

CHRISTIAN PEACE THEORY 2.0: CONTROLLING FOR DEMOCRACY

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I. Introduction

This paper shall lay the theoretical foundation and present a preliminary empirical study for a peace theory based on Christianity, analogous to the monadic thesis of the democratic peace (i.e. that democratic states are less aggressive than non-democratic states). The dependent variable is the propensity of states to initiate armed conflicts with other states. The independent variable is the percentage of the state's population that is Christian. Although a study of this sort could theoretically be conducted for any world religion, this particular study focuses on Christianity for two reasons. First, Christianity, like several other world religions, has a well-established, systematic framework of values that also inform a well-established, sophisticated theory on the permissibility of starting and fighting wars. Second—and this factor distinguishes Christianity from most other religions—the followers of Christianity are sufficiently numerous *and* geographically diverse that the sample size of Christian states is large enough to do empirical studies¹ (roughly half of the states in the world today are Christian). The hypothesis to be tested is that Christian states start wars less often than non-Christian states, and for different reasons.

Why have a “peace theory” at all, let alone a peace theory based on any particular ideology such as Christianity or democracy? How does this line of research advance our knowledge and

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¹ The only other religion that is comparably geographically diverse is Islam (roughly one-quarter of all states in 2008); indeed an Islamic peace theory is eminently testable. The next most prominent world religion among states, Buddhism, is prevalent in only nine or ten states (one-third of which consist of Buddhism mixed with another religion such as Taoism or Shinto), which may not be a sufficiently large sample size to test a Buddhist peace theory.

understanding of international relations theory and political philosophy? To answer this question one must return to the original context in which the democratic peace was presented. Immanuel Kant advances democracy (i.e. a “republican form of government”) as one of several steps toward achieving peaceful relations between states, on the basis that democratic states will be less prone to start wars than non-democratic states.² The implication of this theory is, of course, that democracy is a requisite to a lasting, universal peace—or, put more precisely, that governments embrace, internalize, and put into practice the political values that enable democracy to flourish. To put it simplistically, the prescription of democratic peace theories is that the world political system would be better off if all states became democracies. Consequently, tests of the democratic peace that do not distinguish between *starting* an armed conflict and merely *fighting* in one³ miss the point of the whole exercise. A showing that democratic states do fight wars, for example, teaches us that democracies are usually not pacifist, but little more. Such a finding does not advance our understanding of international relations theory, nor does it offer any prescription for improvement. Rather, the most useful studies of the democratic peace are informed by the question, what types of states are more likely to *start* armed conflicts,⁴ or which are more likely to commit *aggression* against other states. This is the fundamental question that informs the present exploration of a possible Christian peace theory.

Unlike democratic peace theories, this study does not end with the prescription that all states

² Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” First Definitive Article of a Perpetual Peace, in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 99-100.

³ Bruce Russett, “And Yet It Moves,” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 164-75; Melvin Small & J. David Singer, “The War-Proneness of Democratic Regimes, 1916-1965,” *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): pp. 62-63; Steve Chan, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . . Are the Freer Countries More Pacific?,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (Dec. 1984): 617-48; Erich Weede, “Democracy and War Involvement,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (Dec. 1984): 649-64; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & David Lalman, *War and Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 148. On the other hand, Maoz and Abdolali were careful to distinguish between initiation and involvement, finding that democracies were no more or less likely than autocracies to be involved in an armed conflict, but less likely than autocracies to initiate one. Zeev Maoz & Nasrin Abdolali, “Regimes Types and International Conflict, 1816-1976,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33, no. 1 (Mar. 1989): 3-35.

⁴ See Greg Cashman, *What Causes War?* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 1993), pp. 125-26.

adopt Christianity. It does, however, seek to show that states are less aggressive, or less prone to start armed conflict, when they have embraced, internalized, and put into the practice the mode in which resort to force is regulated in Christian thought. That mode is the classical just war tradition in Western, i.e. Christian, culture. Space does not permit an exposition of the specifics of the just war tradition in this paper.⁵ Suffice it to say that the just war tradition promotes justice over injustice, and accountability over unaccountability, in statecraft. It does not privilege Christendom over non-Christendom and is thus adaptable for a great number of cultures.

II. Christian Peace Theory

A. Assumptions

The Christian just war tradition serves as a basis for the formulation of a Christian peace theory, i.e. that Christian states initiate inter-state armed conflict less often, and for different reasons, than non-Christian states. This hypothesis rests on a number of assumptions.

The first assumption is that applying the Christian just war tradition results in the actor initiating fewer armed conflicts than otherwise. If the just war tradition is compared to ethics of war based on the maximization of power, then this proposition seems well supported. Specifically, this assumption is supported by just war theory's requirement of an injury, the restraint of proportionality, and the intent to restore a just peace, all in furtherance of a larger ethic of charity. Just war theory thus prohibits aggression; indeed, it is conceived as a *response* to

⁵ For treatments of the just war theory, see Michael Walzer, *Just And Unjust Wars*, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2006); James Turner Johnson, *Morality and Contemporary Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein: Just War and the New Face of Conflict* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Davis Brown, *The Sword, the Cross, and the Eagle* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). For the distinction of just war theory from the other two theories of war in Christian thought, holy war and pacifism, see Brown, *supra*, chap. 2.

it. In contrast, a theory of war that is based on power relationships (“might makes right”), and/or imposes no requirement of legitimacy save the ability and willingness of the state to undertake it (“anything goes”), should result in considerable aggression.

The next assumption is that the Christian just war tradition is *uniquely* non-aggressive, i.e. the preponderance of other world religions (1) are not pacifist, (2) have not developed any war ethic similar to that of the Christianity, and (3) their theories of war are more aggressive. An objective assessment of this assumption may not be possible, for in the current political environment nearly every apologist for any given religion will assert its peaceful nature. However, a preliminary study by Walter Dorn of Canadian Forces College suggests that most (though not all) world religions are on the whole more militant than the Christian just war tradition.⁶

The third assumption is that Christianity, taken generally, even affects the political behavior of states at all, and specifically that the Christian just war tradition affects the political behavior of those regime elites who are responsible for committing their states to use military force. Generally speaking, for a state to start a war or escalate a dispute into an armed conflict, the active decision to do so by the governing regime, and by the regime elites in particular, is required. We must therefore proceed on the assumption that in Christian states, the Christian just war tradition affects the decision of the regime elites. This in turn requires an assumption that the regime elites of a state generally hold the same religious beliefs as the state’s general population. This latter assumption will introduce anomalies into the quantitative application of a Christian peace theory in cases where the regime elites belong to a minority that professes a different religion or atheism.

⁶ Walter Dorn, “The Justifications for War and Peace in the Scriptures of World Religions: A Comparison Along the Force Spectrum” (research paper for ISA and Just War Theory Project, on file with author).

Finally, the first phase of the study assumes that all other traits of states that might impact their propensities to use force, such as military and material power, or alliances or balance of power, are evenly distributed between Christian and non-Christian states. The second phase is a first attempt at controlling for democracy.

B. Predictions

How, then, would a Christian just war theory affect state behavior, i.e. what results might it have on the propensities of Christian states to start wars? In contrast to power-centric ideologies, Christian just war theory is reactive; it legitimizes force only in response to a wrong committed by the other side. This feature renders Christian just war theory hostile to conquest or interventions designed to assert or preserve a state's hegemony. Because Christian teleology is concerned with the salvation of souls in the afterlife, Christianity is indifferent, and frequently even hostile to, the acquisition of material wealth; this trait reinforces the Christian just war theory's rejection of war for the sake of power or territorial enlargement. On the other hand, a fundamental component of the Christian teleology is the commission of good works in the present life, i.e. charitably promoting the well-being of others, including rescuing them from oppression, harm, or risk thereof. Christian just war theory thus favors humanitarian intervention and the use of force for hostage rescue operations or to evacuate non-combatants from war zones. Ideologies that are power-centric, in contrast, are more likely to be indifferent to the well-being of powerless individuals, making such states less likely to commit its resources to war for such a purpose.

As to the propensities of states to engage in ideological interventions (pro-democratic, pro-communist, etc.), two equally strong factors make it impossible to predict the outcome. One

factor is that the same charitable concern with the rights and well-being of others that makes Christian states more likely to engage in humanitarian intervention and protection of nationals, also makes them more likely to engage in pro-democratic intervention. However, states driven by power-centric ideologies may be more likely to engage in pro-autocratic interventions to preserve their security or hegemony by keeping in power other regimes that are ideologically friendly; they are also relatively indifferent to the rights of the populations.

The hypothesis also predicts that Christianity will have no effect on the propensity of states to initiate uses of force in self-defense. A right to self-defense can be derived from both Christianity and pure realism: Christian charity places on the civil magistrate the responsibility to protect the people from harm, in furtherance of their well-being, whereas realism dictates the necessity of force to preserve one's own well-being from harm.

III. Christian Peace Theory in International Relations

A. Placement Within International Relations Theory

We turn now to the placement of the Christian peace theory within the broader structure of international relations theory. As a point of departure we consider first the location in international relations theory of another peace theory built on ideology—the democratic peace. Modern iterations of the democratic peace make two general claims: first, that democracies never (or rarely) fight each other (the dyadic thesis), and second, that when democracies do fight (with autocracies), they do so less often than autocracies fight with other autocracies (the monadic thesis). The monadic thesis is a roundabout way of advancing the claim that democracies are less aggressive than autocracies.

The Kantian iteration of this claim proceeds thusly: if we accept the natural state of man as one of anarchy, in which every unit of a society exists in conflict with every other unit,⁷ then the existence of others robs one of security, for in the natural state of lawlessness there is no protection from aggression by another.⁸ What preserves the peace, and makes relations between the units of the society possible, is a compact between the units to respect each others' rights and freedoms, as equal parties. In Kant's iteration that compact takes the explicit form of a constitution.⁹ Such an arrangement serves not only individuals forming a community and communities forming a state, but also states in structuring their relations with other states. In an international political structure, all states are equally sovereign, and therefore are not only entitled to claim respect for its own rights, but also obliged to respect the rights of other states.

Christian peace theory also arrives at this conclusion, but via a different path. The particulars of Christian *jus ad bellum*, like all other aspects of Christian thought, are based on the two core principles of Christian conduct: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . and your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ In Christian political thought, these two core concepts serve as the foundation for a war ethic that seeks to promote justice, characterized by Augustine as the eradication of sin,¹¹ not only for the benefit of God but also for the charitable benefit of others. Indeed, two of the most basic classical texts on just war theory, those of Thomas Aquinas and Francisco Suarez, are actually parts of comprehensive, structured treatments of Christian

⁷ Plato, *Laws* i, 626, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 7: *Plato* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley chap. 13, secs. 9 & 12-13 (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)

⁸ Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 2nd sec., Which Contains the Definitive Articles of a Perpetual Peace between State, in *Kant: Political Writings*, pp. 98-99.

⁹ *Id.*, First Definitive Article, pp. 99-100.

¹⁰ Luke 10:27.

¹¹ See Brown, *The Sword, the Cross, and the Eagle*, pp. 29 & 64.

thought, both of which treat war within the context of *charity*.¹² This duty of charity gives the Christian just war theory its protective function. However, what must logically precede the protection of the rights of others is the acknowledgement and *respect* of those rights. The use of force in violation of the rights of others is thus antithetical to Christian values.

Fundamental to all of this—in democratic as well as Christian political theory—is the *idea* that each unit of the society has rights that all other units are duty-bound to respect. Democratic and Christian peace theories thus fit best into ideational liberalism. Andrew Moravcsik defines liberal international relations theory in part as one in which state *preferences* matter more in world politics than state *capabilities* or institutional structures,¹³ and goes on to define ideational liberalism as viewing “the configuration of domestic social identities and values as a basic determinant of state preferences and, therefore, of interstate conflict and cooperation.”¹⁴ Moravcsik, however, places the democratic peace within the republican variant (in which the interests of particular groups who wield power and influence impact state behavior), on the ground that groups in power tend to be risk-averse, and the more groups that are empowered or can influence the regime, the more restrained the regime will be in committing its resources to war.¹⁵ He characterizes the phenomenon in terms of cost-passing, an approach which would seem to this author to be more akin to a theory of neoclassical realism than liberalism.¹⁶

¹² The treatment of charity within the *Summa Theologica* is pt. ii-ii, qq. 23-45; the classic Thomist just war criteria are presented in q. 40. Suarez’s piece “De bello” is Disputation XIII of the part “On Charity” in his larger treatise *A Work on the Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity*.

¹³ Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (Autumn 1997): p. 513.

¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 525.

¹⁵ *Id.*, p. 531.

¹⁶ Cf. Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991) (arguing that states over-expand because domestic lobbies drive the ruling regimes to do so). The approach is based on the premise that the less domestic support for a war effort the regime enjoys, the more reluctant that regime will be to pass the costs of war-making to a constituency that is sufficiently empowered to remove that regime from power. In a democracy, the empowered constituencies are more numerous and their interests more divergent, which makes it more difficult to gain domestic support for a war effort that is not driven by urgent necessities such as self-defense. Central to these

But leaving that particular objection aside, a classification of democratic and Christian peace theories based on audience costs and preferences of empowered domestic constituents still does not give the role of charitable respect for the rights of others its due. Advanced democracies thrive not because the desire of one constituency to oppress another is checked by the power of the other to prevent it, but because both constituencies recognize and respect the rights of the other, even to their own disadvantage. This ethos is evident in the classic, oft-repeated Voltairian quip, “I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” It is eminently compatible with Christian political theory. In both ideologies, the governing regime believes in and accepts the rule of law, the rights of the individual, and the duty to further the interests of the population rather than their own power or material wealth.¹⁷ In short, such regimes adhere to a certain system of beliefs *and values* and those values impact the behavior of the state. This trait would seem to suggest that a better placement for both theories—which trace their roots back to the *idea* of rights—is within *ideational* liberalism, not republican liberalism as Moravcsik does.

For the democratic peace, this argument draws the objection that immediately after setting forth the claim that a republican form of government is an essential criterion for peace between states, Kant goes on to assert “the reason for this is . . . the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise” and describes the costs, efforts, and suffering that

considerations is the regime’s *telos* of staying in power—a perspective that seems to align better with realism than idealism.

¹⁷ See Reus-Smit, “Constitutional Structure,” p. 577; Martha Finnemore & Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): pp. 905ff (on what makes norms influential in statecraft); Alexander Wendt, “Driving with the Rearview Mirror: On the Rational Science of Institutional Design,” *International Organization* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): pp. 1024-29 (on the logic of appropriateness).

ensues.¹⁸ It follows that a citizenry that must bear the burden of making war would be highly reluctant to start one, which taken by itself is a realist argument. But such an argument is incomplete, for it does not by itself explain what must follow from a general application of Kant's argument: that a strong republic would restrain itself from making war on a weak state, even though the burden on the citizenry would be comparatively light. Realism would predict the opposite result, which is incompatible with the monadic thesis of both the democratic and Christian peace theories. Thus the thesis cannot fit neatly within realism. What does explain the restraint of even very powerful republics is that its citizenry (and the governing regime, as a microcosm of the citizenry), in charitably recognizing the rights of each other, also comes to charitably recognize the rights of the citizenries of other states. Although the immediate tangible benefits of the two peace theories lie more in the domain of realism, it is ultimately *ideals* and *values* that serve as the foundation for the states' preferences that inform those theories. Both are predicated not on realist concerns over differentiations of power, but rather on idealist concerns for promoting and securing the well-being of others. This is the domain of ideational liberalism.

B. Christian Peace Theory as a Second Image Theory

In Kenneth Waltz's second image of international relations, a state's propensity toward war is informed by the domestic characteristics of that state.¹⁹ The implication of this theory on propensity to war, for the democratic peace, would be that democracy is the peaceful form of the state, and if a state's policy is controlled by the people (a characteristic of democracy), then the

¹⁸ Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in *Kant: Political Writings*.

¹⁹ See Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 81.

state's policy will also be peaceful.²⁰ It follows that if a state's people are infused with the values inherent in democracy, those values will be reflected in the state's behavior toward other states.

The same must be true for religious values as well. When most of the population of a state adheres to a particular value system, and the government is drawn generally from the population (as opposed to a specific minority that holds to a different value system), then it follows that the regime should be influenced by the same value system that influences the behavior of the rank and file. The value system of the state's population, taken as a whole, is infused into the government, which speaks and acts for the state on the international plane. Thus, for example, one would expect the state of Colombia, which is 90% Catholic, to "think" like a Catholic and the state of Thailand, which is 94% Buddhist, to "think" like a Buddhist. The value systems inform the behaviors of states as well, as their philosophies; a Christian state "acts Christian," a Muslim state "acts Muslim," and so forth.

As a belief system, religion can influence the foreign policy of states much in the way that Nathan Leites describes the influence of Marxism on early Soviet foreign policy.²¹ Using the concept of "operational code," defined as "the values, world view, and response repertoire which an individual acquires and shares with other members of an organization,"²² Leites identifies the axioms and rules of the Bolshevik psyche, and the world view upon which those rules were based. Building upon this foundation, Alexander George organizes the components of Leites' operational code into several philosophical and instrumental questions,²³ the answers to which form a guide to the regime's decision-making.

²⁰ Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, p. 101, citing Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*.

²¹ Nathan Leites, *A Study of Bolshevism* (New York: Free Press, 1953).

²² Stephen Walker, "The Evolution of Operational Code Analysis," *Political Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1990): p. 403, citing R. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," in R. Merton, ed., *Reader in Bureaucracy* (New York: Free Press, 1940). The quoted definition is Walker's own restatement of the concept.

²³ Alexander George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 23 (Jun. 1969): pp. 190-222.

Christianity, like other religions, is a suitable value system for analyzing state behavior using the technique of operational code analysis. Stephen Walker identifies several assumptions of the Leites-George paradigm, all of which Christianity satisfies.²⁴ The first assumption is that decision makers vary significantly in their propensities and beliefs. Christianity, like other religions, stands in contrast with other belief systems. The major world religions, for the most part, have different criteria for the permissibility of making war, and several of these criteria conflict with secular belief systems that purport to supplant religion. For example, while Christian political theory would justify war only upon just cause and even then would carefully regulate the response, classical Marxism would claim the right to use force to advance its cause whenever it is expedient.²⁵

The second core assumption in the Leites-George paradigm is that the characteristics of the value system must structure the decision maker's range of goals and analysis of alternatives.²⁶ Christianity satisfies this assumption. For example, whereas Marxist and radical Islamic theories of *jus ad bellum* are informed by the goal to propagate themselves, Christian *jus ad bellum* requires that military force aim to achieve a result that is objectively just, i.e. whose justness is apparent universally, as opposed to only the warrior. Furthermore, the requirements of proportionality and right intent in the Christian just war tradition render non-forceful alternatives to conflict resolution more preferable than they might be in belief systems that admit a right to unlimited force in furtherance of what its proponents regard as an absolute goal. In addition, from a more neoclassical-realist perspective, a decision that tramples on the value system of the

²⁴ Walker, "Evolution," pp. 406-7.

²⁵ See Karl Marx, "The Communist Manifesto," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 271.

²⁶ One must be careful not to *overstate* the power of a value or belief system in this regard. Alexander George himself cautioned against viewing an operational code as a "set of rules and recipes to be applied mechanically to the choice of action," as if the operational code were akin to a criminal statute. George, "The 'Operational Code,'" p. 196, reprinted in Walker, "Evolution," p. 406. Rather, George understood that an operational code was only one of several variables that determine political behavior.

population entails audience costs, and the higher the audience cost, the more likely the decision maker will seek to avoid a contest.²⁷ When the audience's value system is Christianity, in which legitimate entitlement to use force is more restricted, a decision to use force in contravention of the Christian value system would result in high audience costs, and therefore the decision maker will be more restrained.

The third core assumption in the Leites-George paradigm is that the belief system shapes the boundaries of rational behavior for the decision maker. As a belief system, Christianity satisfies this assumption as well. The criteria of the just war tradition constrain the decision maker from asserting the legitimacy of force undertaken in contravention of those criteria. A government whose decision makers adhere to Christian norms of conduct cannot legitimately announce a right to attack and annex another state under the theory of some "divine right of conquest," because doing so would not be regarded as rational by the rest of Christendom. Rather, the decision maker must articulate a rational basis for doing so within the parameters set by the Christian just war tradition; even if he or she is wrong or mistaken, the attempt must still be made.²⁸ Thus Christianity, along with other world religions, satisfies the three core assumptions of the Leites-George paradigm, which its authors designed as a model for studying the role of belief systems in determining the political behavior of states.²⁹

²⁷ See James Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (Sep. 1994): pp. 577-92.

²⁸ This perception of the necessity to justify military action to other states is hardly unique to Christianity. For example, Iraq never asserted its "right" to invade and annex on the basis that it simply wanted to. Rather, Iraq sought to justify its use of force by claiming an injury by Kuwait (e.g. slant-drilling by Kuwaiti oil rigs) and its annexation of Kuwait by a historical claim to the territory. Of course, none of these claims were persuasive in the Security Council, but the fact that Iraq made the effort at all demonstrates the force of boundaries of rational behavior.

²⁹ Walker suggests that the future research agenda should include, among other things, linking operational code analysis with other research in motivational psychology on the need for power, affiliation, and achievement, a quintessentially realist perspective. Walker, "Evolution," p. 412. However, there is no reason to limit operational code analysis to decisions that are based on considerations of power; indeed, because operational codes are based primarily on ideas, this research technique would seem to yield better results in examining the influence of *ideas* on a decision maker.

IV. Operationalization

The specific hypothesis being tested is as follows: Christian states initiate uses of force against other states less often and for different reasons than non-Christian states. The reason for the relatively tortuous language of this hypothesis should become clear momentarily.

A. Type of Research Design

The quantitative portion of this study is conducted as a Static-Group Comparison, in which a group subjected to treatment X is compared to a group that is not subjected to that treatment, for the purpose of establishing the effect of X on the outcome variable:³⁰

$$\begin{array}{c} \underline{X} \quad O_1 \\ O_2 \end{array}$$

Both groups consist of states that initiated inter-state uses of force between October 24, 1945 and December 31, 1999. The treatment X is Christianity; Observation 1 consists of armed conflicts initiated by Christian states and Observation 2 consists of those initiated by non-Christian states.

B. Collection of Data

A complete census of all uses of force by states against other states for the time period specified was not possible due to time and resource constraints. Rather, this study covers a sample consisting of all qualifying cases that appear in any of the four following texts:

Evan Luard, *War in International Society: A Study in International Society* (1986)

Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989* (1991)

A. Mark Weisburd, *Use of Force: The Practice of States Since World War II* (1997)

George Childs Kohn, *Dictionary of Wars*, rev. ed. (1999)

³⁰ Donald T. Campbell & Julian C. Stanley, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 12.

Given the nature of the data reasonable available for this study, it was necessary to limit the sample of cases in this way (i.e. not include other cases on an *ad hoc* basis) in order to avoid selection bias.

The Correlates of War database (COW), which contains far more cases than this study, was considered as a potential source for data but was ultimately rejected. COW codes a use of force by one state against another (which it terms “militarized inter-state disputes” [MIDs]) according to the date that the *dispute* began, and codes the two sides of the dispute according to which side initiated the *dispute*. Neither of these data is useful for determining which side was the first to *use force*. Furthermore, COW does not include narratives for many cases, making it impossible to determine from COW the *reason* that one side initiated the use of force. In sum, the data collected in COW is unsuitable for research of the nature needed for this study.

The preferred source for gathering data on the religious makeup of states was the World Factbook published annually by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency or its predecessor publication, the National Basic Intelligence Factbook. This source was chosen because it was compiled for a purpose other than that of this study, thus minimizing bias in coding, and it was compiled by an entity that may reasonably be expected to consist of professionals and subject-matter experts. To account for the time lag in publication, the religion of the initiating state is coded according to the CIA World Factbook (or its predecessor) for the year *after* that in which the armed conflict was initiated.³¹

³¹ The CIA World Factbook and its predecessor only go back to 1976. For cases prior to 1970, or for states in which the Factbook provides no information, data on religions of states was obtained from contemporaneous editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

C. Definitions

1. “State.”

This study adopts the classic definition of a state in international law is a political entity that possesses all four of the following characteristics: (1) a permanent population; (2) a defined territory; (3) a government; and (4) the legal capacity to enter into relations with other states.³² Essentially, the term “state” means *sovereign* state. This study is further limited to uses of force *by a state* (combatants controlled by a state use force) against *another state*, i.e. on another state’s territory, against its armed forces, or against its marine or air fleets. A use of force by a state on its own (undisputed) territory is not covered. Uses of force by dependent territories, breakaway provinces, or rebel movements against other states are also not covered, if those belligerents are not controlled by or acting on behalf of the state.

2. “Christian State” and “Non-Christian State.”

A “Christian state” is defined as a state in which the population is Christian (and not syncretic). The population of the metropole, plus any geographically separate territories that are fully integrated into the metropole, e.g. Hawaii, is counted as part of the population. If 61% or more of the population is described as Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, or belonging to a particular church within any of the above categories, that state is coded as Christian. If 39% or less of the population meets the above criterion, the state is coded as non-Christian, regardless of the specific religious makeup of the rest of the population.

When 40-60% of the population is Christian, the state is coded as half-Christian and half-non-Christian. An initiation of an armed conflict by a half-Christian state will count as only half the value as that of a Christian state. Since a half-Christian state is also half-non-Christian, its use of

³² Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 70 (citing Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, Dec. 26, 1933).

force will also count as half the value as that of a non-Christian state. For example, if a half-Christian state uses force for the purpose of militarizing a territorial dispute, the case will be treated as 0.5 uses of force initiated by Christian states for that purpose, and 0.5 uses of force initiated by non-Christian states for that purpose. The two data points will cancel each other out.

3. “Initiate the Use of Force.”

Although the Christian just war tradition centers on which belligerent is “at fault,” thereby justifying the other to use force against it, this study refrains from assigning “fault” to either side, mainly because such a question lies more within the purview of international law and ethics. Rather, the term “initiate” denotes simply which side is the *first* to use force against the other. This is the reason for the somewhat tortuous language of the hypothesis; the study is only interested in which state *started* the fight, not who simply happened to be *in* it.

For the purpose of this study, the state that “initiates the use of force” is that which is the first to commit any of the acts listed in the Definition of Aggression adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974.³³ The document specifies that any of the following acts of a state qualify as an “act of aggression” (and therefore, also a “use of force”):

(a) *An invasion or attack upon the territory of another state.* This covers an attack on or movement into the *undisputed* territory of another state, an attack on or movement into *disputed* territory, and the use of force in such a manner as to extend a state’s claim of territorial waters or airspace beyond that which is recognized under the international Law of the Sea. What these three subcategories have in common is that the state is asserting *control* over a certain space, and in doing so excludes other states from that space.

³³ Definition of Aggression, Annex to G.A. Res. 3314 (XXIX), art. 3(a)-3(g). That document characterizes any first use of force which meets any of the various criteria as “aggression,” implying its unlawfulness. As a normative document, this author would argue that its restrictions are too broad (and it is not a legally binding documents, for resolutions of the General Assembly on international peace and security matters are only recommendatory; U.N. Charter, art. 11, para. 2). Rather, the resolution’s utility is as a descriptive document.

(b) *Bombardment or other use of weapons against the territory of another state.*

(c) *Blockade of another state.*

(d) *An attack on the armed forces, marine fleets, or air fleets of another state.*

(e) *Use of armed forces that are already in another state with that state’s consent in contravention of the conditions of that consent, including remaining after consent is withdrawn.*

(f) *A state allowing its territory to be used by another state for using force against a third state.*

(g) *“The sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State.”*³⁴ To fall into this category, the irregular forces must be “sent” by a state, i.e. organized and/or controlled by the state, rather than merely provided arms or logistical support.³⁵ Providing such assistance to a group of irregulars that have organized themselves and intend to attack another state *without* their host state’s prompting does *not* satisfy this characteristic.³⁶ The consequence of this approach is that relatively few cases in which a state supports and arms rebel movements in other states will be covered in this study; the rebel movements must actually be *answering to* the state that is supporting them.

Finally, it should be noted that these categories of uses of force cover interventions by states in civil conflicts taking place in other states, but only when they are on the side of the insurgents.

³⁴ Definition of Aggression, art. 3(g).

³⁵ This is the interpretation by the International Court of Justice of this part of the Definition of Aggression in the Nicaragua case. Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicar. v. U.S.) (merits), para. 195, *International Court of Justice Reports* 1986, p. 103 [hereinafter *Nicaragua Case*]. Although the Court characterizes such support as “use of force,” the Court ruled that it does not constitute *aggression*. This seems like a confusing inconsistency until it is recalled that the term “use of force,” as operationalized in this study, has a meaning different from that of the Court. Whereas the Court uses the term “use of force” to denote force by a state that is of insufficient scale and effect to constitute “aggression” (i.e. the terms are interchangeable), this study uses the term “use of force” to denote acts of force that meet any of the seven categories in the Definition of Aggression.

³⁶ Thus the entry by Chinese Nationalist forces into Burma during the Chinese Civil War is not included in this study, because the Nationalists were no longer the central government and did not answer to the new central government.

If an intervention is by invitation and consent of the other state, i.e. on the side of the central government, it is *not* a use of force on that state.³⁷

4. Reasons for Initiating Armed Conflicts

This study codes each use of force by the purpose for which it was initiated. The categories of purposes themselves are, for the most part, informed by the way uses of force are categorized in modern international legal scholarship. Legal analyses of the legitimacy of force generally hinge upon the purpose for which the state resorted to it.³⁸ Each use of force in this study is coded for each purpose for which it was initiated, according to the information contained in the narrative accounts of them by Kohn and Weisburd, or reasonable inferences therefrom. Some uses of force are coded for more than one purpose. In a few cases the purpose for using force is unclear; when it is unclear because the initiating state may have had any of several purposes, those purposes are coded, but at only half of the weight as cases in which the purpose is clear. When the purpose is unclear because the initiating state cannot be identified (and each side had a different purpose), the case is not coded for purpose at all.

Each purpose covered in this study in this study is defined as follows:

Conquest: The purpose is to deny another state its independence, or even existence. A war with the design of annexing another state, or “unifying” another state or territory with itself, against the wish of that state or territory, fits into this category.³⁹ The several wars initiated to eradicate the state of Israel would also fall into this category. In addition, this category includes the use of force by a state in furtherance of a claim to territorial waters or airspace that international law does not recognize. Although such a case does not involve the subordination of

³⁷ *Nicaragua Case*, para. 246.

³⁸ See, e.g. Anthony Clark Arend & Robert J. Beck, *International Law and the Use of Force* (London: Routledge, 1993); Thomas M. Franck, *Recourse to Force* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁹ The exception is the use of force to liberate a colony from foreign rule. There are too few such cases to analyze this motive specifically.

another political entity to itself, the state is attempting to “extend” its sovereignty to an area in which it is not entitled to it. Mining international waterways fit into this category, as do attacks on foreign vessels present in waters that the initiating state has illegitimately claimed as its own territory.

Militarize Territorial Dispute: The purpose is to gain de facto possession of a territory whose ownership is in genuine dispute with another state, i.e. both claims have a veneer of reasonableness in light of long-standing international law and state practice. This threshold distinguishes, for example, the dispute over the Agacher Strip in Africa (coded as a genuine territorial dispute) from Argentina’s century-old claim to the Falkland Islands, which carried hardly any legal or practical support from the international community.

Attack Non-State Actors: The target of the force is not the other state itself, but non-state actors operating within the territory of that other state. Because such an attack does involve crossing an international border, it must be coded as a use of force against the state in accordance with paragraph 3(a) of the Definition of Aggression. This purpose generally presupposes that the attack on the non-state actors is a response to prior attacks committed by the non-state actors on the state, e.g. rebel or terrorist groups, but that is not a requirement for inclusion.

Protection of Nationals: The purpose of using force is to remove the state’s own nationals, or nationals from a third state, from harm. It encompasses both hostage rescue operations and evacuation of non-combatants from the vicinity of an armed conflict (internal or inter-state). For it to be coded as a use of force against another state, the operation must take place without the consent of the central government of that state.

Humanitarian Intervention: The purpose of force is to prevent or stop gross violations of fundamental human rights on a large scale. This can be accomplished either by deposing the

violating regime, or by removing the aggrieved population from the control of the violating regime.

Ideological Intervention: The purpose of force is to replace the regime of another state with another regime that is ideologically more aligned with the intervenor. The Brezhnev and Reagan Doctrines during the Cold War were quintessential expressions of this purpose; both sides claimed the right to use force to guarantee a communist or democratic government in other states, respectively.

V. Results of Study

A. Christianity v. Non-Christianity

The findings of this study suggest support the hypothesis for the time period covered, Christian states did initiate armed conflicts against other states less often and for different reasons than non-Christian states.

For each type of armed conflict studied, the null hypothesis is that having a Christian population has no effect on the likelihood of any given state initiating an armed conflict. Using the data sources described above as well as the Polity data set, I was able to determine the probability of any non-micro-state being Christian in any given year from 1946 to 1999, and thus the probability of any such state being Christian at any point at which it initiated an armed conflict from 1946 to 1999, using the formula

$$P_{\text{total}}(X) = \frac{p_{1946}(X) + p_{1947}(X) \dots + p_{1999}(X)}{Y}$$

where p is the probability of such a state being Christian in any given year, and Y is the number of years in the time period studied. Over the entire period from 1946 to 1999, the probability of

any non-micro-state being Christian is 51.7%. Thus the null hypothesis would predict that for any given type of armed conflict, *ceteris paribus*, 51.7% of them are initiated by Christian states and 48.3% by non-Christian states.

The results of the study suggest that the null hypothesis is disproved, but not conclusively, primarily for lack of sufficient data. Overall, i.e. for all armed conflicts sampled, the probability of a Christian state being the initiator of an armed conflict is $32.2 \pm 8.9\%$.⁴⁰ The null hypothesis predicts that the probability is $51.7 \pm 9.5\%$. The 95% confidence intervals for these results do not overlap. Overall, Christian states should have initiated about half of all armed conflicts, but instead they initiated only one-third. Given the limited data, this is the closest the study comes to disproving the null.

The following table shows the proportions and confidence intervals for all of the meaningful results of this study:

Type	N	Initiated by Christian State	Null Hypothesis
All Armed Conflicts	107	$32.2 \pm 8.9\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Major Wars (>1000 battle deaths)	23	$30.5 \pm 18.8\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Wars of Conquest	24	$16.7 \pm 14.9\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Militarized Territorial Disputes	24.5	$14.3 \pm 13.9\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Attacks on Non-State Actors	20	$40.0 \pm 21.5\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Protection of Nationals	8	$75.0 \pm 30.0\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Humanitarian Interventions	7.5	$40.0 \pm 35.1\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$
Ideological Interventions	11.5	$69.6 \pm 28.9\%$	$51.7 \pm 9.5\%$

As predicted, the uses of force for conquest and/or for territory initiated by Christian states is disproportionately low and the use of force for protection of nationals by Christian states is

⁴⁰ All results are shown at a 95% confidence interval.

disproportionately high. These findings are consistent with the Christian indifference toward material wealth and Christian charity toward innocent victims.

The prediction that Christian and non-Christian states are equally likely to engage in self-defense appears to have been confirmed. Christian states engaged non-state actors (i.e. rebels and terrorists) in 40% of the cases (close enough to call it roughly half).

Several other predictions of the hypothesis, however, did not come to pass. The hypothesis predicted that Christian states have a greater propensity to humanitarian intervention, yet they initiated only 40% of the cases. There are two possible explanations for this: (1) the preponderance of other religions has equal concern for human rights as Christianity; and (2) the cases themselves are contaminated with other motivations for which the religion of the state is not predicted to make a difference. The latter possibility is especially true of the invasions of Cambodia and Uganda (undertaken by non-Christian states).

The result for ideological interventions is as inconclusive as the prediction. Christian states initiated 8 of the 11.5 cases; three of those were by the Soviet Union, leaving 5 pro-democratic interventions initiated by Christian states (about half), with the other half consisting of pro-autocratic interventions by non-Christian and one (nominally Christian state). It may be that the null hypothesis is true for ideological interventions; perhaps propensity for such interventions is more informed by political ideology than religious.

B. Controlling For Democracy

Using data from the Polity IV data set, the initiators of armed conflicts were also coded as Democracies, Half-Democracies (Anocracies), and Non-Democracies, according to the following table of Polity IV scores:

7 or higher	Democracy
0 to 6	Half-Democracy
Below 0	Non-Democracy

The same technique for weighting half-Christian states was used to weight half-democracies.

As a preliminary matter, it should be noted that the overall null hypothesis for democracies, i.e. that democracies do not initiate armed conflicts any less or more often than non-democracies, is quite unlikely to be disproved. The probability of any state being a democracy in any year over the period 1946-1999 is 36.2%, thus any given type of armed conflict has a 32.6% chance of being initiated by a democracy, according to the null hypothesis. In the sampling, democracies initiated $32.8 \pm 9.1\%$ of all armed conflicts, and $23.9 \pm 17.4\%$ of all major wars. This is rather damning evidence for the monadic thesis of the democratic peace.⁴¹

After controlling for democracy, the results are mixed. A simple comparison of proportions suggests that within the sets of democracies and non-democracies, Christian states initiated fewer armed conflicts than the null hypotheses would predict. Christian states number 72.5% of all democracies, thus 72.5% of armed conflicts initiated by democracies should have been initiated by Christian states. Instead, Christian states initiated only $55.2 \pm 16.4\%$. Among armed conflicts initiated by non-democracies, the null predicts that Christian states should initiate 39.3% of them, but instead they initiated only $20.0 \pm 18.7\%$. Unfortunately, the confidence interval is too wide to disprove the null with certainty.

⁴¹ This study did not explore whether democracies are more or less likely to initiate armed conflicts for certain purposes such as conquest, territorial disputes, etc.

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A bivariate analysis, however, indicates that democracy and Christianity are not independent factors in a state’s propensity to use force. The following two tables show the observed and expected number of armed conflicts overall initiated by Christian, non-Christian, democratic, and non-democratic states:

Observed:

	by Democracies	by Non-Democracies	total
by Christian States	18.5	15	33.5
by non-Xn States	15	52.5	67.5
total	33.5	67.5	101

Expected:

	by Democracies	by Non-Democracies	total
by Christian States	11.1	22.4	33.5
by non-Xn States	22.4	45.1	67.5
total	33.5	67.5	101.0

The χ^2 is 11.037. For 1 degree of freedom, this result corresponds to a probability of about 0.001 that this result would be observed if democracy and Christianity were independent of each other. For major wars, the χ^2 is 1.516, corresponding to an approximately 25% chance that the result would be observed if democracy and Christianity were independent of each other.

By this analysis, the observed results show that among democracies, Christian states initiate *more* than their fair share of armed conflicts, but among non-democracies Christian states initiate

less than their fair share. This result appears to conflict with the comparison of proportions mentioned above.

VI. Conclusion

A. Limitations

At its present stage of development, this study has a number of limitations, the first of which is that more data is necessary to narrow the confidence intervals of the results. Additional data will help in mitigating the second limitation, by facilitating controlling for other factors that have theorized to reduce propensity to war such as military and economic power, balance of power or alliances, or democracy. Preliminary results suggest the possibility of a link between Christianity and democracy in a state's propensity to use force, but those results are not yet conclusive. It should be noted, however, that a study to test whether Christianity and democracy are epiphenomenal to each other must also be open to the possibility that Christianity could be the causal variable, and democracy and propensity to war are the epiphenomenal ones.

The third limitation to this study is that it codes states by religious identity of their general populations, not their governments. A useful follow-on project might be to repeat a study such as this one, but correlate propensity to use force to religious makeups of *regime elites* of states. Such an undertaking would necessitate researching the religious makeup of every governing regime whose state was the initiator for every armed conflict covered.

A further, admittedly very significant limitation of this study is that it only covers the period from October 24, 1945, which is when the U.N. Charter entered into force, until the end of 1999, which is when the coverage in the four data sources ends. 1945 was specifically chosen as the

starting point for this study, for that year marks the beginning of the current epoch of *jus ad bellum* in international law, which is more restrictive than in prior epochs. I speculate that if a Christian peace theory were measured prior to 1945, it probably would not be supported. There are several possible reasons for this. One is that the norms of *jus ad bellum* were different prior to 1945, and very different in the 19th century (*jus ad bellum* was very permissive, as opposed to today when it is very restrictive). Another is that the community of states was quite different prior to 1945; most states were Western and Christian, and had military capabilities that most of the non-Christian world simply did not have. An additional possible explanation is that the Christian war ethic was different, especially in the 19th century. The just war tradition had fallen into desuetude; it was not mentioned in international treatises (in contrast to the naturalist era of international law, when it was regarded as a core concept), and much of Christendom had bought into the so-called *mission civilisatrice*, in which Christian states asserted dominion over political entities which in their view were incapable of governing themselves and/or needed to be brought into the fold of the (mostly Christian) civilized countries, for their own good (as Rudyard Kipling put it, the “white man’s burden”).⁴² Although this sentiment, in a paternalistic way and properly applied, can be traced back to Christian charity, its result would cause many European military ventures in Africa and Asia to be coded as conquest according to the operationalization of this study, thus heavily skewing the outcome.

Thus the primary research agenda that this study calls for is an expansion and refinement of the research to overcome the limitations just listed. First and foremost, additional data is needed. In addition, coding states by religious identity of the *regime*, as opposed to that of the general population, would eliminate some the anomalies in the current study. A comparative study of both the democratic peace and a Christian peace theory for several epochs of *jus ad bellum*, e.g.

⁴² See Anthony Pagden, *Peoples and Empires* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), pp. 139-40.

1648-1814, 1815-1918, 1919-1945, and 1946-present, could yield findings that would also advance our understanding of the force of international law. A study of propensity of war based on religious identity, however, would have to scrupulously include cases outside of Christendom as well; this would be a more difficult task, given that the Westphalian community of states prior to 1918 consisted almost exclusively of Christian states. Finally, similar studies on the propensity of Muslim states to use force are definitely possible. It seems doubtful, however, that any world religion other than Christianity and Islam could yield a sufficiently large sample size.

B. Prescriptions

If, after further study, Christian just war theory were indeed established as a causal factor in reducing states' propensities to use force, what then? Religious identity is such a deeply ingrained trait that no scholar who values genuine, civil discourse would dare to prescribe that all non-Christian states convert to Christianity, and neither does this author. Indeed, that alone would not appear to eliminate war, for the data in this study easily refute the dyadic thesis that Christian states do not use force against each other. However, is it possible for non-Christian states to adopt and internalize the approach of Christian just war theory, i.e. to "secularize" it? This author suggests that it is possible. The global Westphalian state system is itself a product of Western political theory, which in turn is a product of Christian thought. The rest of the world has, for the most part, subscribed to the Western system of international law, which is also drawn heavily from Christian thought, and one of the foundations of that system is the Christian just war theory. The just war tradition, although Christian in origin, does not favor Christendom over non-Christendom, making it suitable for universal application.