

## Religious Factor in Civilization Conflicts: The Religious National Character as Breakthrough Point

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### Abstract

After the “cold war”, in the field of international politics and international relations, the ideological conflicts weaken, and religious cultural conflicts become the main factors of the instability of the world and the new focus of conflicts. Because religious belief is the main characteristic to distinguish the civilization, the religious war almost breaks out between different ethnic groups who have different religious beliefs. As religious nationality reflects the intimate relationship between religion and nationality, from the national character of religion, analyzing the religious factors in the conflict of civilization can grasp the era characteristics of religious culture, take targeted measures with the advancing times and transform the religious culture gradually. So that can we reduce the international civilization conflicts.

**Key words:** Civilization conflicts; Religious element; Nationality

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### INTRODUCTION

After the “cold war”, in the field of international politics and international relations, the ideological conflict weakens, and religious cultural conflicts become the main factors of the instability of the world and the new

focus of conflicts. Because religious belief is the main characteristic to distinguish the civilization, the religious war almost breaks out between different ethnic groups who have different religious beliefs. If conflicts of interest between ethnic groups have a religious background or with religious feelings, the content and form of national contradiction will change, making it become more complicated and sensitive. Sometimes, under the interference of foreign powers, religious contradiction can exacerbate ethnic contradictions, leading to consistent wars and conflicts in some areas. As religious nationality reflects the intimate relationship between religion and nationality, this article will analyze the religious factor in civilization conflict with the nationality of the religious.

### 1. THE CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN RELIGION AND NATIONALITY

The religious issue is world social problem, which is caused by religious belief, religious discrimination, religious persecution or religious war. The basic cause of the religious issue is conflicts of interest among different countries, nations, groups and political powers, in the process of which they make use of religion to consolidate their domination, to strengthen solidarity, to unite against external forces, and to realize their respective countries' and national interests. When a political force in some trouble, it often seek ways to solve problems through the form of religion, by which makes religion will become an excuse for foreign expansion or driving force to compete for spheres of influence, or become an important force to promote the country and nation's unity, to struggle for national independence and liberation. While what is remarkable is that the ethnic and religious problems always have a special affinity. Although religion and nationality belong to two different categories, religious issues are often intertwined with ethnic problems inextricably. Religion often makes a nation cohesive, and

meanwhile nation often makes a religion bursting with vitality. Ethnic groups can extend their personalities with the aid of religion while religions can take advantage of nations to expand its influence. When religion becomes the faith of the whole nation, there will be a special dual role; on the one hand it is the sacred national flag, on the other hand, it is easy to be used by the dark forces. In a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, religious issues are often important part of ethnic problems and difficult to be separated completely. In some regions and countries, ethnic problems usually take the form of religious conflict, and the difference of religion contributes to aggravation of the national estrangement and disputes in return. Ethnic problem is a difficult and sensitive social problem. If ethnic conflicts mix the contradiction of religious belief, the ethnic conflicts will become more complex, increasing the difficulty of a reasonable solution. And vice versa, if ethnic problems are added into a religious problem, also increases the complexity of it.

The close relations between religion and nationality mainly manifest in two aspects, that is the nationality of religious and ethnic religiosity.

**Nationality is the carrier of religion; religion is a national consciousness; national character contains religious factors. Religious exclusiveness intensifies the national estrangement and contradictions, making religious and ethnic conflicts trigger the war.** Religion is one of the foundations of the national “common psychological quality”, and religious belief is an important spiritual power to maintain a nation. Compared with other social and cultural phenomenon, religion has sanctity and transcendence. As religion is a kind of culture which looks faith as psychological basis, objects of belief, as external alien force, have supreme and sacrosanct feature for faith’s main body. So, stereotyping is not only very strong, but also very sensitive, and has a strong sense of exclusivity. Therefore, every nation must be defended his conscientious beliefs. The religious belief is the most sensitive and touched nerve sensors in the religious people; once stimulated by the outside world. It will make the most rapid and intense reflections. So that religions can be the spiritual bond for the national fusion with the same religious belief, meanwhile it may lead to the nation or country, who has different religious beliefs, be divided. Reflected in the international relations, it can promote the “dialogue between civilizations” and the cooperation between different countries, and could also become the trigger and variable of disputes and conflicts. For example, on December 6, 1992, nearly 200,000 Hindus across India gathered in Ayodhya, and some fanatics who broke through the cordon of the army, climbed to the top of the mosque temple, destroyed three large domes. This movement seriously damaged the Muslim religious feelings, and triggered a nationwide sectarian sanguinary conflict. Over the following week, at least

1,200 people were killed, 4,000 wounded. What’s worse, the event that Hindus destroyed mosque, immediately caused Muslim’s backlash and revenge in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. According to the report, in Pakistan, Muslims burned 125 Hindu temples, and dozens of people were killed in the violence. In Afghanistan, Muslim destroyed three Hindu temples and a Sikh temple; there are also some Hindu temples were destroyed in the UK. This fight for the temple is the most influenced and the most widespread sectarian conflict after India’s independence.

**Religion is an important manifestation of national interests.** National conflict, at its base, is the conflict between the political and economic interests, such as the battle over the territorial dispute, market wealth, control and being controlled. The right and wrong, in, often works by complex problems left over by history, external forces’ interference and special consideration of internal power class. Some are clear; some have their own right and wrong, cannot be settled simply. History and reality tell us that the conflicts of national political and economic interests, often take the form of religion; and many of the religious conflict’s occurrence lies in the deep reason that the national interests conflict. Therefore, religion can usually become important manifestation of national interests and the important means of calling on the masses. In European history, for example, the Crusades, under the banner of religion, the Pope commanded crusaders march towards eastern Europe and west Asia north Africa in the name of “holy war”, putting forward some slogans, such as “aid eastern brothers”, “battle with barbarian (Muslim)”, “embark on the journey to Holy Sepulcher (Jerusalem)”, and chanted “this is god’s willing”. In fact, the most profound reason is that the western European feudal lords coveted the eastern land and wealth, so that they invaded and plundered on the excuse of religious slogans. The Crusaders’ burning and looting fully proved that their crusade is not for spreading the gospel of god but for national oppression and exploitation, to satisfy their greed. The war makes millions of people died unnatural deaths; then Europeans gained control rights of the Mediterranean, excluded Muslim and Byzantine forces, and occupied important trade ports.

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## 2. THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN CIVILIZATION CONFLICT

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“Religion” often shows in the form of traditional culture. In ethnic group whose basic masses have a certain faith, religious etiquette integrated with customs of the ethnic, literature and art, life and customs, ethics organically, becoming an important part of the national culture. Nationalities with different religions have different traditional culture. It is characterized by its religious spirits and ideas, so that it can be distinguished from other

nation's traditional culture. As a result, religious factors can be fully embodied in the struggle, collision and fusion of various cultures. We can just discuss religious culture to conclude the relationship between religion and civilization conflict.

If we see religion as a social cultural phenomenon, then, you will find that religious culture saturates the influence of the religious ideas. We can say that, religious culture which looks with religious ideology as the core and soul, has a broader and more profound social influence than religion itself. Religious culture's influence on society is in different fields, like on people's way of life, way of thinking, customs, fashion, etiquette taboo, psychological emotion, values, and so on. So it enlightens, edifies, bounds, and controls its followers virtually. In religious states or counties and regions who have religious atmosphere, the influence of regional and religious culture to its believers is born. What we often see is that, the kind of emotion, psychology, customs derived from religious culture's influence, accord with the religious emotion, psychology, customs, and cannot be separated. Religious beliefs can be abandoned by individual consciously choice, but the influence of religious culture or environment, believers is unable to choose and abandon. That is to say, osmosis or traditions of religious culture, are more stubborn, and persistent than the religion itself. Therefore, we need more to understand the property of religious culture. In terms of its cultural attributes, it contains different levels. Namely, religion in the real society, exists and functions in different ways as the institutional culture, the text culture and ethical culture and customs culture. In terms of its institutional culture, it mainly contains religious laws, commandments, regulations, and relevant religious rites; In terms of its text culture, it mainly includes its religious classics, newspapers, books and religious thoughts reflected in it; In terms of its custom culture, it mainly contains its custom, fashion, life taboo, ethics which correspond to its religious thoughts and ideas. These levels, embodied by religious culture, form and improvement in the long-term historical development of human society, meanwhile they are also accepted consciously or unconsciously and defended by believers.

With a variety of technology to spread their religious culture, the sociability which religious culture has and their peculiar social function are incomparable with other social culture in today's information society. Any religion, especially as world regions, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, which has many believers and followers, is, no matter positive or negative, embodiment or disseminator of the social function of their own religious culture. And Social functions of religious culture implement through their action that participate in social activities. Any kind of religion, to maintain the purity, existence and development of religious culture, and to play its social

functions of religious culture, inevitably, would set up its corresponding organizations (such as churches, religious association, etc.), to ensure that its religious culture in daily social life play a proper role and may affect the people around. Those who want to take advantage of religious culture to reach a certain social political purposes, will also organize themselves, and set up small associations, adapting to their need, to make religious culture actively function.

In today's world stage, some Western developed countries often put their own cultures (including religious culture), consciously or unconsciously, on the commanding heights of civilization. In order to conquer other nationalities and countries. With the ideological culture and social psychology, they use their own advantages and voice in economy, politics, science and technology, and culture, to spare no effort to instill their political concept, values and religious beliefs in developing countries. Finally, it could lead to strong cultural rebound in developing countries, resulting in the international civilization conflicts. The United States, for example, makes use of the economic globalization to promote cultural hegemonic. It thinks its own religion and values as "absolute truth", the religious culture of other countries as "heterogeneous". It makes the culture permeate to many parts of the world, spreading the ideology and values, to expand its influence on social lives around the world. That is to say, The US wants to act as both the world police and a priest in the world, and challenge the rest of the world civilization. So it is not difficult to cause conflict and confrontation. Of other nations and religious culture. American behavior in Iraq and Libya, which aroused the conflict among the two countries, is the actual demonstration.

The United States also interferes in other countries' internal affairs on the excuse of religious culture. Since the end of the cold war, human rights issues have been an important content of the international struggle. Freedom of faith as a fundamental right of people, is an important part of human rights. And religious issues often become an important aspect of the international struggle for human rights. The US-led Western countries as well as religious organizations in these countries, often interfere in others internal affairs in the name of safeguarding human rights. The US often use religion problem accused China, for example, to interfere in China's internal affairs. In Tibetan Buddhism, it supports the Dalai clique's separatist activities in order to seek "independence of Tibet", to divide and destroy the unity of the Chinese; in Islam, although it is strongly against islamic extremism and international terrorism in some places, on the contrary, it hopes that the disaster overruns in China's Xinjiang, so that it can meddle in affairs of Xinjiang.

Religious culture has two-sided effect on civilization conflict. It not only has the negative effect on civilization

conflict as previously mentioned, but also has some positive factors. Though heterogeneous religious culture is one of the factors to trigger international civilization conflict, on the contrary, the same religious culture is the cultural foundation of extensive international cooperation in different countries. Religious culture can be the bridge and media of international union and international cooperation, which are the result of the international characteristics of religion. In the post-war international community, the most typical international cooperation, which regards common religious culture as its foundation, is the Muslim world. Their unity and cooperation are based on Islamic culture. It has an important influence on against Zionism, imperialism, coordinating the contradictions among the Islamic world, promoting the Islamic world to common prosperity, and enhancing the Islamic cultural communication.

In conclusion, religion, as a kind of underlying cultural phenomenon, is a complex cultural system of building national personality and strengthening the national cohesion, and has the relative independence and exclusivity. Religious cultural differences of different ethnic, interweaving with political and economic contradictions, are easy to induce international civilization conflict. Therefore, we must grasp the era characteristics of religious culture, take targeted measures with the advancing times and transform the religious culture gradually. So that can we reduce the international civilization conflicts.

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## CONCLUSION

In the development of international politics and international relations, religion is an important influencing factor. Religion and religious problems, though very exquisite and sensitive, are prevalent in the human social life. Especially after the end of the cold war, as the international community's diversification and globalization develops in depth, religion and ethnic problems are regarded as bond for the cultural identity to revive their spirit of society and condense the strength of society by various political powers. With religion and nationality, country and political problems interweaving, it complicates and sharpens many problems faced by

human, and make the human social life and political life be regularly confronted with accompanying troubles and difficulties.

The ambiguity, confrontation and struggle in the field of religion, after all, are determined by different social and historical conditions on which religions can be produced and exist, and by contention for realistic benefits represented by a variety of religions in different countries and nationalities. Religion as a special kind of ideological power, plays an important role in prompting, reinforcing and continuing conflicts of practical interests in the human society, especially the international political, economic and strategic conflict. For this reason, in the international stage, religion becomes power, carrier and coat, which can be utilized by various international actors.

Therefore, it is extremely essential for us to pay attention to the associations between religious factors and international politics, analyze the rule of their interaction objectively, and develop cultural strategy for international interactions. So that we can expand the positive effects of religion, inhibit its negative effects and promote the healthy development of international relations.

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