Religion's Effects on Foreign Policy Public Opinion and Crisis Bargaining

Joshua Su-Ya Wu
Department of Political Science
The Ohio State University

EITM Houston (June 2013)
Presentation Synopsis

1. Research Motivation
2. Argument
3. Domestic effects of religious rhetoric on domestic publics and elites
4. Strategic effects of religious rhetoric on strategic bargaining
5. Empirical testing strategy
6. Conclusion
1. Research Motivation

• Increasingly, scholars agree that religion matters in international politics, but we don’t know how or when it matters

• Focusing on religion’s effect on foreign policy, my project answers 2 research questions:
  1. How is religion “activated”?
  2. What is the effect of religion (religious rhetoric) on domestic audiences?
  3. What are the strategic implications of changed domestic foreign policy attitudes on states’ crisis bargaining?
State of the literature

• The dominant research strategy in IR is to focus on states’ religion “type”
  • Measured through state-religion laws and governance (Fox) or % religious composition (Maoz & Henderson)
  • However, while having broad temporal and international coverage, these datasets do not really capture the contextual effect of religion and religious communities
    • Slow moving measures
    • No clear mechanism of how religion matters
2. Religious Rhetoric (RR)

• I argue that to best examine religion’s political effect, we must focus on how political actors (mis)use religious rhetoric
  • Jose Casanova: “the actual concrete meaning of whatever people denominate as religion can be elucidated only in the context of their particular discursive practices”
  • Religion may be influential but is not always activated, and religious rhetoric is a primary way that polities’ religious identities and belongings become salient
The power of religious rhetoric

• When political actors use religious rhetoric, they leverage two characteristics of religious rhetoric that can have significant social and political effects
  • Illocutionary power
  • Rhetorical coercion
RR’s Illocutionary power

• Illocutionary rhetoric (Austin) is discourse that contains explicit motivations and imperatives for social action
  • Pennington: RR does not just contain “propositional meaning (locution) but also are a call for action, response, change of view, and commitment (illocution)”
  • Thus, when used by political actors, RR can be an authoritative framing discourse that compels and motivates audiences to new political action
RR as Rhetorical Coercion

- RR is a conversation stopper (Rorty) that is authoritative and difficult to argue against
- RR is also a type of rhetorical coercion (Krebs & Lobasz) that constrains opposing rebuttals and justifications
  - It does not change preferences per se, but makes it difficult for other actors to rhetorically argue against a religiously-supported claim
- RR has an effect of dampening counter rhetorics or diverging political opinions
3. RR’s effect on domestic actors

- Leaders’ use of RR is religious framing that changes how domestic audiences perceive and understand a particular foreign policy crisis
  - RR $\rightarrow$ increase in domestic FP support
- Leaders’ use of RR is rhetorical coercion that makes it difficult for domestic elites to oppose his/her foreign policy
  - RR $\rightarrow$ decrease in elite FP opposition $\rightarrow$ elite cue effects on domestic FP support
RR’s effect on domestic actors

Figure 1: Effect of religious rhetoric on FP public opinion

1. Presidential religious rhetoric (PRR) effect on FP public opinion
2. PRR effect on elite foreign policy rhetoric
3. Elite foreign policy rhetoric effect on FP public opinion
RR’s differential effects

• The effects of RR on domestic audiences and elites are not homogenous
• Expected political effects are moderated by:
  • Type of religious rhetoric
    • Implicit non-divine election / Explicit non-divine election / Explicit divine election
  • Partisanship of domestic elites and audiences
    • Republican / Democrat
  • Religiosity of domestic audiences
    • Religious / Secular
RR’s differential effects

• Type of religious rhetoric
  • Implicit non-divine election / Explicit non-divine election / Explicit divine election
• Religiosity of domestic audiences
  • Degree to which leaders’ religious rhetoric is effective as religious framing
• Partisanship of domestic elites and audiences
  • Elites: sensitivity to leaders’ rhetorical coercion
  • Audiences: responsiveness to changes in elite FP opinions
RR’s differential effects on American audiences and elites

Figure 2: Effect of religious rhetoric on American FP public opinion

President

Effect moderated by religiosity of domestic audiences

Foreign Policy Public Opinion

(1) Religious Republicans
(2) Secular Republicans
(3) Religious Democrats
(4) Secular Democrats

Domestic elites

(1) Elites dependent on religious constituencies
(2) Elites not dependent on religious constituencies

Effect moderated by partisanship of elites

Effect moderated by partisanship of domestic audiences
RR’s differential effects on American audiences’ FP support

- Republican, Religious
- Republican, Secular
- Democrat, Religious
- Democrat, Secular

Legend:
- Implicit non-Divine Election
- Explicit non-Divine Election
- Explicit Divine Election
Recap of RR’s domestic effects

• So far, I have argued that political leaders can use religious rhetoric to leverage the illocutionary and rhetorical coercion power of religious rhetoric **domestically** to change domestic publics’ foreign policy support

• The effect is moderated by the type of RR used, elites’ dependence on religious consistencies, domestic audiences’ alignment with elite partisanship, and domestic audiences’ religiosity
Extensions & Generalizability

• Applicability to non-democracies?
  • Theoretically, yes. If there are no domestic audiences, RR only has rhetorical coercion effects on elites, who are the punishing agent that impose audience costs

• Is there a way to formalize this?
  • Unclear (I haven’t found an appropriate model...)

• Do these domestic dynamics translate into international crisis bargaining?
  • Maybe, perhaps simplified?
4. Strategic implications of RR

- Changes in domestic foreign policy opinion have strategic implications on bargaining during foreign policy crises.
- Changes in domestic publics’ foreign policy opinion can be signaling or new constraints:
  - Signaling: reveals information about the type (resolve) of an actor.
  - Constraints: domestic publics constrain the range of acceptable bargains a state can (will) accept.
Modeling RR’s strategic effects

• I choose to focus on the **bargaining effect** of RR, not the signaling effect (at least for now)
• Thus, I use a **complete information** model of FP crisis bargaining found in Tarar & Leventoglu’s “Public Commitment in Crisis Bargaining” (2009)
  • Audience costs model where actors can endogenously choose the level of audience costs to create (as opposed to Fearon 1994/97 where audience costs are exogenous)
Tarar & Leventoglu (2009)

- Key insight: by making (rhetorical) commitments, leaders activate the audience costs mechanism, increase opponents’ concessions, and make bargaining gains
- While state’s payoff increases, there is no direct increase in leaders’ personal utility
  - Opponent only offers enough to make leader indifferent between the settlement and war
  - Perhaps there are down-the-road benefits as publics that receive more public goods are more likely to support the leader in the next election
My tweaks to T&L 2009

• They claim that commitments can only be made \textit{before} the crisis
  • I argue that commitments can be made \textit{during} crises
• The only endogenous variable in their model is a state’s public commitment ($\tau_i$)
  • I argue that the audience costs coefficient ($a_i$) can also vary depending on the use or non-use of religious rhetoric
Baseline bargaining model

• Player 1 makes offer \( x^* = p+c_2 \) and Player 2 makes offer \( y^* = p-c_1 \)
  • Both offers are subgame perfect equilibria
  • Bargaining range \( [p-c_1, p+c_2] \)
Bargaining with Commitments

- Player 1 is dissatisfied \((p-c_1 > \text{Status Quo})\)
- Player 1 can make different types of commitments
  - a minimal commitment \((\tau_1 < p-c_1)\)
  - a moderate commitment \((\tau_2 > p-c_1)\)
  - an extreme commitment \((\tau_3 > p+c_2)\)
Types of commitment

• A minimal commitment ($\tau_1 < p - c_1$) has no effect on bargaining (as if Player 1 had made no commitment)
• A moderate commitment ($p + c_2 > \tau_2 > p - c_1$) results in bargaining gains for Player 1
• An extreme commitment ($\tau_3 > p + c_2$) results in war because Player 2 would rather fight than accept a suboptimum offer
Commitment equilibrium

• Range of SPE equilibria as Player 1 can commit from \([0, p+c_2]\)

• If Player 2’s war utility \((1-p-c_2)\) is zero or negative (implying very low resolve for war or probability of winning the war), Player 1 makes demand for the whole good \((\tau=1)\)

• Unique equilibrium \(\tau^*=p+c_2\) if we make assumption that Player 1 is pie-maximizing

• Symmetric equilibria if only Player 2 can make rhetorical commitment
Commitment’s audience costs

• When Player 1 makes a commitment, he pays audience costs equal to $z - a_D(\tau - z)$
  • $z$ is the final accepted settlement Player 2 makes to make Player 1 leader indifferent between accepting the offer and going to war
  • $a_D$ is the audience costs coefficient
• When a leader uses religious rhetoric to make a public commitment, he creates greater audience costs ($a_R$)
  • $a_R$ (audience costs with RR) > $a_D$ (audience costs with non-religious rhetoric)
Justifying $a_R > a_D$

• Instead of just assuming that $a_R > a_D$, I use a survey experiment to empirically test this.

• The experiment emulates audience costs experiments (Levendusky and Horowitz 2012; Tomz 2007; Trager and Vavreck 2011).

• If public disapproval when the president uses religious rhetoric to make a commitment and backs down is greater than if he uses non-religious rhetoric to commit and back down, there is evidence that $a_R > a_D$. 
Justifying $a_R > a_D$

- Vignette: developing crisis between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan
- Treatment: 3x3 factorial design
  - Factor 1: Crisis outcomes (Commit to stay out, Commit to intervene and Uzbekistan backs down, Commit to intervene and backs down)
  - Factor 2: Rhetoric (Secular, explicit non-divine election, explicit divine election)
- Sample: Mturk sample, ~900 respondents (98-104 respondents in each of the 9 treatment groups)
# Sample treatment vignette

## Rhetoric Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back Down</th>
<th>Secular Rhetoric</th>
<th>Blessedness Rhetoric</th>
<th>Chosenness Rhetoric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(One week later, the Uzbek army crossed the border. The US did not send troops, and Uzbekistan successfully invaded Tajikistan.)</td>
<td>The president said that “the US would protect Tajikistan from any potential Uzbek offensive.” He said that “freedom is the right of every nation” and stated “America is committed to protect those whose freedoms are threatened.”</td>
<td>The president said that “the US would protect Tajikistan from any potential Uzbek offensive.” He said that “freedom is the right of every nation” and asked for <strong>God’s continued blessing on America</strong> as we protect those whose freedoms are threatened.”</td>
<td>The president said that “the US would protect Tajikistan from any potential Uzbek offensive.” He also said that “freedom is the right of every nation” and stated that <strong>America is God’s ordained defender</strong> of those whose freedoms are threatened.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Experiment findings

## Table: Comparisons of Audience Costs (Support when crisis outcome=Back Down)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>7 (Secular Rhetoric)</th>
<th>8 (Blessedness Rhetoric)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 (Blessedness Rhetoric)</td>
<td>( \mu_8 - \mu_7: .09 ) (( p=.84 ))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (Chosen Rhetoric)</td>
<td>( \mu_9 - \mu_7: -.70 ) (( p=.08 ))</td>
<td>( \mu_9 - \mu_8: -.78 ) (( p=.05 ))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- There is (preliminary) evidence that \( a_R > a_D \)
- Specifically, \( a_R \) (divine election rhetoric) > \( a_R \) (non-divine election rhetoric) \( \sim a_D \)
Implications of $a_R > a_D$

• Using religious rhetoric to make commitments generates higher audience costs; to account for that, the opponent must make a bigger offer to make Player 1 indifferent

\[
Z^* = \frac{p-c_D+a_R\tau_D}{1+a_R} > Z = \frac{p-c_D+a_D\tau_D}{1+a_D}
\]

• Thus, leaders (states) that use religious rhetoric are more likely to receive more concessions than if it did not use religious rhetoric
Preliminary hypotheses

• If an actor can make public commitments, his use of religious rhetoric gives it bargaining leverage and a greater bargaining payout than if he does not use religious rhetoric

• I am still working on the equilibria results when both actors make commitments and/or use religious rhetoric

• At least 6 different “classes” of commitment & use of religious rhetoric combinations to figure out mathematical solutions for
4. Empirical testing

- Observational empirical data
- Inferential challenges
- Experiments for more robust inference
- Process-tracing case studies
Using observational data

- Identify independent variable
  - Use content analysis to identify leaders’ use of religious rhetoric in overall FP crisis discourse
- Identify dependent variable
  - Use content analysis to identify frequency and proportion of elite support/opposition to leaders’ foreign policy
  - Examine public opinion polls to create time series of public’s foreign policy attitudes and support
Problems with empirical data

- Political actors are strategic, leaders and elites only use RR (or other rhetoric) when it serves their interests
  - The observed record of crisis rhetoric and elite FP support is biased, leading to biased estimates of effects of RR
- Problems with FP public opinion polls
  - Polls are not fielded regularly (if at all)
  - Inconsistent questions
  - Data is very noisy and susceptible to other confounders
Using experiments

• Allows manipulation to identify effects on audiences’ FP opinion across the full range of observed and potential religious rhetoric
• Better measurement of domestic audiences’ religiosity than in public opinion polls
• Use of survey experiments can increase external validity through better sampling
• Use of panel survey experiment can reduce potential priming effects from questions about respondents’ religiosity
Different types of experiments

• Survey experiments
  • Mturk: over-sample non-religious respondents; can also field to non-US samples
  • Replicate results with representative national samples (YouGov, KN, TESS), pending funding

• Mturk panel experiment
  • Cost-efficient way to create 2-wave design
  • Wave 1: battery of questions on politics and religiosity
  • Wave 2: no demographic questions; only experimental vignettes
Process-tracing case studies

- Complement large-N analysis to further demonstrate the causal mechanisms of RR’s effects on domestic FP attitudes and crisis bargaining
- Allows me to examine key (important, critical) FP crisis episodes
- Process-tracing can identify effects of RR on elite FP support in states whose publics cannot really impose audience costs (i.e. non-democracies)
Preliminary empirical results

• As a preliminary test (and b/c of highest data availability), I examine the domestic and strategic effects of presidential religious rhetoric (PRR) in US context

• Focusing on US FP crises as identified by the International Crisis Behavior group in post-Cold War era (15 cases) using both empirical and experimental approaches
Empirical examples of PRR

- From *Public Papers of the Presidents*, I collect all FP crisis rhetoric and code religious rhetoric.
- Bush (11/2/90): “we Americans have turned to God in prayer and, in so doing, found strength and direction.”
- Clinton (2/17/98): “And we still have, God willing, a chance to find a diplomatic resolution to this and, if not, God willing, a chance to do the right thing for our children and grandchildren.”
- Bush (2/9/03): “Liberty is not America's gift to the world. What we believe strongly and what we hold dear is, liberty is God's gift to mankind.”
PRR (from *Public Papers of the Presidents*)

Average of .13 instances of PRR per crisis week (90 total PRR, 712 crisis weeks)
## RR’s effect on public opinion

### Does PRR increase public’s FP support?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICB Crisis #</th>
<th>Crisis</th>
<th>Foreign Policy approval</th>
<th>Presidential approval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>393</td>
<td>Prelude to Gulf War</td>
<td>No (p=.83)</td>
<td>No (p=.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>403</td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>No (p=.21)</td>
<td>No (p=.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>411</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>No (p=.14)</td>
<td>No (p=.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412</td>
<td>Iraq 2</td>
<td>No (p=.60)</td>
<td>Yes (p=.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>419</td>
<td>Iraq 3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>422</td>
<td>Iraq 4 (UNSCOM)</td>
<td>Yes (p=.10)</td>
<td>Yes (p=.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>427</td>
<td>Embassy bombings</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes (p=.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>429</td>
<td>Iraq 5 (UNSCOM II)</td>
<td>No (p=.82)</td>
<td>No (p=.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>No (p=.40)</td>
<td>No (p=.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>434</td>
<td>Prelude to Afghanistan</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No (p=.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>440</td>
<td>Prelude to Iraq War</td>
<td>No (p=.49)</td>
<td>No (p=.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tajik-Uzbek Experiment

• Examine full results from the audience costs experiment I discussed above
• Scenario: Developing foreign policy crisis along the Tajikistan/Uzbekistan border
• 3x3 factorial treatments: Crisis outcome, presidential use of RR (9 treatment groups)
• President always stays out of crisis
• Post-test measures of respondents’ religious preferences and religiosity
Testing RR’s differential effects

• Mturk sample allows me to “oversample” non-religious (49% vs. 10-14% in population)

• Two ways to test
  • Include religious preference (comparing those with affiliation with the no-affiliation “none’s) and religiosity variables as IV
  • Divide full sample into religious/non-religious sub-samples
## Religiosity as IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV</th>
<th>Specific religion dummies (baseline: non-religious)</th>
<th>Non-religious vs. religious (1 dummy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Approval</td>
<td>No religion-specific effects</td>
<td>No religion-specific effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Affect</td>
<td>No religion-specific effects</td>
<td>No religion-specific effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect for America</td>
<td>P, C, E, LDS/J/M/H have higher affect than NR</td>
<td>NR have lower affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP approval</td>
<td>C have higher approval than NR</td>
<td>No religion-specific effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Doing the right thing”</td>
<td>P, C have higher “right thing” belief</td>
<td>NR have lower “right thing” belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting for president</td>
<td>P, C higher electoral support than NR</td>
<td>NR have lower electoral support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US success is God’s plan</td>
<td>P, C, E, LDS/J/M/H have higher belief than NR</td>
<td>NR lower belief that US success is God’s plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall support</td>
<td>P, C have higher support</td>
<td>NR have lower support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subpopulation analysis

• Three different ways to create religious/non-religious subpopulations
  • Religious preference
  • Religiosity (mean)
  • Religiosity (median)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Variable</th>
<th>None / No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Preference</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious (mean religiosity)</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious (median religiosity)</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Subpopulation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>E8</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
<th>R4</th>
<th>R5</th>
<th>R6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>relnone=1</td>
<td>relnone=0</td>
<td>religious=0</td>
<td>religious=1</td>
<td>religious2=0</td>
<td>religious2=1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DV Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>-1.12***</td>
<td>-1.49***</td>
<td>-.57**</td>
<td>-1.47***</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>-1.51***</td>
<td>-.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
<td>(.22)</td>
<td>(.27)</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>-.52***</td>
<td>-.58**</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.70***</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.65**</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(.22)</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome x Rhetoric</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.35*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(.18)</td>
<td>(.19)</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td>(.18)</td>
<td>(.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>7.06***</td>
<td>7.20***</td>
<td>5.26***</td>
<td>8.45***</td>
<td>3.96***</td>
<td>7.50***</td>
<td>4.74***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(.84)</td>
<td>(1.12)</td>
<td>(.96)</td>
<td>(.98)</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RR has expected negative effect on non-religious but no stat. significant effect on religious
6. Conclusion

- I argue that religion matters when political actors use religious rhetoric in their FP crisis discourse
  - Domestic effects
  - Strategic effects
- I use formal game (based on Tarar & Leventoglu 2009) to translate the effects of domestic politics to FP crisis bargaining
  - Perhaps under-specified or too simple to capture the full dynamics of differential domestic effects of RR
Ongoing / Future Research

• Figuring out the formal model equilibrium
• How to better translate domestic dynamics into strategic bargaining
• Continuing to collect FP rhetoric and public opinion polls
• Designing / fielding survey experiments
• Theoretical questions
  • Does RR also have direct effects on opponents and foreign publics?