

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**ASPECTS OF RELIGION IN THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR AND PEACE OF  
WESTPHALIA RELEVANT TO PAKISTAN**

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

In the world shaped by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Thirty Years' War seems far from the public consciousness. Nevertheless, this war which is difficult to understand offers, in fact, a useful analogy to the politics of religion in the current international security environment. This paper first will address consequences of the Thirty Years' War on religion in context of the international order emerging from the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. It will then explore how these aspects of religion and the politics of the Westphalian system of states are both relevant to Pakistan and a source of instability in the region.

Today in the western world, sovereignty is accepted a dominant principle regulating relations between states. It was not always so. The Peace of Westphalia established the conditions for an inverse relationship between sovereignty and religion: as the sovereignty of states became dominant, religion receded in importance in international politics. Consequently, the international environment was no longer subject to the passions that religious militancy had inspired. For the three hundred and sixty two years since the Peace of Westphalia the primacy of state sovereignty has been a stabilizing influence in international order in the West. Among states in the Islamic world that gained independence in the twentieth century, however, the idea of religion as an instrument of international politics is reminiscent of pre-Westphalian Europe. Pakistan best illustrates how a state that has attempted to construct a direct rather than inverse relationship between sovereignty and religion, has created conditions that have destabilized the region, inviting comparisons to Europe in the early seventeenth century.

### **DISCUSSION:**

Two aspects of the Thirty Years' War concerning religion are especially noteworthy:

First, state sovereignty emerged as a dominant feature of international politics in the years after the Peace of Westphalia. The national interest of the state consequently developed as a concept that for the first time separated a state's interests from the religion of the prince and his people.

Second, religious moderates, who "rejected providentialist theology"<sup>1</sup> contributed to the development of the Westphalian system of states by prevailing over religious militants and their belief in the primacy of universal moral values. These aspects have contributed to the development of a system that is inherently more stable than the one that preceded it. In addition, they have an important relation to the evolution of Pakistan since its independence. On one hand, Pakistan, an insecure state highly sensitive to its sovereignty, is closely wedded to the post-Westphalian order. On the other hand, the growing influence of Islamists in Pakistan, whose religious worldview is not unlike militants during the Thirty Years' War, suggests Pakistan continues to evolve toward a pre-Westphalian society where religion has primacy over the state.<sup>2</sup>

This dilemma has created an inherently unstable dynamic similar to the religious tension that sparked the Thirty Years' War. The expanding role of Islam in Pakistani society, while originally intended to buttress the state's legitimacy, now poses a threat to the security of not only neighboring India and Afghanistan, but also U.S. interests in the region, and, ironically, Pakistan itself.

### **The Thirty Years' War:**

While the Thirty Years' War was far more complex than simply a conflict over religion, Europeans in the seventeenth century believed religion played a significant role in initiating the conflict.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Peace of Westphalia that ended the war signaled major changes for the relationship between religious and temporal authority. The significance of religion in the Thirty Years' War was not about differences of doctrine or faith: the alliance of Catholic Bourbon France with Lutheran Sweden and Calvinist princes against the opposing alliance of Catholic Habsburgs and their Lutheran allies indicates as much. Nor did it involve a consciously secular challenge to religion: On a personal level, people in the seventeenth century remained very religious, and religion remained a powerful influence in society. Still, several fundamental changes affected how religion was seen as an instrument of political power and identity in the aftermath of the war: First, the war's unprecedented violence discredited militant Christians and challenged their belief in the overarching importance of universal moral values in international affairs. Militants believed Christian unification could be achieved through force rather than persuasion.<sup>4</sup> Moderates, on the other hand, were more pragmatic and saw Christian unification as a distant goal, achievable through persuasion. Though they were religious rather than secular in their outlook, their influence ultimately contributed to the rise of an essentially secular international order.

It took the Thirty Years' War to resolve the longstanding tension between the two perspectives. Militants, like Emperor Ferdinand II's confessor, the Jesuit Wilhelm Lamormaini, were aggressive advocates of religious dogma, uncompromising and intolerant of heresy. As a force in European politics, militancy had been particularly destabilizing to relations among the German princes. The 1629 Edict of Restitution was perhaps the most damaging manifestation of militant influence during the Thirty Years' War. The Edict, inspired by Lamormaini, directly

threatened to reverse changes to the political-religious landscape favoring Protestants since the 1555 Peace of Augsburg, and was opposed not only by Calvinists who were not recognized under its provisions, but by Lutheran princes who questioned the Emperor's authority to issue it. Most significantly, it extended the war by triggering the intervention of Sweden, ultimately leading to intervention by Sweden's ally, France. When it ended, the German principalities were exhausted and had little appetite for militants and their universal Catholic aspirations.

With the end of the war, religion as a force in international politics gave way to new political concepts not explicitly addressed in the Peace of Westphalia: the principles of state sovereignty and national interest. German academic Johannes Burkhart had these thoughts in mind when he described the Thirty Years' War as a "state-building war."<sup>5</sup> It was the result of a process whereby the Reformation initially destroyed "the universality of canon law that had underpinned the medieval international order...[which peaked during the Thirty Years' War that] determined the size and character of individual states and settled how they were going to interact."<sup>6</sup>

The Thirty Years' War also established conditions for change in the relationship between the authority of the Catholic Church and German princes. Though the Peace of Westphalia did not actually result in the outright independence of German principalities, it did give princes authority to supervise churches and church property, which effectively increased their authority over their subjects.<sup>7</sup> This development was a reason that Pope Innocent X objected to the Peace of Westphalia, although in vain. The principle of state sovereignty developed from this new authority of the princes (and because other provisions that might have restricted the princes' authority were never enforced).<sup>8</sup> Over time, therefore, the sovereignty of the state replaced religion as the most influential political idea shaping a new international order. Related to the

principle of sovereignty was another secular idea: that a state's national interest -- "raison d'etat" -- was distinct from a ruler's religious affiliation or authority. Although "national interest" is today widely used in international political discourse, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was not immediately accepted. Dutch academic Jakob Jansenius expressed the skepticism of many at the time:

Do they believe that a secular, perishable state should outweigh religion and the Church?... Should not the Most Christian King believe that in the guidance and administration of his realm there is nothing that obliges him to extend and protect that of Jesus Christ, his Lord?...Would he dare say to God: Let you power and glory and the religion which teaches men to adore You be lost and destroyed, provided my state is protected and free of risks?<sup>9</sup>

Although Niccolo Machiavelli wrote about the principle of national interest for the first time, the French Chief Minister, Cardinal Richelieu, introduced it into international politics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "Richelieu was the father of the modern state system," Henry Kissinger writes. "Under his auspices, *raison d'etat* replaced the medieval concept of universal moral values as the operating principle of French policy."<sup>10</sup>

Richelieu, in allying Catholic France with Protestant Sweden, separated the interests of France from those of the institutional Catholic Church, and thereby established a new paradigm that challenged the traditional integration of religion with the state. In fact, "raison d'etat" did not merely separate religion from the state, it *subordinated* religion *to* the state, contributing to the secular post-Westphalian system that has come to dominate international politics. State sovereignty gave rulers the ability to formulate their interests – separate from the interests of the Church – and express them as secular policy. Distancing religion from the interests of the state in this way quelled passions that religion had inspired during the Thirty Years' War, contributing to a more stable international order. However, this particular paradigm of relations between

religion and the state is a Western tradition. In the twentieth century, newly independent states in Asia and Africa challenged the dominant international paradigm that emerged from the Peace of Westphalia. The developing world did not subscribe to the Westphalian system; “their cultures were not Westphalian culture.”<sup>11</sup> Among these newly independent states, the Islamic world stands out, breathing new life into the pre-Westphalian paradigm of the primacy of religion over the state in international affairs.

### Pakistan:

Pakistan is especially relevant to the religious and state-building aspects of the Thirty Years’ War and Peace of Westphalia. In one respect, Pakistan is firmly planted in the post-Westphalian system of states, strongly adhering to the principle of sovereignty which historically superseded religion as the most influential aspect of international politics. However, a countervailing trend emerges in Pakistan: Since independence in 1947, Pakistan’s society and government have evolved to a pre-Westphalian construct of religion. This change has happened as a consequence of the growing influence of militant Islam that both supports and threatens the legitimacy of the government. These two aspects would appear to be in conflict, and, in distinct ways, are sources of instability.

The Pakistan that independence leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah envisioned was secular. On 11 August 1947, he famously addressed the nation about his vision for the newly independent Pakistan, saying, “You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State.”<sup>12</sup>

Although Pakistan was created as a home for the Muslims of British India, Jinnah's view was consistent with attitudes in post-Westphalian Europe: religion was subordinate to the state. From its inception, Pakistan has been particularly sensitive to its sovereignty: To the west, the Durand Line has remained contested with Afghanistan which had previously made claims on Pashtun lands east to the Indus River. To the east, Pakistan and India fought over competing claims to Kashmir. The United States in the war on terror has added to Pakistan's overriding insecurity and concern over its sovereignty, the most notable instances being unilateral U.S. Predator strikes in North Waziristan and the May 2011 SEAL raid on Osama Bin Laden's compound.

Yet despite the Westphalian system serving as the basis for its legitimacy, Pakistan has evolved from its secular origins to embrace a pre-Westphalian concept of the primacy of Islam over the state. This transformation has become a source of instability to both the government of Pakistan and its neighbors, particularly India and Afghanistan, and threatens U.S. objectives in Afghanistan. Initially, Pakistan's government attempted merely to buttress the legitimacy of the state without any sense that its actions spurred the growing influence of Islamists in Pakistani society. In 1956, for instance, Pakistan became the first state to use "Islamic" in its title: "the Islamic Republic of Pakistan."<sup>13</sup> However, despite the intention of Pakistan's founder merely to use Islam to lend legitimacy to the state, the introduction of religion into the political sphere has grown as a force in society beyond the government's control. From early in Pakistan's history the writing has been on the wall: The founder of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami party (Islamic Society), for example, spoke for many in the middle and lower classes when he advocated establishing "Islamic rule, [organizing] the various aspects of social life on Islamic bases, to adopt such means as will widen the sphere of Islamic influence in the world..."<sup>14</sup>

Soon after independence, Pakistan's government began supporting militant groups, both to serve as proxies in the ongoing conflict with India over Kashmir and as a means of bolstering the state's legitimacy. Under the Presidency of General Zia ul-Haq, these efforts linking the government to Islam became comprehensive, transforming Pakistan's government and society. "Zia's decade in power...ushered in an era of religious obscurantism that affected every facet of domestic life and foreign policy."<sup>15</sup> Zia, with American assistance, famously used Islam as a shield against Communist influence in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. Pakistan's support for the Afghan mujahedeen further caused the country to turn to the Middle East for both financial support and to strengthen its position in the Muslim world. Zia also integrated Islamic principles into schooling, the judiciary and the military.

Zia ul-Haq's efforts at Islamization made Pakistan an important ideological and organizational center of the global Islamist movement...Pakistan's sponsorship of the Taliban in Afghanistan, together with the presence in Pakistan of Islamist militants from all over the world, derived from Islamabad's desire to emerge as the center of a global Islamic resurgence.<sup>16</sup>

Many Pakistanis have opposed the idea of identifying Islam more closely with society, the government and relations among states, highlighting another aspect of the Thirty Years' War relevant to Pakistan: longstanding tension between religious moderates and militants. The Pakistani writer Zaid Haider suggests Pakistani society is split between moderates descended from the South Asian and Sufi tradition of inclusion and tolerance, and militants inspired by Wahabi or Deoband traditions of uncompromising "pan-Islamic revivalism."<sup>17</sup> While the Pakistani establishment is largely moderate, those moderates who have openly advocated more inclusive and accommodating positions, such as revising or repealing the blasphemy laws, have been increasingly victims of intimidation and violence.<sup>18</sup> While militants were largely discredited following the Thirty Years War, in Pakistan they have proven resilient in the face of

moderate opposition and remain very influential. Much as militant influence was responsible for stirring popular passions and prolonging the Thirty Years' War, the influence Islamists exert in Pakistan contributes to domestic sectarian violence. Bombings and assassinations attributed to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a terrorist group that seeks to establish an Islamic regime in Pakistan, for example, have seriously stretched the capacity of the Pakistani army to contain domestic violence.

Predictably, Pakistan's pervasive use of Islam as an instrument of policy has provoked rather than contained conflict with her neighbors. Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) support of Lashkar-i-Tayiba (LT), for example, has accounted for much of the recent violence in Kashmir as well as the LT attack on the Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai. To the west, ISI support for the Pashtun Haqqani network, operating on both sides of the Durand Line, is currently the most serious insurgent threat to Afghanistan's security. Most significantly, the fact that Pakistan is the only Islamic state to possess nuclear weapons is hugely symbolic to the rest of the Islamic world, in addition to serving as a deterrent to her nemesis India.

Pakistan, therefore, has experienced a different relationship between the state and religion than what took place in Europe after the Thirty Years' War. Instead of separating religion from the state as a means of establishing the government's authority, successive Pakistani governments have used Islam in an effort to strengthen their legitimacy. Political authority, in other words, has become closely identified with religion, precisely the opposite of the political development of Europe following the Peace of Westphalia. Consequently, rather than confronting militancy and distancing itself from religion, the Pakistani government's close association with Islam has inflamed religious passions it subsequently has been unable to control.

“Islamists,” a Pakistani diplomat noted, “not content with having a secondary role in national affairs...have acquired a momentum of their own.”<sup>19</sup>

The integration of politics and religion in Pakistan will not necessarily provoke violence on the scale of a Thirty Years’ War. Nevertheless, it does indicate a political-religious dynamic that is inherently violent and destabilizing, which Europeans came to understand through painful experience. Where Europe after the Thirty Years’ War came to view religion and religious authority as incompatible with the principles of sovereignty and national interest, Pakistan has viewed them as mutually supporting. Her policies linking religion to the state underscore the incompatibility of the Islamist worldview with the Westphalian order.

#### CONCLUSION:

The rejection of religious militancy in Europe resulted from the economic and social impact of thirty years of violence. In contrast, Islamic militancy in Pakistan continues to pose a threat to the legitimacy of the government and security of the entire region. The situation in Pakistan has not degenerated to resemble Europe during the Thirty Years’ War. Still, it is telling that writers and pundits have occasionally opined that the Middle East and Southwest Asia are returning to the sort of religious and political environment that infected Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> We cannot predict where the influence of religion in Pakistan’s society and government will lead. Nevertheless, the Thirty Years’ War and Peace of Westphalia provide a useful reference for a study of militant religion, the use of religion as an instrument of international politics, and the relationship in Pakistan between religion and sovereignty. For the time being, the conflicting aspects of religion in Pakistani society, both supporting and

challenging the legitimacy of the government, do not suggest that the Westphalian system, which has provided a semblance of order in international affairs for over three hundred fifty years, is falling apart. They do, however, point to the increasingly accepted view in the Islamic world of the resurgence of religion's primacy over the state. This Islamist perspective opens the door for challenges to the previously sacrosanct principle of state sovereignty, even as Pakistan clings to this principle to bolster international acceptance of its contested borders.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bireley, S.J., Religion and Politics in the Age of Counterreformation (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> This paper is more narrowly focused on religion than ideology. I use "religion" as a destabilizing, potentially explosive component of ideology in international politics. Ideology has continued to be fairly common in international politics; militant religion less so. Pakistan is not entirely unique as a state drawing legitimacy from the Westphalian system emphasizing the primacy of sovereignty over religion while at the same time promoting a pre-Westphalian idea of religion as a unifying principle in the international order. The Arab-Israeli conflict and Iran are also examples. Pakistan is provocative because these two aspects of the pre/post Westphalian order seem to function at cross-purposes and are a source of domestic and regional instability.

<sup>3</sup> Peter W. Wilson, "The Causes of the Thirty Years War 1618-1648," English Historical Review, Vol CXXIII, No. 502 (June 2008), p. 560. Wilson points to evidence that Europeans themselves in the seventeenth century believed the war was religious in character, initiated with the Defenestration of Prague and ending with the Peace of Westphalia.

<sup>4</sup> Peter W. Wilson, The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy (London: Penguin Press, 2009), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Peter W. Wilson, "The Causes of the Thirty Years War," p. 562.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 564. Peter W. Wilson paraphrasing Johannes Burkhart.

<sup>7</sup> Peter W. Wilson, "Who Won the Thirty Years War", History Today, Vol. 59, Issue 8 (August 2009), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Bonney, The Thirty Years War (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), p. 89. Enforcement of this provision, which established 1624 as the year for determining allocation of church property among the three recognized denominations, would have limited the authority of the princes.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Kissinger, Diplomacy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 63-64.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth W. Thompson, Traditions and Values in Politics and Diplomacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1992), p. 193.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted from the Pakistani daily Dawn, Independence Day Supplement, August 14, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Husain Haqqani, Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> Zaid Haider, The Ideological Struggle for Pakistan (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2010), p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Haqqani, p. 317.

<sup>17</sup> Haider, pp. 40-41.

<sup>18</sup> Most notably, Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab, was assassinated by one of his guards in January 2011 for advocating repeal of Zia's blasphemy laws. Taseer, a secularist, was a leading member of the moderate Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

<sup>19</sup> Haqqani, p. 318.

<sup>20</sup> Many have drawn parallels between the Thirty Years War and the Middle East. Among them: Andrew Sullivan, "The Thirty Years War Brewing in the Middle East," The Sunday Times, 17 December 2006; Spengler, "General Petraeus' Thirty Years War," Asia Times Online, 4 May 2010; Michael T. Klare, "The New Thirty Years War," Middle East Online, 27 June 2011.