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## RELIGION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL POLITICS

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### ABSTRACT:

*THROUGHOUT TIME, THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS OF ANALYSIS AND THE TARGET OF MULTIPLE SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS. STARTING AS THE BINDING AGENT OF THE ARCHAIC COMMUNITIES, WHICH LATER GENERATED VARIOUS TYPES OF COMMUNITIES<sup>2</sup>, TO BEING THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT OR TERRORISM ACTS, RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS HAVE BEEN PRESENT, MORE OR LESS NOTICEABLY, IN ALL THE HISTORICAL STAGES OF THE HUMAN SOCIETY AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN THE PROCESS OF DEFINING CERTAIN SOCIO-POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF THE WORLD'S NATIONS. VACILLATING FROM VITUPERATION TO APPRECIATION, THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON HAS FOLLOWED A SINUSOIDAL PATH, YET IT REMAINED A CONSTANT OF SOCIAL LIFE IN ANY HISTORICAL ERA, AND, MOST OFTEN, A CONSTANT WITHIN POLITICS.*

*THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS RESURGENCE IS NO LONGER A NOVELTY, BUT HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN VARIOUS AREAS OF SOCIETY. AND THIS GENERATES AT LEAST ONE IMPORTANT QUESTION: HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON IN A POST-MODERN SOCIETY THAT CONSIDERS ITSELF SECULAR AND HUMANIST, WHILE CONTINUING TO BE MULTICULTURAL AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS?*

*THE THESIS OF THIS STUDY STARTS WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS RESURGENCE HAS BROUGHT CHANGES AT THE LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INFLUENCING THE STRATEGIES AND POLITICAL DECISIONS IN THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICS. THE AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY REVOLVES AROUND THE ASSERTION THAT THERE IS A RELATIONSHIP OF INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGION AND THE INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS. THIS STUDY ENDEAVORS TO DISCUSS THE DIMENSIONS OF THIS RELATION, AS WELL AS A FEW EMPIRICAL ASPECTS.*

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**KEY WORDS:** THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGION, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, GLOBALIZATION, IMPACT, POLITICS

### THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGION. GLOBAL RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

In our contemporary world, it is very difficult to ignore the presence of religion in public affairs. The media portrays numerous cases of people, institutions, and ideas from the religious sphere thus demonstrating it continues to have a major relevance and influence on the political field.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> George Moyser, *Politics and religion in the modern world*, (London and New York:Routledge, 1991), 1.

<sup>3</sup> George Moyser, *Politics and religion in the modern world*, 1.

Proof of religious resurgence is already overwhelming and it is not disputable because it is accepted as inherent. Absolutely obvious especially in Africa and Latin America, this re-emergence is also visible in Asia and even Australia, through the increasing numbers of religious topics with each passing year since 2001. The seemingly European negative example, as exempt from the phenomenon of religious resurgence, through its continuous and extreme secular state, has already challenged a careful analysis of present practices.<sup>4</sup>

This wave of religious resurgence has multiple causes. First of all, certain people react to the failure of the secularization process and of the liberal and official religions to fulfill their religious needs. This is a familiar pattern in the history of religions. A second source for the religious rebirth is the continuous failure of justice, the incapacity of making a fair distribution of goods and services, including food and health products. Certain people react against the failure of the humanistic-secular paradigm to confer peace and prosperity, and to provide plausible explanations for inequity, evil and pain.<sup>5</sup>

The religious movements in many areas of the world, present in various religions and gradually drawing in more people and even organizations, are the reason the analysts deemed it necessary to reevaluate the secularization theory. One of the findings is that all the signs of religious rebirth contradict the secularization theory, outlined half-way through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Religion should have gradually become all the more private, with gradually lesser interest for the political problems and a decreasing force (with less impact) both in the society as a whole, and in individual lives. An echo of the expectation (and anticipation) that religion could disappear can be heard in certain multicultural political groups hoping that religious differences won't matter much. In time this position will become difficult to advocate.<sup>6</sup>

The predictions concerning the place religion will take in the public arena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are based on the hopes it will become marginalized and even eliminated, or at least limited to the private life. Late modernity predicted the *alienation from religion*, meaning that religion would no longer have control over the social life, being limited to the private life, at best, thus giving way to a society dominated by a secular mindset in which religion lost all its social roles.

*The historicity of the extra-European, and even the European territories, contradicts this diagnosis of religious extinction. Without abandoning the expression, specialists write about the vitality of religions, which are capable of creatively responding to the displacements caused by globalization, and thus offer meaning to the individuals and communities, on the traumatizing path of modernity.*<sup>7</sup>

The prediction was for a secularized era, whereas religion would be ill-suited and irrelevant. Yet the visible reality is different. The religious factor and its religious emergences not only have not disappeared, but have gained amplitude in our contemporary context, encompassing different social levels.

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<sup>4</sup> George Moyser, *Politics and religion in the modern world*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Beyer & Lori Beaman, , *Religion, Globalization and Culture*, (Boston: Brill Leiden, 2007), 187.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Beyer & Lori Beaman, , *Religion, Globalization and Culture*, 187

<sup>7</sup> Anca Manolescu, *Stilul religiei în modernitatea târzie*, (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 103.

*The classical assumption that modernization generates the unavoidable decline of religion has lost some of its strength. After the fall of communism and the acceleration of globalization, the various forms of religiousness have reentered the heart of political and intellectual debate, while religious engagement is increasing in general.*<sup>8</sup>

The religious resurgence is considered a surprise, in a society that considers itself to be secular. The global rebirth of the religious movements in the 1970s has taken by surprise many Western observers, who presumed that the secularization process, based on the positivist ideas of the progress and modernization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was universal, unidirectional and unavoidable: all societies have become inexorably all the more secular. Within such societies, religious institutions have been progressively marginalized, and their influence on society has diminished.<sup>9</sup> Although it was believed that secularization would gradually fence in religion, limiting it to the private life, contemporary religious awakenings have created skepticism towards the secularization theory and there can be seen new efforts in adapting it to the new circumstances. The contemporary world is massively religious, characterized by the interplay of secular and counter-secular forces. There are strong religious dynamics in most parts of the world, the Western Europe being an exception in this respect.<sup>10</sup>

The causes of the resurgence of religion were connected to the inner needs of the individual:

*... the rebirth of religion is certainly connected to the global search for identity and belonging, community, and new orientation systems to guarantee purpose and significance. The more a society is exposed to modernization people will yearn for a deeper meaning of life, because modernization creates the feeling of displacement and disorientation, causing the collapse of community's values, traditions and lifestyles.*<sup>11</sup>

The spiritual factor is believed to be essential in the making and perpetuation of a society. Throughout the historical evolution of humankind, certain drives were noticeable, under the influence of one or more systems of thought which, even though they claimed to be secular, functioned by the same principles as the religious systems.

*The historical world built by the Europeans during the last 6-7 centuries (beginning with the Renaissance) is today in the process of being shattered all together, a process altering the very axis of the world. Yet this change cannot be observed at the level of economies and states, only religions. Consequently, the problem of our contemporary world cannot be limited to the opposition between capitalism vs. communism, but refers to the break of the constraints (parametrical) described: a) by the capitalist system (as a world system); b) by the noologic positivist conglomerate (nous < gr. spirit, logos < orienting word), as a constitutive part of the great Western culture,*

<sup>8</sup> Camil Ungureanu (ed.), *Religia în democrație. O dilemă a modernității*, (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 5.

<sup>9</sup> David Zeidan, *The resurgence of religion*, (Boston: Brill Leiden, 2003), 61.

<sup>10</sup> David Zeidan, *The resurgence of religion*, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Natalia Vlas, *Globalizarea și religia la începutul secolului XXI*, (Cluj Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2008), 136.

*that gains a gradually more important position, even triumphing over the whole, especially starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, by overtaking the spiritual lead of the world; c) by the secular systems of legitimizing authority.<sup>12</sup>*

Secularization was not capable to solve important issues at the level of international relations. This is why analysts presume that the global resurgence of religion can be interpreted as a result of the failure of the secular, modern state to produce democracy or evolution in the developing countries. These countries have gone through a dilemma during the colonial occupation – should they accept Western countries as models of development and despise and renegade their own culture, with the purpose of gaining equal power – or should they affirm their own cultural and religious traditions and retain their inferior material level.<sup>13</sup>

In the midst of the rapid transformation and the challenges imposed by progress and globalization, the consequences are the individualization of religious and spiritual search for meaning, a search that cannot be limited to the need for safety. As a result of immigration and globalization, in Europe arose new religious communities. In short, while the secularization theory remains open as a scientific assumption, at society level the recent European history didn't take the shape of a teleology of the triumph of secular thinking. We are now witnessing the decline of the traditional church, and in the same time the new positioning of the sacred and spiritual in relation to the private and social life.<sup>14</sup>

The resurgence of religion is global in a geographic sense because it is not limited to a certain part of the world, such as South America, Central Asia or Middle East, and, from the perspective of compared politics and compared religion, this phenomenon takes place in different countries, with different political types, and in all the major religions of the world. The global resurgence of religion also takes place in countries with different cultural and religious traditions, as well as in countries with different levels of development.<sup>15</sup>

*During the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a worldwide rebirth of religion. This rebirth brought about an amplification of religious consciousness and the emergence of fundamentalist movements deepening the differences between religions. Yet it did not produce significant changes in the world's percentage of different religions.<sup>16</sup>*

There is a comeback of religion on a global scale which takes place in the entire world, a comeback which means a challenge to our interpretation of the modern world – what it means to be modern – and it impacts the manner in which culture and religion influence international relations. The global rebirth of religion takes place in the modern world; it is part of a larger crisis, the crisis of modernity in the Western countries. This reflects a much deeper delusion, on a larger scale, toward a modernity which reduces the world and

<sup>12</sup> Ilie Bădescu, *Geopolitică și religie. Insurecții religioase în secolul XXI. Insurecția euxiniană*, , <http://roncea.ro/2010/08/06/prof-ilie-badescu-geopolitica-si-religie-insurectii-religioase-in-secolul-xx-insurectia-euxiniana/>, accesat în 16.10.2013.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Scott M, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 40-41

<sup>14</sup> Ungureanu, *Religia în democrație...*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Scott, *The Global Resurgence of Religion...*, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*, (București: Litera, 2012), 85.

everything that can be perceived and controlled through reason, science and technology, and leaves aside the sacred, religion and spirituality.<sup>17</sup>

As a result, it was suggested that the global resurgence of religion can be seen as part of the search for authenticity and development in the developing countries. The global resurgence of religion in the developing countries can be seen as a rebellion against the West.<sup>18</sup>

The global resurgence of religion can also be interpreted as a fundamentalist and anti-modern reaction to the unavoidable and inexorable spread of modernity and globalization. The phenomenon can be understood as part of a larger picture, the already-existing criticism of modernity on a world level of authenticity and development. A postmodern perspective starts by accepting the fact that the disaffection with modernity has shown us that the Illuminist promises of freedom, autonomy and understanding through reason and knowledge were unwarranted. This approach shares the same perspective with the artists, theologians, and cultural critics who admit the limitations of the world delusion. This tendency was predicted by George Simmel, over a century ago. He was worried that the growing attachment to things would constantly devalue our world. For all these reasons, the 20<sup>th</sup> century could be the last modern century. A truly multicultural international society is formed for the first time, taking seriously the cultural and religious pluralism – this is one of the most important aspects of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's international politics.<sup>19</sup>

The global resurgence of religion may be defined as an increase of performances and religious persuasion, a growing importance of religious beliefs, practices, and declamations, in private and public life, as well as a growing role of religious people, non-state groups, political parties and communities, organizations, in internal politics, and all this happens in a manner of significant implications for international politics.<sup>20</sup>

### **THE IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS RESURGENCE ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

The idea that religion plays a major role in many conflicts worldwide is accepted. Despite this, it is uncertain which conceptual frame should be adopted in order to analyze the rebirth of religion, religious ideas and transnational religious movements in international relations. The scholars who are concerned with the global rebirth of religion in international relations have adopted a variety of views on religion, and placed religion in a variety of theoretical conceptions of international relations.<sup>21</sup>

Researchers in international relations have approached religion as if it were a part of a larger problem (even one of identity), that of understanding the power of ideas, systems of beliefs or ideologies in international relations. People's ideas, their beliefs, what they consider to be right or wrong, strongly shape their behavior. The emphasis on religion as being a set of ideas and a form of ideology underlines the manner in which the differences of religious ideas – religious differences – perpetuate the potential for conflict and make existing conflicts much harder to solve.<sup>22</sup> One of the reasons is the fact that religions involve

<sup>17</sup> Timothy Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International. The Modern Myth*, (London:Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 180.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, *The Global Resurgence of Religion...*, 41-42.

<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics...*, 181.

<sup>20</sup> Scott, *The Global Resurgence of Religion...*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Scott, *Religion and International Conflict*, in K.R. Dark, *Religion and International Relations*, (Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Scott, *Religion and International Conflict*, 1.

basic values, which define what is good and wrong, values considered an absolute truth and, often times, a universal truth. Usually, the religious people claim that these values and beliefs should be accepted by everyone in the world. Self-identification with religion and devotion to it spring from the natural tendency to perceive the values of one's own religion as being superior to other systems of beliefs.<sup>23</sup>

Religious conflicts are a type of ideological conflict and as such they are much harder to solve, since they exclude the possibility of compromise or coexistence. Ideas, unlike territorial disputes, and economic conflicts over commerce, money and resources, cannot be separated.<sup>24</sup>

The use of religion and religious beliefs in politics differs from the secular political ideologies, because the moral commitments and the political options that emerge from religious beliefs, institutions and practices are associated with the Absolute. This implicates that the religious values and beliefs may add an additional degree of efficiency in the expectations from people.<sup>25</sup>

The second way the religion was understood in the International Relations is as a primary source of individual and social identity. This approach considers religion to be a main quarry of differentiation between groups. A system of religious beliefs offers its followers an important source of identity. There is a certain core essentialism and determinism in the very nature of religion, because the religious differences are immutable and fundamental, and much more important than the differences imposed by ethnicity, class or gender.<sup>26</sup>

In the modern world, religion is essential, probably even the central force that motivates and mobilizes people. What actually matters for them is not the political ideology or economical interests. Even more than the ethnicity, the religion makes a definitive and exclusive discrimination between people.<sup>27</sup>

The third way the religion was perceived in the International Relations is a version of the idea that religion is a form of ideology. The religion is therefore a type of transnational idea, and it could simply be called *transnational religion*. The ideas become transnational when people from different countries have a similar belief system, moral code, or they believe in a special international law, or some international regulations. The proletarian internationalism, the anti-racism and a basic commitment regarding the human rights, are all transnational ideas aiming to create multinational or multi-ethnic states.<sup>28</sup>

The fourth way the religion is perceived in the International Relations is as a form of soft power. Unlike the hard power (military or economical power), the soft power is the force of the attractive ideas. When the ideas are attractive (or even the opposite, when they are repulsive, e.g. racism and anti-Semitism), they become capacities of attitude that form the intangible elements of power for the International Relations players. They inform (or sometimes can infuriate, in case of racism or Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism) the popular beliefs, the perceptions and attitudes of some elective constituencies. When this happens, the transnational ideas become a form of soft power. People – individuals, citizens, believers and

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<sup>23</sup> Kegley, C. and Wittkopf, E., *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*, (New York, 1997),181–186.

<sup>24</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark(ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Barker, E., *The Cage of Freedom and the Freedom of the Cage*, in Barker, E. (ed.), *LSE on Freedom*, (London, 1995),103–118.

<sup>26</sup> Scott, *apud* K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor...*, 91.

<sup>28</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 5-6.

political activists – adhere to these ideas and believe they should influence the nations' behavior in the worldwide politics.<sup>29</sup>

The transnational religions can also offer basis of action for the non-state actors, transnational performers or non-governmental organizations, and this is the fifth way in which the impact of religion is manifested in the International Relations, method widely studied by analysts. The transnational actors can influence the international relations by using force or the power of ideas. By force, movements of national liberation, rebel or terrorist groups, the monopoly of the state regarding the usage of force in the international system is challenged. The transnational actors can also influence the international relations through ideas and their power. The ideas represent – or are considered as such by the individuals and the international community – the soft power of the ideas played in time, ideas that give shape to the values and norms of the international system. The transnational environmental groups (like Greenpeace) represent the environmentalism at a worldwide level, while the human rights groups (such as Amnesty International or The International Committee of the Red Cross) represent the human rights. This gives them the possibility to influence the political agenda, and the vocabulary of the political debates. Therefore, they can influence the parameters of the possible political results. This is the reason why some transnational actors have a bigger impact on the world stage and receive a major attention in the external affairs from the leadership of the states than those who are weak in the international system.<sup>30</sup>

The sixth way in which religion was analyzed in the International Relations is that it is perceived as a civilization or a cultural area. The crucibles of the great religions are tightly connected with the main locations of the great ancient Asian civilizations. This was the starting point for one of the most influent method of interpreting the religion in the international realm, before the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> Huntington revived this tradition of analyzing the civilizations based on religion, for the period of time after the Cold War. He declared that the East-West axis as a division of the world during the Cold War was replaced with the theory of a clash of civilizations. Civilizations determine the greatest differences within humanity and therefore, it is considered that cultural differences will be the main source of future conflicts in the world.<sup>32</sup>

The revival of religion is a contingent, circumstantial, and situational force. This is the reason why the religious conflicts depicted as a reaction to globalization are considered indeed linked to the increasing political and economical power of the marginalized groups in the international relations, instead of bringing the religion in the political realm.<sup>33</sup>

### **THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

Is religion a threat for international stability, or can it be used as an instrument to promote peace? The influence of religion on international politics can be seen from many perspectives: from religious conflict to the contribution of religion to international peace and stability. When religious institutions are controlled by the state, such as the Orthodox Church of Cyprus or the post-soviet Orthodox Church of Russia, the state politics can become more uncompromising. When religion is mixed with nationalism, as is the case of the Orthodox

<sup>29</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Said A., *et all.*, *Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective*, 4th edn, (Englewood Cliffs: N. J., 1995), 188–191.

<sup>31</sup> Joll J., *Two Prophets of the Twentieth Century: Spengler and Toynbee*, *Review of International Studies* 11, 1985, 91–104.

<sup>32</sup> Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor...*, 22–49.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, (London, 1994), 1–5.



Church of Serbia, the state politics can approve actions of ethnic cleansing and actions that generally violate the human rights. Seen from a different angle, religion can offer increased resistance and independence to communities and individuals. As examples of cases where religion prevailed political or state abuses there is *The Confessing Church* in Nazi Germany or the German Democratic Republic, the Catholic Church of the communist Poland, and the anti-apartheid Christian churches of South Africa.<sup>34</sup>

Some questions arise when we approach the relationship between religion, on one side, and international politics on the other: How does the 'global renaissance' of religion impact the principles, rules, and norms of the international society?<sup>35</sup> Does the transnational religion imply a new transnational ideology, one that would create obedience towards the state? Does this ideology bring new beliefs and values that are incompatible with the rules, principles and norms of the international society?<sup>36</sup>

The resurgence of religion has been also analyzed from the perspective of its relationship with a series of issues that are unrelated to religion. First of these is the *field of international politics*. To properly evaluate the role of religion in international politics, there has to be a distinction between political movements which are truly inspired or based on religion, and those that use religion as a legitimate tool in their quest of fulfilling a political agenda based on non-religious interests.

The second issue related to the religious resurgence is the *peace and war* debate.<sup>37</sup> Although it would be ideal to say that religion is a force working in the interest of peace, things are not so. More accurately, it is very probable that religion is a tool often creating and amplifying wars and conflicts between and within the nations of the modern world. Thus, when analyzing the impact of the religious resurgence within international politics, both aspects have to be taken into account.

Another matter interacting with the resurgence of religion is the *economic development*.<sup>38</sup> This is best described in the writings of Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which shows that certain values nourished the development of the modern economy.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the religious resurgence interacts with the area of *human rights and social justice*.<sup>40</sup> The religious institutions are regarded as the authors of many human rights, some of those having important political consequences. In any instance, it has to be taken into account the fact that various religions have different perspectives towards the human rights' meaning.

Among the main allegations related to religious resurgence, is that it is and can be a source of conflict. This is because it promotes new beliefs incompatible with the rules, practices, and norms of the international society, such as territorial integrity, sovereignty, and non-intervention. The international society is based on European values and norms, and it was more or less created through the expansion of the European states – through colonialism

<sup>34</sup> E. Barker, *The Cage of Freedom and the Freedom of the Cage*, apud Barker, E. (ed.), *LSE on Freedom*, (London, 1995), 103–118.

<sup>35</sup> J. N. Rosenau, and Czempiel, E-O. (eds.), *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, (Cambridge, 1992), 61-62.

<sup>36</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Max Weber, *Etica protestantă și spiritul capitalismului*, (București: Humanitas, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> Max Weber, *Etica protestantă și spiritul capitalismului*, p. 17.

and imperialism – across the globe. What was once an international European society is now a worldwide international society.<sup>41</sup>

### RELIGION AND POLITICAL ACTIONS

As an empirical reflection towards this study, the following paragraphs emphasize some realities and aspects related to the decisional process, starting with the implications religion has as a social actor.

Secularization and liberalization tended to limit religion to the private sphere or sector, thus making the theological aspects irrelevant in considering the relationships between states. In contrast, the role of religion in International Relations is now a broader subject of study. Case studies reveal that external policy is affected by the state religion and by the communications made possible through the networks of 'transnational believers'.<sup>42</sup>

From another perspective, *religion is a profoundly political influence in public matters and it should not be regarded as a set of theological problems.*<sup>43</sup> It is thus considered that *religion is political*, even in the absence of a theologically-generated political conflict. Religion has a social and interpretative purpose or function in fulfilling the need for transcendence. Theology, which articulates the main frame of ideas that belong to a religion, is focused on this function.<sup>44</sup>

The involvement of religion in politics is also seen in the social protection policies, through actions that complete and compensate the lack of state services. It also proposes different or alternative social strategies in overcoming certain social problems.

The link between religion and politics can be palpably and unmistakably seen in the USA, where Christianity had an important contribution regarding political decisions. In matters of external policy, Christians were more relevant in the middle of the '90s.

*Generally, it is considered that the role of the 'Christian rights' in the external policies of the USA has increased over the last years, thanks to certain events. First of all, the election of George W. Bush as the president of USA is strongly tied to this movement. Second of all, their influence is strongly related to the significant number of voters (43%) and to the fact that the Christian rights became a force whose claims are generally taken into consideration by public people. Moreover, the influence of Christians on the external policy is also due to their alliance to neo-conservators.*<sup>45</sup>

As examples, there are some situations where Christians had a direct involvement in international politics, one of them before the Bush administration: during the Cold War, Christians tried to influence the USSR toward religious freedom. They also had various diplomatic initiatives, one of them being *International Religious Freedom*, for signing certain acts against human trafficking (2000). In 2004, under evangelical influence, the North

<sup>41</sup> Scott, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 18.

<sup>42</sup> Harriet A. Harris, *Theological Reflections on Religious Resurgence and International Stability: a Look at Protestant Evangelicalism*, in K.R. Dark (editor), *Religion and International Relations*, (Macmillan Press Ltd 2000), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Rubin Barry, *Religion and International Affairs*, in Johnston, D. and Sampson, C. *Religion, The Missing Dimension in Statecraft*, (New York, 1994), 20-34.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, in K.R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations*, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Vlas, *Globalizarea și religia...*, 199-200.

Korean Human Rights Act was signed. Other such examples are the interest of the Bush family in the eradication of AIDS in Africa, freedom of religion in China, etc.<sup>46</sup>

The way Christians were involved in political actions is described by analysts as important in matters of human rights, playing an important role in the following aspects: the end of the civil war in North Sudan – USA efforts in ending the longest civil war in Africa was a result of a constant Christian campaign; the peace treaty of 2005 was mediated by the American ex-senator John Danforth, an Episcopalian.<sup>47</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING ARGUMENTS

The global rise of religion describes the ways in which religion and politics intersect throughout the world. This phenomenon is referred to as *the religion reconstruction* in the global era. A focus on the remodeling of religion can offer a better understanding of the way the methods of social and cultural change are put together thanks to globalization in order to bring a long-term cultural change in internal and international politics.<sup>48</sup>

Religion is often perceived as a competitor in the battle for people's attention and allegiance. Same as the transnational beliefs, religion is considered a set of laws that sit above the state's law or international treaties.<sup>49</sup> The transnational religion is also considered to be a way of undermining diplomacy – one of the main institutions of the international society. This is due to the fact that religious conflicts cannot be taken into account during diplomatic negotiations.<sup>50</sup>

Even if religion can solve complex conflicts, through religious legitimacy, it is still up to the politics to solve tensions among social communities.<sup>51</sup> The analysts suggest that religious conflicts should not be approached unilaterally:

*There will be need of a holistic approach regarding religion and security. What is more important is that we should not limit our religion and security-related research to threats. Religion is not only part of the problem. It is also part of the solution.*<sup>52</sup>

There is also another way to express the challenge that transnational religion creates regarding principles, rules, and society norms.<sup>53</sup>

The best way to understand religions is to consider them interpretative communities, when talking to their members and interacting with their traditions in order to determine their contemporary faith and social life relevance. Different cultural views about religious authority regarding the inter-gender relationships amplified the conflicts in developing countries.<sup>54</sup>

The relationship between politics and religion, between the global resurgence of religion and the international politics is debated under two opposing views: from considering

<sup>46</sup> Vlas, *Globalizarea și religia...*, 200-208.

<sup>47</sup> Vlas, *Globalizarea și religia...*, 209.

<sup>48</sup> Scott, *in K.R. Dark (ed.), Religion and International Relations*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> J. Goldstein, *International Relations*, 2nd edn, (New York, 1996), 204.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson D, *Introduction: Beyond Power Politics*, in Johnson, D. and Sampson, C. (eds), *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, Oxford, 3.

<sup>51</sup> M. P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562–1629*, Cambridge, 1995, Introduction and chapter 6.

<sup>52</sup> Robert A. Seiple, Dennis R. Hoover, *Religion & Security. The new nexus in international relations*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC. 2004), 2.

<sup>53</sup> Scott, *apud K.R. Dark (ed.), Religion and International Relations*, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Scott, *apud K.R. Dark (ed.), Religion and International Relations*, 21.

the positive role of religion to viewing it as a conflict generator. Both sides have to be disappointed by facts: when evaluating this role, there is no detailed alternative, but a declaration can be made – those neglecting religion in their business conducts are exposing themselves to a great danger.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Berger , *The Desecularization of the World*, 18.

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