religion has been on the public policy agenda since the Millennium. Noting that UK public policy is not structurally secular, I went on to consider the accusation that it is culturally secular, taking an ethnographic approach to understanding the ways civil servants approach religion as a policy issue. Here I suggested, contrary to the observation that the act of policy formation is a 'secular activity' (Chapman, 2008:3), civil servants act out of a combination of pragmatism and utilitarianism, coupled with a commitment to impartiality which culminates in a condition of 'religion blindness' which manifests itself in a cultural resistance to engagement with religious actors and dynamics.

In Chapter Four, I went on to explain that British foreign policy draws on the constitutional church-state settlement, both in the specific case of international religious freedom and in underpinning a broader range of foreign policy initiatives. While the pursuit of international

religious freedom has emerged as policy priority only relatively recently, the way in which it is pursued has longer antecedents. Notably, the 'religious freedom toolkit' uses our own church-state settlement as a model of 'religious freedom'. Furthermore, I was able to demonstrate that a range of recent foreign policy engagements with religion - including the appointment of a Minister for Faith and Communities, the appointment of a Religious Adviser to the Ministry of Defence and the publication of 'Faith Partnership Principles' by the Department for International Development - all follow precedents in the domestic policy arena. The implication of this, I suggested, is that contrary to accounts of the 'post-secular' which emphasise religious change, it is important to identify the continuity of our constitutional settlement as a determining factor in religion-related policy engagements. Furthermore, in Chapter Five, I demonstrated the ways in which the American constitutional separation of church and state influences its foreign policy in ways that are both secularising and 'religionising'. While recent engagements with religion - including but not limited to the pursuit of religious freedom - are evidence of structural secularisation, the very principle of religious liberty takes on civil religious significance in national public policy debates, suggesting that it is at once a uniquely secular *and* religious polity.

All of this evidence reminds us that the Treaty of Westphalia had an important effect, in that it nationalised religion, something which has largely been ignored in international relations scholarship. It is the

case, as Calhoun et al (2011:15) suggest, that the common narrative of Westphalia initiating secular relations among sovereign states is ‘profoundly misleading’. Instead, they argue, Westphalia established in Europe the principle of ‘cuius regio, eius religio’, given that European states after Westphalia were largely confessional with established churches. So too does Onnekink (2013:2) challenge the dominant assumption of a ‘model of an entirely secular post-Westphalian system’. Like Onnekink, May et al (2014:334) suggest that the ‘invented template’ does not adequately capture the ‘historical complexities of the seventeenth century’. It may be, then, that rather than enacting a process of secularisation, the Treaty of Westphalia would be better described as ‘nationalising’ religion, as Thomas (2005: 25) suggests. Indeed, Eisenstadt (2000) has suggested that the contemporary religion-society picture - characterised as ‘multiple modernities’ - is the result of variations in the formulation of the nation state model. Given the evidence drawn from my original interviews demonstrates that religion-related foreign policy is influenced by national constitutional frameworks, it seems to be the case that - far from being abandoned in the contemporary context - the Westphalian synthesis has renewed relevance.

Yet this is not the only way in which the legacy of Westphalia has been misrepresented in political science literature. As May et al (2014:338) suggest, ‘Many Western theorists of nation-states presuppose secularism (as a normative concept) for the nation-state

framework, which is based on Western experience, but may not in reality be a necessary component to the nation-state model.' This quotation has two implications: as part of the 'common narrative' about the Treaty of Westphalia, it implies that the Westphalian synthesis is contingent upon the Western experience, something which is under increasing challenge in contemporary international relations. However, there is a secondary implication, which I would suggest is equally important: this quotation implies that there is a singular 'Western experience' and that this experience is one of the 'secularism' of the nation-state framework. Again, my own original research challenges this perception.

What Chapters Four and Five have demonstrated is the distinctive difference between the religion-related foreign policy of the UK and the US influenced by their distinctive religio-political settlements. While, in Chapter Five, I acknowledged that both the US context and the UK context are evidence against 'post-secular' narratives, there are important constitutive differences between the two contexts. In Chapter Three, I described a vast array of religion-related engagements that characterised the UK policy community, demonstrating that there is no structural barrier to 'doing God'. In Chapter Four, I extended this to the foreign policy context. By contrast, in Chapter Five, I suggested that, despite perceptions from UK policy makers that there was 'too much religion' in US politics, increasing religious engagement in the State Department has been

characterised by increasing secularisation. Here, I went on to demonstrate, both domestic and international policy is rooted in the First Amendment, something which takes on ‘civil religious value’ in American cultural life.

The picture, then, is both more complex than a single ‘Western experience’ that is associated with narratives about the Treaty of Westphalia but so too is it more complex than the picture of ‘religious America, secular Europe’ that has been provided by sociologists of religion, notably Berger et al (2008).<sup>124</sup> It is necessary, as Davie has noted, to recognise that ‘even in the modern West, there is surely, not only considerable diversity in the religious situations on offer, but seriously conflicting trajectories in terms of their likely development’ (2002:16)<sup>125</sup>. Once more, the assumptions I made in writing my MA thesis come into question. There, I wrote of the commonality among the ‘Western security community’ and described the normativity of the Western concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘secularism’, something which needed to be abandoned in light of global events (Lindsay, 2011: 64, 21). Yet in this thesis, I demonstrate quite the opposite: that there are important constitutive differences between these two Western nations when it comes to religion-related foreign

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<sup>124</sup> It is important to recognise that there are constitutive differences between the UK and other European countries when it comes to constitutional arrangements which are likely to be borne out in their foreign policy. In light of my research, detailed exploration of different European settlements would merit further study.

<sup>125</sup> It is worth noting that Davie (2002:3) puts considerable emphasis on constitutional arrangements as being significant in differentiating between European and American societies just as I have found these arrangements as being significant in differentiating between UK and American polities.

policy. What these differences suggest is that religious studies scholarship, which has long evidenced the distinction between the religious complexions of the US and Europe, needs to be brought into conversation with political science in order effectively to explain the contemporary context. Not only this, it suggests that there is scope for further research into other Western nations to determine the influence of their constitutional settlements over their foreign policy. One notable example would be to determine how far the new Canadian Office for Religious Freedom<sup>126</sup> is a product of its domestic context.

Finally, as Gross (1948:29) explains, the Treaty of Westphalia ‘marked Man’s abandonment of the idea of a hierarchical structure of society and his option for a new system characterised by the co-existence of a multiplicity of states, each sovereign within its territory, equal to one another, and free from any external earthly authority.’ In Chapter Four, I explored the relationship between globalisation and international relations, demonstrating that political science literature overwhelmingly recognises globalisation as a challenge to the nation-state at economic, democratic and territorial levels. This era is one in which the very crux of the Westphalian synthesis - a system of sovereign nation states - is brought into question. Hence it is possible for Hurd (2009:3) to describe the contemporary era as ‘post-

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<sup>126</sup> In his 2011 election campaign, Stephen Harper made a commitment to establishing an Office for Religious Freedom and the Office was officially opened in February 2013 with a mandate to protect religious minorities; oppose religious hatred and intolerance; and promote Canadian values of tolerance and pluralism overseas. See [http://www.international.gc.ca/religious\\_freedom-liberte\\_de\\_religion/index.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.international.gc.ca/religious_freedom-liberte_de_religion/index.aspx?lang=eng) - accessed 19 May 2015.



Westphalian', while Cerny (2010:25) explains that though international relations has hitherto been dominated by the Westphalian (realist) paradigm which posits that the world is organised into nation states, forces which transcend the nation state are increasingly challenging this paradigm.

As I explained in Chapter Four, the assumed decline of the nation state has taken place in parallel to the emergence of the 'non-state actor' and it is in this role that religion has commonly been 'brought into' international relations. As Thomas (2005:98) explains 'It is by recognising religious groups or organisations as one of the types of non-state actors that religion has frequently been brought back into the theory of international relations'. However, I went on to argue that, in the UK context, the State itself constitutes a 'religious actor' and there are important domestic sources of foreign policy both of which underline rather than marginalise the nation state as a source of political agency. In Chapter Five, though the USA is characterised by structural secularisation rather than structural religiosity, I went on to describe the ways in which religion-related foreign policy draws on the domestic constitutional context and provides further evidence of the domestic sources of foreign policy. What this suggests is that religion-related foreign policy operates on an 'inside-out' rather than an 'outside-in' trajectory. Drawing on Robertson's (1989) analysis of globalisation, in which he argues that the prevalence of national societies is a distinctive feature of globalisation, I demonstrated the

determinative influence of the British church-state settlement and domestic cultural dynamics over religion-related foreign policy. Once more, in re-stating the importance of rather than undermining the nation state, my research is evidence that the legacy of the Treaty of Westphalia is still highly relevant for understanding contemporary politics.

In summary, the Treaty of Westphalia has been treated as an anachronism by many contemporary international relations scholars, something whose legacy is of little relevance in a world that has been described as ‘furiously religious’ (Berger, 1999:2). For them, Westphalia marked the birth of a Western global model of secular nation states, a model which has been exposed as wanting by contemporary events, both because it absents religion from international affairs and fails to respond to the changes wrought by globalisation. Yet my research points in the opposite direction, suggesting that the Treaty of Westphalia, far from being abandoned, is of continued relevance in contemporary politics. Not only, I argue, should Westphalia be recognised as a ‘nationalising’ rather than ‘secularising’ moment, the myth of Western homogeneity needs to be challenged as does the apparent demise of the nation state.

### 6.3 Structure, culture and agency

In critiquing the ‘common narrative’ about the Treaty of Westphalia and challenging the presentation of the Westphalian synthesis as secularising - as creating a largely homogeneous series of Western nations and as being undermined by the forces of globalisation - throughout this thesis I have engaged with three different political science narratives by bringing them into conversation with ideas about religion-state relationships drawn from the sociology of religion. This brings the thesis back to the literature discussed in Chapter Two in which I demonstrated that ‘post-secular’ discourse traverses two different scholarly conversations - one drawing from the political sciences and the other from the sociology of religion. These two conversations, I explained, have evolved to emphasise different factors in explaining the religion-society relationship. While the political sciences point to *cultural* factors as most significant in accounting for religion-state relations in the current era; the sociology of religion emphasise the *structural* location of religion as most significant.

In this section, I reflect on how the conclusions that can be drawn from my research demonstrate the limitations of each of these models to explain independently what is going on in either the UK or the US context. In the UK, as we have seen in Chapters Three and Four, there is structural religiosity combined with cultural ‘religion blindness’. By

contrast in the US, we have seen that structural secularisation is mirrored by cultural religiosity. It is only by bringing the two literatures into conversation, I contend, that we can adequately start to explain the religion-foreign policy relationship in these two contexts. Drawing on the work of Archer (1988, 2012) to demonstrate that culture and structure are analytically separable yet mutually constitutive, I introduce ‘morphogenesis’ as a new way for political scientists and sociologists of religion to understand the relationship of religion to foreign policy. This model is more complicated than accounts of the ‘post-secular’, ‘religious resurgence’ or ‘secularisation theory’, given it at once describes Western heterogeneity and at the same time provides analytical space for religious continuity.

In Chapter Two, I explained that despite Beckford’s (2000) observation that the end of the twentieth century saw the sociology of religion ‘playing together’ with the mainstream social and political sciences - given both now find religion at the core of their accounts - there are significant differences between the sociology of religion’s account of the ‘post-secular’ and that emanating from the social and political sciences. The latter, I suggested, has sought to ‘bring religion in’ to their frameworks through a ‘turn to culture’, manifest in an embrace of constructivism as an alternative to the positivism of realist political scientific models. As a result, I suggested, religious agency is increasingly understood as something symbolic and non-rational which orientates political actors in the world. Considering the way

religion has been introduced into the fields of development studies, international relations theory, security studies and terrorism studies, I suggested that there are a number of common elements. First, scholars in all of these fields lament the absence of religion from their intellectual frameworks, so too do these disciplines seem to have inherited elements of classical secularisation theory in that they recognise a connection between modernisation, structural differentiation, and religious decline. This in turn, I argued, has influenced the way religious actors are presented in social scientific literature as ‘non-state actors’ who either contribute toward or undermine specific policy objectives. Seeking to overcome this dichotomy between religion and the state, which is manifest in the intellectual frameworks of the social and political sciences, requires something more radical than the ‘non-state actor’ model.

As part of a broader critique of modernity as a culturally contingent ideology, Alexander (2003:193) and others have sought to overcome the limits of positivism by introducing a ‘post-positivist’ or ‘interpretative’ approach. The introduction of ‘meaning-related content’ (Lapid, 1989: 236) to the social and political sciences has led to a better understanding of religious agency which is now able to be interpreted in light of the histories, narratives and symbols of different cultural contexts. Not only has this moved conversation about religious agency forward, it has opened up the category of the ‘secular’ to political analysis (see e.g. Hurd, 2011). However, just as I

pointed in my introduction that the ‘turn to culture’ has, as yet, not taken account of the potential differences there might be between culture and structure, so the material presented in my thesis has borne out these limitations. In Chapters Three, Four and Five, I demonstrated that, while it has a role in shaping the religion-state relationship on both sides of the Atlantic, cultural factors are only part of the equation, making it necessary to acknowledge and to understand the interplay of structure and culture in seeking to describe the relationship between religion and state and, indeed, to understand the way the state might represent a form of religious agency.

This critique is reminiscent of a debate on-going in mainstream social theory about the relationship between culture, structure and agency. In her model of ‘cultural morphogenesis’, Archer (1988) points out that there are similarities in the way we can understand culture and structure. Both, she suggests, can be understood using the ‘morphogenetic cycle’. According to this sequence, it is possible to analytically (if not empirically) distinguish between structure/culture and agency to demonstrate that agents are at once subject to structure/culture and at the same time contribute to shaping that structure/culture. Furthermore, in her analysis of the culture-agency riddle, Archer acknowledges the importance of separating ‘parts’ and ‘people’ in order to understand sociological change. This position of ‘analytical dualism’ is an alternative to different forms of ‘conflation’ which she argues social theory has tended toward (Archer, 1988: 277).

Failure to recognise emergent relationships between culture and agency has, she suggests, resulted in autonomy being denied to one side or the other hence ‘downward conflation’ grants causality only to culture and not to agents whereas ‘upward conflation’ grants causality only to agents and not to culture. I want to suggest that the problem of downward conflation is apparent in the ‘turn to culture’ taken by the mainstream social and political sciences. In seeking to overcome the limitations of their previous intellectual frameworks which, broadly speaking, were based on realist<sup>127</sup> models, scholars in the political sciences have undertaken a ‘cultural turn’ widely analogous to that which has taken place in the wider social sciences under the auspices of ‘critical theory’. Briefly, while critical theory introduced ‘historical and cultural contexts’ (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002: 52) to mainstream sociological study, so the cultural turn has prompted non-rational methodology, ‘thick’ description and interpretation to the political sciences as the best ways in which to understand religious agency.

The result, as we have seen in Chapter Two, has been the emergence of the idea of the ‘post-secular’ supported by the opening up of the category of ‘secularism’ to cultural analysis such that it appears to be a ‘series of political settlements that define, regulate, and manage religion in modern politics, including international politics’ (Hurd, 2011:60). While we have already seen that the portrayal of a single

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<sup>127</sup> Realism is one tradition in international relations theory particularly associated with the work of Thomas Hobbes. According to realist theory, the international system is characterised as being anarchic and states pursue rational self-interest in navigating this system. For an introduction see Donnelly (2008:150).

'Western' identity is problematic in light of the evidence found in this thesis, there is another element of this cultural reading of secularism that is questionable. Theories of 'cultural secularism' are guilty of the sort of 'downward conflation' Archer identifies in that they imply agency is shaped and indeed determined by these cultural patterns. Yet my analysis of the UK and US context belies this. In the UK, though it has been labelled a 'secular' culture, I found that negotiation between personal agency and cultural patterns (what Archer would call 'socio-cultural interaction') shaped policy makers' engagement with religion. In the US - where there is strong religio-cultural patterning at the macro (or cultural system) level formed around the First Amendment - this is reversed in the policy context (the socio-cultural level) where a process of religious engagement has been characterised by increasing secularisation. To properly explain the sort of cultural dynamics by which foreign policy cultures are characterised, then, requires more than the political sciences - and specifically constructivist readings of the 'post-secular' - are able to offer.

The post-positivist or 'cultural' turn in the political sciences has therefore moved conversation about religious agency forward. However, it has not always moved it forward in a helpful directions. The 'cultural turn' has sought to reverse positivist accounts, which contain circumscribed definitions of culture, but has replaced them with all-encompassing definitions of culture guilty of engulfing the cultural system, denying individuals agency and, in turn, failing to



account properly for cultural change. But what of the other 'post-secular' body of literature I dealt with in Chapter Two? Here, I suggest, we have the opposite set of problems. As I explained, sociologists of religion, like their counterparts in the political sciences, have sought to explain the contemporary era by challenging the legacy of secularisation theory on their discipline. The first set of challenges, I explained, are empirical in that they challenge the premise of secularisation theory based on the numerical decline of religious behaviour. However, empirical challenges to secularisation theory might be guilty of 'upwards conflation' in that they draw from patterns of religious behaviour (the socio-cultural level) to determine positions regarding the place of religion in a particular society (or cultural system). But this is not the only problem facing sociologists of religion. In his 1988 article, Roland Robertson described the 'reawakening' of contemporary sociology and social theory to culture given 'mature modernity was unfavourable to concern with culture, whereas postmodernity - more explicitly post-modernism - encourages it' (1988: 4). However, he argues, the relationship of culture to structure is a perennially 'thorny' issue (1988:5), something which has been dealt with by sociologists from the French tradition but has largely been ignored in American sociological analysis (1988: 8).

Hence, in Chapter Two, I described the way rational choice theories of religion have elevated the core subject matter of the sociology of religion from the micro to the macro level, but have done so at the

expense of understanding the relationship of structure to culture.

Supply side theories of religious change, associated particularly with Rodney Stark and the American school (see e.g. Warner, 1993; Stark, 1999), have challenged secularisation theory with a deductive paradigm which seeks to explain the co-existence of high secularity and high religiosity in the US context. Counter to the assumptions of secularisation theory, they argue that the American tradition of religious liberty has created a competitive market in which religion thrives. These models deny religion cultural potency, emphasising as they do the human tendency to utility maximisation. Hence we have the opposite situation in the sociology of religion to that in the mainstream social and political sciences. Where political science is increasingly interested in the non-rational elements of human agency culminating in an over-bearing 'culture' which is guilty of engulfing agency, sociologists of religion turn to rational principles as the basis of religious choice and appear 'culture-resistant' (Robertson, 1988:9). Yet, in Chapter Five, I described the way rational choice theories of religion themselves might represent a form of cultural patterning, or 'sacred economism', which is characteristic of the American polity and might be utilised as part of a neo-secularisation paradigm based around the First Amendment.

What remains, then, is to recognise the utility of work by Dobbelaere (1981) and Casanova (1994) in challenging the sort of conflation between levels and in separating three different premises of

secularisation theory. Not only do their neo-secularisation models point to important cleavages between Western nations in their experience of secularisation, they have brought greater analytical clarity to the field by distinguishing between institutional differentiation, religious involvement or decline and religious change or adaptation (Dobbelaere, 1981:12). Importantly, for Casanova (1994), the differentiation thesis represents the analytical core of secularisation but it can exist in inverse proportion to meso-level secularisation. That is to say, 'public religion' (or what we might call religious resurgence) is possible even in the context of macro-level secularisation. Yet, Casanova's argument has been challenged in this thesis. In the UK context, there has been no macro-level differentiation between Church and State as born out in the evidence of religious engagement outlined in Chapters Three and Four. Whereas in the American context, I have characterised religious engagement by foreign policy officials as increasingly secular. Nevertheless his analysis remains critically important for accounts of church and state because it demonstrates that different dynamics are possible between sociological levels (micro, meso, macro). So too, I want to suggest, are different dynamics possible between structure and culture.

The two post-secular narratives, I have suggested, offer us a limited understanding of the relationship between structures and cultures.

While those constructivist accounts drawn from the political sciences seem to downwardly conflate making culture determinative of

structure; empirical challenges to secularisation theory in the sociology of religion are guilty of ‘upwards conflation’ in that they draw from patterns of religious behaviour (the socio-cultural level) to determine positions regarding the place of religion in a particular society. Theoretical challenges to secularisation theory go one step further in denying culture any autonomy whatsoever. None of these accounts, I have suggested, adequately explains the evidence I have found in the course of my research where - on both sides of the Atlantic - there have emerged distinct cultural and structural phenomena which are related without either seeming to determine the other.

Archer (1988:284) proposes that the same explanatory model of analytical dualism works for both structure and culture and suggests that it can help us understand relationships between the two. Given structure and culture are analytically - rather than empirically - separable, such that ‘actors themselves do have positions for both domains simultaneously’, it is necessary to theorize about the intersection of structural and cultural fields. As she suggests, applying the morphogenetic perspective to both structure and culture has the effect of ‘discouraging both the inflated importance assigned to culture, presented as society’s bandmaster, or its relegation to a reflective role as society’s looking glass’ (Archer, 1988:274). Archer’s point, then, is to assert that ‘structural and cultural dynamics are indeed interrelated in determinative ways, without one of them

ultimately determining the other' (1988:282). Using the phases of the morphogenetic cycle, Archer examines the interplay between the sequences at structural and cultural levels.

There are, she suggests, four alternative patterns: shared morphostasis where both structure and culture are stable: 'where there is a conjunction between structural and cultural morphostasis, the consequences of each domain for the other are symmetrical and conducive to maintenance in both fields' (1988: 292); a combination of cultural morphostasis, structural morphogenesis in which the population is subject to ideational control but structural morphogenesis takes place in the form of the substantial differentiation of material interest groups. Here, 'culture provides no spur to the group differentiation which is the generic motor of structural change but acts as a drag upon it' (p.293). The third pattern is the opposite of this, described as a combination of cultural morphogenesis and structural morphostasis - where there is structural status quo but diversification in culture characterised as pluralism. This impacts on the structural system by generating movement among material interest groups who seek new advantages and opportunities, hence it stimulates social regrouping: 'what cultural morphogenesis does is to change people...from unthinking traditionalists into evaluators of alternatives....although this occurs in the cultural domain, its effects do not stop there because cultural actors are also structural agents' (1988: 298) The fourth pattern, which Archer (2012)

describes as characteristic of the current era, is mutual morphogenesis where there is a combination of competing interest and idea groups at the same time resulting in complex mutual interaction at the socio-cultural level.

I want to suggest that patterns two and three describe the differences I have found between the US and UK foreign policy contexts. In the US, while there remains a strong degree of cultural homogeneity, anchored around the First Amendment, there has been underway a considerable amount of structural change characterised both by increased religious engagement and - at the same time - increased secularisation. This trajectory, epitomised by the emergence and development of international religious freedom policy, has been marked by the proliferation of interest groups utilising ideas (the socio-cultural level) for self-advancement which has, in turn, renewed and refreshed the cultural 'civil religious' narrative. On the other hand, the UK policy context has emerged as one in which there is remarkable structural morphostasis, characterised by the continuity of religious establishment, which interacts with cultural morphogenesis within the governing cadre whose 'religion blindness' is increasingly challenged by the appearance of varying 'ideal interest groups' (1988:297) and with calls to engage with religion as a foreign policy issue (see e.g. Barnett et al, 2015). The result has been what Archer (1988:297) describes, where 'ideational change stimulates social regrouping', as it has intensified conflict between 'religious'

and ‘secular’ positions both within and outside government structures, exemplified by the debate over the ‘militant secularism’ of the public sector where the substantive content of this thesis began.

In Chapter Two, I suggested that the two different post-secular narratives were independently only able to offer a limited insight into the relationship between religion and foreign policy in the UK and the US. Moreover, I argued, bringing the two literatures into conversation exposes critical flaws in both which are not always cited in post-secular narratives. Where one (the turn to culture) set of accounts either overplays religion’s significance in agency or engulfs agency entirely with its account of overbearing culture, it underplays the role of religion in structure. The other (responses to mainstream secularisation theory) overplays the significance of structure at the expense of culture. The sum of these two conversations is a narrative of homogenous Western secularism in the face of global (and national) religious change. Yet, what Archer’s (1988) model of morphogenesis, applied both to structure and to culture, has opened up is not only the possibility that cultural and structural change can happen independently but that one can happen prior to the other. As a result, it is possible to develop a narrative quite different than that offered by post-secularists. Where those accounts place an emphasis on cultures of secularism and therefore Western homogeneity, a cultural and structural analysis of religion-related UK and US foreign policy reveals more differences than similarities between the two contexts.

Furthermore, where post-secular narratives offer a picture of cultural religious change, Archer's (1988) account of morphogenesis enables us to account for *change* in the context of either structural (UK) or cultural (US) *continuity*.

Morphogenetics, I would suggest, necessarily complicates rather than simplifies the picture suggesting as it does that structural and cultural change can happen independently of one another. However, I would argue that Archer's assumptions about the 'Late modern' condition of reflexivity in which there is continuous interplay between morphogenetic structure and culture, where 'discursive struggles are socially organized and social struggles are culturally conditioned' (Archer, 1995: 324), has not been supported by the evidence in this thesis. Hence, this thesis challenges Archer's (2012:5) proposition that we have moved into an era of 'rapid social transformation deriving from the positive reinforcement of cultural morphogenesis by structural morphogenesis and vice versa'. Contrary to Archer's (2012:5) argument, I contend that the UK and US are still characteristic of the age 'coterminous with modernity' in which morphogenesis happens in either the structural or cultural field and is matched by morphostasis in the other. Rather than the sort of 'reflexivity' Archer describes (e.g 2012: 7) appearing in either the UK or US foreign policy establishment, we have seen that 'bringing in religion' is structurally (UK) or culturally (US) 'restorative of the



status quo' (2012:6). And this is borne out by some very recent evidence.

#### **6.4 The contemporary picture**

In Chapter One, I described the contemporary research context as one in which scholars are increasingly called upon to demonstrate research impact. In this final section, I outline the ways in which I have sought to make my work not only policy-relevant but also impactful. Here I discuss two recent workshops that I have organised and facilitated bringing together scholars and practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic to discuss religion-related foreign policy in furtherance of the conclusions of this thesis. These workshops, I argue, contribute to the considerable pressure being placed upon foreign policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic to bring religion into their decision-making processes. Yet, the recommendations for UK foreign policy emerging out of these workshops, while they would initiate some 'progress' in the foreign policy establishment's religious engagement by challenging the cultural problem of 'religion blindness' and, while they might on the surface resemble the new American arrangements, would nevertheless themselves both represent a distinctively British response and, in so doing, would be 'restorative' of the structural status quo. Focussing particularly on three recommendations - to develop a religious engagement strategy into which religious freedom advocacy would be folded; to learn from best practice elsewhere in

Government; and to leverage existing expertise from within the diplomatic cadre - I demonstrate that a new 'religion attentive' foreign policy approach would exhibit all the hallmarks of historic religion-related domestic and international policy. First, it would derive its model of religious freedom from the domestic church-state settlement; second, it would derive its approach to religious engagement from the considerable wealth of best practice drawn from domestic and international development policy and in doing both of these things, it would challenge religion blindness but not the structural 'religiosity' of the British state.

#### **6.41 Towards Better International Policy Making**

Work emerging from one recent transatlantic initiative has at once advocated greater foreign policy attention should be paid to religion (Szabo, 2015) and at the same time pointed to the cleavages between European and American experience of the religion-foreign policy relationship (Jenichen, 2015). By contrast, a series of transatlantic dialogues I have been involved in pointed to some areas of commonality between the US and the UK when it comes to religion-related policy objectives. In May 2013, in conjunction with the State Department, I organised, facilitated and presented at an inaugural State Department-Foreign Office roundtable on religion and foreign policy. A second roundtable, in October 2013, continued the conversation, focussing on the ways in which institutional resistance

to 'doing religion' might be overcome. These roundtables opened up dialogue between policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic and, as a direct result, consensus emerged on three religion-related foreign policy priorities: countering violent extremism; promoting religious freedom; and achieving development and international stability. It is clear that, whatever the differences in the way they 'do God' (as described in Chapters 3,4 and 5), it is possible to reach agreement on the areas in which policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic recognise religion to be a relevant policy variable.

In order to build on - and interrogate - these areas of consensus, in 2014 I submitted a bid to the British Council 'Bridging Voices' programme for funding to organise two transatlantic workshops entitled 'Toward Better International Policy Making: Understanding the Role of Religion in Two Priority Regions'. Working with academic colleagues and with considerable input from both the State Department and the Foreign Office, the proposal was for two scholar-practitioner workshops which aimed at increasing the understanding of religious actors and dynamics in two regions: the Horn of Africa and the Middle East and North Africa, regions designated as high priority for foreign policy, development and stabilisation efforts on both sides of the Atlantic.

In practice, each British Council-funded workshop comprised scholars and practitioners and focussed on the ways in which religion is related

in the range of issues of concern to policy makers and diplomats in the region(s) and sought to identify opportunities for effective religion-related policy interventions. The workshops focussed around lesson-learning and sharing of best practice within and across different communities (NGOs, Governments, FBOs, academics) and had the explicit aim of developing answers to five question sets:

1. **In what ways do Governments successfully work with religious actors in the region to advance strategic interests?** Which approaches or interventions have been successful? What elements are replicable? What faith-based communities, institutions and organisations have the necessary capacity to be constructive partners? Where are the strategic gaps and how can we contribute to building capacity?
2. **Which country or regional policy objectives would benefit from a better understanding of religious dynamics?** In particular, what might the advancement of religious freedom contribute to regional objectives?
3. **What can we learn from historical policy decisions that were not sufficiently attentive to the role and influence of religion?** How might having a more deliberate or nuanced understanding of religious perspectives have helped avoid these errors?
4. **What are the barriers to effective engagement with religious actors and dynamics?** How have they been overcome? How can conflicts of interest be resolved?

## 5. How can we measure the impact of religious engagement?

Which approaches/interventions have been successful? Which elements are replicable?

Yet, while these workshops originated in consensus between the two transatlantic foreign policy establishments, our findings pointed to divergence between the two contexts. The most obvious point of difference reflected in the Report of the workshops, published under the title ‘Toward Religion-Attentive Policy Making’, was in the machinery of government. In the time between conceptualising the workshops and hosting them, the US State Department took a ‘great leap faithward’ (Birdsall, 2013a) and established the Office for Faith Based Community Initiatives (subsequently re-named the Office for Religion and Global Affairs). As the Report highlights, there remains a strategic gap in the UK foreign policy establishment’s ability to engage religion effectively. Yet I would argue that the divergence between the two contexts goes further. This report makes a number of recommendations - many of which are relevant to policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic (for example about how to conceptualise religion) but at least four of which (about building capacity) are specifically intended for the UK foreign policy audience. The latter represent an attempt to overcome the sort of religion blindness which was identified in Chapter Three of this thesis, as the report explains “the FCO, and perhaps the UK Government more broadly, suffers from a condition of ‘religion blindness’. The FCO can improve the

quality of its work by analysing religious dynamics and engaging religious actors (Birdsall, Lindsay and Tomalin, 2015b:8).

Specifically, the report calls on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to do more on religion by appointing a Director of Religion and Global Affairs (Birdsall, Lindsay and Tomalin, 2015b:8). To an untrained eye, the appointment of a senior official and creation of bureaucratic space for the strategic consideration of religion within the Foreign Office might look a bit like the sort of initiative taken by the State Department and its Office for Religion and Global Affairs. But would this move to developing 'religion attentive' UK foreign policy really just be a case of conforming the British foreign policy establishment to the American model?

On the contrary, while the report represents just the latest example of pressure to 'do more on religion' facing foreign policy makers, I want to demonstrate that its recommendations are as much about continuity as they are change and therefore that they represent the evolution of a uniquely British way to 'manage God'. First and most obviously, the report calls on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to develop a religious engagement strategy into which religious freedom advocacy should be folded. This does not suggest a radical re-tooling of existing international religious freedom policy which, as we saw in Chapter 4, draws significantly on the domestic church-state settlement and Equalities legislation for its model. Furthermore, while the idea of a religious engagement strategy does echo the US Strategy for Religious

Leader Engagement which is being delivered by the State Department's Office, the Report makes clear that the Foreign Office should 'emulate best practice' (Birdsall, Lindsay and Tomalin 2015b: 9) from within the UK Government. But what might best practice look like?

#### **6.42 Doing religious engagement: a typology**

One of my interviewees, when asked about the government's religious engagement suggested: 'there is no collective database of religious groups and ways they are engaged with..I expect it happens differently in different areas' (HMG 5 July 2012/c). In fact, what I have found is a remarkable degree of consistency in the way government 'does God' even across departmental boundaries. I have mapped an extensive range of public policy engagements with religion and, through this mapping, I have developed a five fold 'typology' of religion-related public policy which illustrates that there are five 'modes' in which policy makers engage religious actors: formal advice, commissioning, consulting or engaging; enabling; and research. In what follows, I provide a brief overview of each of these modes with illustrative examples provided to me during the course of my interviews.

*First*, my interviews revealed that there are a range of mechanisms through which policy makers obtain religious 'advice'. Perhaps the most obvious is through the appointment of designated faith advisers

like the Islamic Religious Adviser to the Ministry of Defence whose role is to ‘represent some of these (religious) perspectives to policy makers’ (HMG/4 October 2013a). In a similar model, a number of faith advisers were appointed to the Department of Communities and Local Government between 2003 and 2010 under the Prevent counter-radicalisation strategy (HMG/5 July 2012/b). These faith advisers, one official explained, introduced a different perspective to the policy making process, suggesting that religion could specifically affect outcomes like poverty and were keen for religion to be included in the list of protected characteristics under equalities legislation (HMG/5 July 2012/b).

As well as the appointment of religious or ‘faith’ advisers to central government departments, advice is also obtained from religious representatives sitting on formal advisory boards including the Foreign Secretary’s advisory group on human rights (HMG/23 August 2012/b); the Faith Partnership advisory board established after the publication of DFID’s Faith Partnership Principles (HMG/14 June 2013/a); and the Ministry of Justice’s Equality and Diversity Forum (HMG 27 July 2012/a)<sup>128</sup>. Taking the perspectives of religious representatives, then, seems to be a relatively routine part of the policy making process.

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<sup>128</sup> In correspondence 30 October 2013.



The *second* model through which policy makers in the UK engage religious actors, ‘commissioning’, involves policy makers contracting out the delivery of public services to faith based organisations. This model began under the Blair government (HMG 27 July 2012/a) with the establishment of the Department of Communities and Local Government and was extended in the 2008 paper ‘Face to Face and Side by Side: a framework for partnership in our interfaith society’. In my interviews, officials identified a range of recent policy initiatives which involved the commissioning of faith sector organisations including everything from faith schools, whose religious credentials could be protected by a move to academy status<sup>129</sup> to neighbourhoods policy under which the Church Urban Fund has been funded to improve inter-faith relations, a new type of partnership which is ‘taking advantage of the role they (the Church of England) already play in communities’ (HMG 27 July 2012/a)<sup>130</sup>. The range and scope of this type of ‘commissioning’ is broad: for example, the Ministry of Justice has contracted the Salvation Army to provide services to adult victims of human trafficking (HMG/27 July 2012/a)<sup>131</sup> while domestic integration policy involves the direct funding of faith related projects seeking to improve community relations (HMG 27 July 2012/a)<sup>132</sup>. Furthermore, under the Localism Act, the Department for

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<sup>129</sup> See The Guardian ‘Gove defends Faith Schools’, 17 February 2011 - <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/feb/17/gove-faith-schools> - accessed 7 May 2015

<sup>130</sup> In correspondence 30 October 2013.

<sup>131</sup> In correspondence 30 October 2013

<sup>132</sup> In correspondence 30 October 2013.

Communities and Local Government encourages local authorities to commission services from faith-based organisations. There is, then, an established pattern of ‘commissioning’ religious organisations to deliver specific public services.

The *third* mode of religious engagement I have identified falls under the banner ‘consulting or engaging’, by this I mean the consultation or engagement of religious actors or representatives as stakeholders in the policy development or implementation process. Based on my evidence, it seems that this is by far the most extensively utilised mode of religious engagement. Consulting or engaging is less about the utilisation of religious groups and their resources and more about the representation of religious groups and their perspectives in the policy making process. This type of engagement, one official explained, dated back to consultation with a range of religious groups over the Millennium Celebrations, which ‘set a precedent for all faiths feeling they had a right to be consulted’ (HMG 27 July 2012/a). Those I interviewed identified a range of consultation with religious groups including with black churches on planning laws (HMG/ 5 July 2012/ c); with Churches over changes to accession rules (HMG/5 July 2012/ a); with religious groups over the swine flu epidemic and flood review (HMG 24 July 2012/a); with Churches and other faith bodies on education policy; and in Northern Ireland, the government has often been ‘in listening mode’ with Church leaders (HMG, 5 July 2012/a). On religious freedom, officials explained to me, the consultation

process with religious groups is 'wide' with 'many advocacy groups in regular contact' (HMG 23 August 2012/a). In July 2011, there was a conference on religious freedom at Wilton Park which brought together government representatives, civil society representatives and faith leaders (HMG 23 August 2012/a). Importantly, officials were keen to point out, consultation of religious groups is wide-ranging - though the government traditionally works with the nine historic faiths it will 'talk to anyone who wants to talk' (HMG, 27 July 2012/a).

What this suggests is that equalities legislation, though critiqued for a functional conception of religion, (see e.g. Trigg, 2013) has in fact provided opportunities for religious groups to contribute to the policy making process.

The *fourth* mode of religious engagement is subtly different from the third. I have labelled this mode 'enabling' though it might also be described as partnership working. This category describes the ways in which HMG works to assist religious organisations and groups to achieve their own ends. The most high profile recent example of this sort of 'enabling' is the so-called Big Society. Recognising that 'there is already a big role for religious organisations in civil society' (HMG 5 July 2012/c), through initiatives like community asset transfer, the government is enabling religious organisations to take over libraries, community centres and other community assets. Similarly, the 'Year of Service' initiative was an 'opportunity for the Government to highlight work that faith communities already do' (HMG, 27 July

2012/a). The Department for International Development has worked with churches on development projects through the Basic Services Fund (HMG 27 July 2012/a)<sup>133</sup>. One of the most significant examples of ‘enabling’, or working in partnership, in recent years has been through the Prevent counter-radicalisation strategy as one official explained ‘In the Prevent Strand, religious groups are critical players, in the early days we looked for friendly commentators’ (HMG 3 July 2012/a). In a way ‘enabling’ represents the counter-point to accusations that the government ‘instrumentalises’ religious organisations in their pursuit of policy goals. By enabling faith groups and communities, the government allows itself to be instrumentalised given these groups’ engagement with government stakeholders is ‘either advancing their agenda or protecting something, like any other organisation that has interests’ (HMG 5 July 2012/c)

The *fifth* and final mode of religious engagement described to me by officials was research. This covers quite a range of activity - from large-scale external research projects like the five year Religions and Development Programme to internal information gathering done by the Research, Information and Communications Unit. Significantly, the scope for research into religion has decreased under the Coalition Government. One official explained ‘there was more research done on religion under Prevent, now we look at ethnicity, place of birth and rare populations’ (HMG 5 July 2012/d), another suggested ‘we rarely

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<sup>133</sup> In correspondence 30 October 2013

go looking for expertise on religion...our interest is in people' (HMG 5 July 2012/c). That said, officials I spoke to identified a range of research initiatives which concerned religion. Perhaps most significant was the cadre of research analysts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who 'support policy objectives but have additional other objectives about enhancing knowledge and expertise' (HMG 28 August 2012/b). While organised geographically, these analysts recognised that 'for an individual or group inspired or motivated by religion, I would expect it to be the most important factor' (HMG 28 August 2012/b) and were able to identify a range of recent research into religion from one piece on the role of specific religious organisations in global and local events to another which tracked trends in the Government's work with certain types of groups. Elsewhere, RICU continues to support counter-terrorism objectives with its work and is 'now able to put information it has gathered to front line staff..this is much more advanced than in other policy areas' (HMG 7 December 2012/a).

While policy makers were quick to point out that these modes of engagement were not unusual and that religious groups are treated 'as just another civil society stakeholder' (HMG/28 August 2012/a) or as 'any other constituency' (HMG/5 July 2012/c), nevertheless this typology provides a useful focus for practitioners in that it illustrates a range of entry points into the policy making process, helping to build the sort of 'policy literacy' I described as essential in Chapter One.

Perhaps more importantly, the array of religion-related policy engagements would represent a good starting point for foreign policy makers keen to learn from the successes or failures of past interventions that have been undertaken elsewhere in Government. There is scope for a similar review of religion-related interventions to be undertaken across the diplomatic cadre (Birdsall, Lindsay and Tomalin, 2015b: 9) who will have their own experiences of religious engagement in post.

#### **6.43 Toward religion-attentive UK foreign policy**

In the United States, building strategic capacity for religious engagement in the State Department - via the establishment of an Office for Religion and Global Affairs - was met with suspicion (e.g. Olmstead, 2013) over the extent to which this initiative would contravene the First Amendment. Unlike that context, the UK foreign policy community would face no such structural barrier in making new arrangements for 'doing God' more strategically. Indeed, taking religion seriously as a foreign policy issue and initiating new efforts to engage and understand religion would be part of a long history of religion-related engagements in the domestic arena and would build on the sort of international initiatives outlined in Chapter Four. Not only is the UK in a unique position to achieve real impact in the pursuit of international religious freedom given its combination of religious establishment and tremendous religious pluralism (see

Chapter Four), it can learn from its past mistakes in doing religious engagement (see Chapter Three) and from the American precedent (see Chapter Five) to develop a religion-attentive foreign policy process which is fit for the contemporary era in which ‘Understanding religion, and religions, needs to be an integral part of our diplomatic armoury.’<sup>134</sup> Doing so, I suggest, would represent a cultural but not a structural shift for the UK foreign policy establishment rather than the sort of mutual morphogenesis Archer (2012) describes as characteristic of late modernity.

Furthermore, what I am describing is far from a ‘post-secular’ foreign policy. I contend that building institutional capacity for religious engagement - be it in the US State Department or the UK Foreign Office - does not represent the sort of fundamental change posited by post-secular narratives. Instead, the adoption of a strategic international approach to religion in both contexts represents *continuity* rather than *change*. Any UK approach to religious engagement would inevitably be shaped by the domestic constitutional settlement which - as domestic policy has shown - makes it comparatively easy for the UK government to engage religious actors given it is demonstrably neither ‘secular’ nor ‘post-secular’. On the other hand, the American Office for Religion and Global Affairs has been shaped by the First Amendment and therefore remains in a

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<sup>134</sup> Nigel Baker, Her Majesty’s Ambassador to the Holy See, Blog January 14th 2014 <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/nigelbaker/2013/01/24/training-diplomats-to-understand-religion/> - accessed May 5 2015

‘secular’ rather than ‘post-secular’ mode. I explained earlier that the core purpose of this project was to explain and examine markedly different transatlantic foreign policy approaches to religion. In the course of writing this thesis, things have changed considerably on both sides of the Atlantic, demonstrating that the religion-foreign policy relationship is not only something policy makers are increasingly concerned about but something scholars should recognise as an opportunity for exploration. Yet what this thesis demonstrates is that the differences between the US and the UK are more fundamental than mere policy positions. This means that no matter how far the UK’s religion-related policy priorities seem to echo those in the US and however the UK Government moves forward to develop a religion-attentive foreign policy approach - be it appointing an Ambassador for religious freedom or developing a religious engagement strategy - it will always ‘manage God’ differently.



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## Appendix A

### 8.1 Sample Interview Questions

**These questions provide an overview of the sort of subjects discussed with participants. They acted as a guide during the interview process which was semi-structured. Questions were tailored to the individual, bearing in mind their connection to the material and context.**

The purposes of the interviews will be to determine:

- 1) if, how and whether religion currently motivates, helps to deliver or contributes to the objectives of foreign policy
- 2) if, how and whether religion has in the past motivated, helped to deliver or contributed to the objectives of foreign policy
- 3) if, how and whether religion currently (or has in the past) motivates, helps to deliver or contributes to the objectives of domestic policy
- 4) why any differences between engagement with/treatment of attentiveness to religion in domestic and foreign policy may emerge (including the extent of personal interest, bias on the part of decision makers)
- 5) how the religious heritage of individuals, groups and generations (including but not limited to personal religious faith and practice, national heritage, educational background) may have influenced specific foreign policy decisions or the general direction of foreign policy

#### Introductory

1. How long have you worked in this department/organisation?
2. What is your particular area of interest/expertise?
3. Having read the project information, please describe your current role and any other experience that you consider relevant to the project.
4. What was your initial reaction to the information provided about the project?
5. How do you react to the suggestion that current UK (foreign) policy is 'religion blind'?

**Use of research**

6. How often do you refer to external research in your work?
7. Can you give examples of the sort of external research you have used in order to develop policy?
8. Is there a part of your department/organisation where research takes place in order to inform policy making?
9. Do you regularly commission/consult research?
10. Does your department/unit/you subscribe to or consult relevant journals e.g. foreign affairs?
11. Have you/your department/unit ever consulted external experts in developing policy?

**Foreign Policy**

12. What is foreign (national security, development, communities) policy?
13. How are foreign (national security, development, communities) policy decisions made?
14. What factors are considered in developing foreign (national security, development, communities) policy?
15. How significant is the national interest in foreign (national security, development, communities) policy?
16. What, in your experience, is the relationship between religion and foreign (national security, development, communities) policy?
17. Are there any ways in which religion motivates foreign (national security, development, communities) policy?
18. Is religion a foreign (national security, development, communities) policy issue?
19. Do you consider religion to influence policy in any other countries? If so which? why/why not?
20. Are there other areas of government policy in which you consider religion to be an important factor?
21. What is involved in the practice of foreign (national security, development, communities) policy?
22. How is success in foreign policy (national security, development, communities) measured?

**US/UK relations**

23. Is the relationship between the US and UK significant in your area of work?
24. How would you describe/do you understand the relationship between the UK and US?

25. How closely do you work with US counterparts on specific areas of policy?
26. What factors are considered when developing policy with relation to the US?
27. How do you respond to the growing attention being paid to religion in relation to foreign policy in the US?/How do you respond to the fact that little attention is paid to religion in relation to foreign policy in the UK?

### **Capability-related**

28. Are there any formal qualifications required for your position/ related positions in your organisation?
29. What experience would you expect someone working in your position/organisation to have?
30. How far is foreign policy influenced by research? Do you regularly engage with think tanks/research organisations?
31. Do you consider there to be a departmental/organisational culture?
32. What is the cultural make-up of your department/organisation?
33. Are there any religion specialists in your department?
34. Has your work ever required you/colleagues to study religion(s) or religious communities?
35. Where would you seek information on religion in the event that it was needed?

### **International Religious Freedom (for USA only)**

36. Where did the IRF act come from?
37. What is the connection between IRF policy and the first amendment?
38. What does IRF look like?
39. Is there a relationship between Christianity and democracy?
40. Is IRF only about the protection of minority religions?
41. What has been/is being done to encourage other countries to pursue an IRF policy agenda?
42. Why do you think Obama was slow to appoint an IRF Ambassador?

### **IRF (for UK only)**

43. What do you know about US IRF policy?
44. How significant is religious freedom as part of the European and UK human rights agenda?

**Education/religious background**

**[I sought information about the educational and religious background of interview subjects to ascertain whether there is a connection between individual experiences of religion and attitudes towards its role in foreign policy.]**

43. What is your understanding of religion?
44. Do you consider yourself to be religious?
45. What is your experience of religion/religious organisations?
46. In what ways do you consider your experience of religion to have assisted you in obtaining/performing your role? previous/future roles? To what level are you formally educated? In particular, do you have undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications? In what subjects?
47. In what ways do you consider your formal education assisted you in obtaining/performing your role? previous/future roles?

**General/Closing**

48. Is there anything you would like to discuss/mention that we have not covered?
49. Are there any interviewees that you would suggest I contact about this research?
50. How significant do you consider to be the findings of this research?

## Appendix B

### 8.2 Interview Coding

#### UK Interviews

Anyone in the employment of Her Majesty's Government (includes members of the permanent civil service, the diplomatic service (including locally engaged officers) temporary appointees or special advisers but excluding Ministers) will be referred to as HMG/date/ a,b,c etc. Attributions will be recorded as 'HMG official'. [note: any reference to 'policy makers' or 'policy officials' in the thesis refer to this group of government employees and NOT to the Ministerial cadre of elected politicians.]

In addition to specific interviews, I have drawn on a number of interactions with HMG officials (including the range referred to above) in the form of roundtable discussions, personal correspondence etc on religion and policy. In order to demonstrate where references are to a single individual, I have used the classification code of his/her first interview in the text and have used an additional footnote to indicate where this information came from an interaction other than a formal interview.

Interview Code	Interview Date	Attribution
HMG/ 8 June/2011	8 June 2011	HMG official
HMG/10 May 2012/a	10 May 2012	HMG official
HMG/10 May 2012/b	10 May 2012	HMG official
HMG/3 July 2012/a	3rd July 2012	HMG official
HMG/4 July 2012/a	4th July 2012	HMG official
HMG/4 July 2012/b	4th July 2012	HMG official
HMG/4 July 2012/c	4 July 2012	HMG official
HMG/5 July 2012/a	5 July 2012	HMG official
HMG/5 July 2012/b	5 July 2012	HMG official
HMG/5 July 2012/c	5 July 2012	HMG official
HMG/5 July 2012/d	5 July 2012	HMG official
HMG/ 24 July 2012/a	24 July 2012	HMG official
HMG/27 July 2012/a	27th July 2012	HMG official
HMG/ 23 August 2012/a	23 August 2012	HMG official
HMG/23 August 2012/b	23 August 2012	HMG official
HMG/28 August 2012/a	28 August 2012	HMG official



<b>Interview Code</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Attribution</b>
HMG/28 August 2012/c	28 August 2012	HMG official
HMG/28 August 2012/c	28 August 2012	HMG official
HMG/28 August 2012/b	28 August 2012	HMG official
HMG/ 21 September 2012/a	21 September 2012	HMG official
HMG/7 December 2012/a	7 December 2012	HMG official
HMG/7 December 2012/b	7 December 2012	HMG official
HMG/ 13 December 2012/a	13 December 2012	HMG official
HMG/19 March 2013/a	19 March 2013	HMG official
HMG/ 21 March 2013/a	21 March 2013	HMG official
HMG/21 March 2013/b	21 March 2013	HMG official
HMG/14 June 2013/a	14 June 2013	HMG official
HMG/4 October 2013/a	4 October 2013	HMG official

### **US Interviews**

Anyone in the employment of the US Federal Government will be referred to as USG/date/a,b,c. Attributions will be to a 'federal government official'.

Given the division between government employees and civil society representatives is less marked in the US, although I will refer to civil society representatives as 'USCS/date/a,b,c', it should be noted that a number of those interviewed were former employees of the federal government - these are marked with an \*.

<b>Interview Code</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Attribution</b>
USCS/26 March 2013/a*	26 March 2013	former USG/civil society representative

<b>Interview Code</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Attribution</b>
USCS/26 March 2013/ b*	26 March 2013	former USG/public intellectual
USCS/27 March 2013/ a*	27 March 2013	former USG/civil society representative
USCS/2 April 2013/a	2 April 2013	civil society representative
USCS/2 April 2013/b	2 April 2013	civil society representative
USCS/24 April 2013/ a*	24 April 2013	former USG/civil society representative
USG/25 April 2013/a	25 April 2013	US Government employee
USG/25 April 2013/b	25 April 2013	US Government employee
USCS/30 April 2013/a	30 April 2013	civil society representative/public intellectual
USCS/7 May 2013/a*	7 May 2013	former USG/civil society representative
USG/7 May 2013/a	7 May 2013	US government employee
USG/15 May 2013a	15 May 2013	US Government employee
USCS/25 July 2013/a*	25 July 2013	former USG/public intellectual
USG/4 October 2013/ a	4 October 2013	US government employee
USCS/29 March 2015	29 March 2015	former USG/public intellectual