# "To Halve and to Hold":

## Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility

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THE FAILURE of Israelis and Palestinians to agree on the status of a sacred site in Jerusalem, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, to Muslims as the Haram el-Sharif, was by most accounts a principal cause, if not the primary cause, for the failure of Camp David negotiations in July 2000.[1] The site, a thirty-five acre trapezoidal platform located in the old city of Jerusalem, contains remnants of the Jewish Temple, holy to Jews, as well as the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aksa Mosque, holy to Muslims. Two months later, on 28 September 2000, then Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited Jerusalem to assert Israeli sovereignty over the sacred site, a move regarded by Palestinians as a callous provocation. The Palestinian uprising in response to this visit signaled the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the resurgence of violence at unprecedented levels. Palestinians named this confrontation the Al Aksa Intifada in honor of the shrine in Jerusalem.

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1. Although analyses of the negotiations are preliminary, there seems to be a broad consensus among participants and analysts on the singular importance of this issue in preventing agreement at Camp David. Barak admitted to the press that "The summit collapsed over the Jerusalem issue." Shimon Shifer and Nahum Barnea, "It All Collapsed over Jerusalem," *Yedioth Aharonot*, 26 July 2000, 4 (my translation). Barak also instructed his delegates to treat the Temple Mount dispute as "the central issue that will decide the destiny of the negotiations." Gilad Sher, *Just Beyond Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999–2001* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Miskal-Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 2001), 197 and 406 (my translation). Israeli delegate Amnon Shahak described this dispute as "the issue that is stuck, that is holding back everything else" (ibid., 209). Chief Israeli negotiator on Jerusalem, Shlomo Ben-Ami, defined Israel's position on the Temple Mount as a "taboo" and recognized that it had become "the make or break issue of the entire negotiations.... There was a breakthrough that could have led to an agreement on all issues, aside from Jerusalem" (ibid., 209 and 233). See also Menahem Klein, *Shattering a Taboo: The Contacts Towards a Permanent Status Agreement in Jerusalem, 1994–2001* (Israel: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2001), 61 and 108.

That most recent round of Middle East violence was sparked by sensitivities toward sacred space, but increased hostility also played itself out through acts of reciprocal desecration of sacred space. One week after Sharon's visit to Jerusalem, Palestinian rioters targeted the tomb of the patriarch Joseph in nearby Nablus. The Jewish seminary at the site was burned to the ground, its library desecrated, and the dome of the tomb was painted green, to symbolize its conversion into a mosque.[2] In Jericho, Palestinian security forces failed to prevent a Palestinian mob from torching a seventh-century synagogue.[3] Reports of the events at Joseph's Tomb led to Jewish vandalism of three mosques in Tiberias and Jaffa, cities in which Jews and Muslims live side by side.[4] Muslims in mixed communities retaliated: synagogues in Jaffa, Haifa, Ramla, and Shfaram were firebombed, the tombs of Jewish saints in several Galilean towns were defaced and the walls of a synagogue in a Jewish settlement were spray-painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans.[5] To express his outrage over Israeli tactics against Palestinians, an American tourist from Los Angeles used red paint to deface the Western Wall, a site revered by Jewish worshippers at the foot of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where the violence had originated.[6] From that point on, confrontations snowballed from isolated acts of vandalism to armed clashes between Israeli and Palestinian forces. By March 2004, the Al-Aksa Intifada had cost the lives of approximately 2,900 Palestinians and 900 Israelis.[7]

Outside the Middle East, a dramatic increase in global anti-Semitic incidents accompanied these violent developments. In most cases, the targets chosen by attackers were not the members of Jewish communities themselves, but Jewish places of worship. Within one month of Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount seventy-seven synagogues worldwide were vandalized, a 400 percent leap compared to the previous months of that year.[8] The ratio of incidents involving the desecration of Jewish places of worship to all other anti-Semitic assaults leapt

2. Sharon Waxman, "Shrine to Hatred: At Joseph's Tomb, Centuries-Old Disputes Cannot Be Laid to Rest," *Washington Post*, 28 October 2000, C01.

3. Margot Dudkevich, "IAF Attacks Jericho After Synagogue Burned," *Jerusalem Post*, 13 October 2000, 1A; Lee Hockstader, "On Both Sides, Toll is Personal," *Washington Post*, 14 October 2000, A01.

4. "Religious Symbols and Sensitivities at Core of Mideast strife," CNN *International*, 10 October 2000, at www.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/10/10/mideast.religiousstrife.ap/index.html.

5. Margot Dudkevich, "Efrat Preparing 'Zionist Response' to Synagogue Desecration," *Jerusalem Post*, 29 October 2000, 1.

6. Haim Shapiro, "Wall Cleanup Hits Religious Stumbling Block," *Jerusalem Post*, 29 December 2000, 3A.

7. "World in Brief," *Sunday Herald Sun*, 21 March, 2004, 41.

8. This figure is based on a report by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles from 3 November 2000, entitled "World Antisemitic Hate Crimes & Major Hate Incidents." The report lists 140 anti-Semitic incidents between 29 September and 11 November, of which 77 involved the desecration of synagogues, cemeteries or ritual baths. In France alone, 33 incidents of attacks against synagogues were reported in the first half of October. See David

from 20 percent in 1999 and 2000, to 60 percent in 2001, totaling more than 130 synagogues in Australia, Tunisia, Bosnia, Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, Sweden, Britain, Canada, Russia, Brazil, and the United States.[9]

Given the prevalence of disputes over sacred space and their grave consequences, it is surprising that the causes and characteristics of conflict over sacred space remain understudied. Although the importance of specific conflicts has been noted by historians, geographers, students of comparative politics, even lawyers and authors of fiction,[10] no attempt has been made by political scientists to generate systematic and general findings beyond recognizing the mobilization potential of conflict over sacred space.[11] The claim that sacred sites offer convenient resources for political mobilization, while sound, begs the question of how and why sacred places are conducive to mobilization. Most importantly, the existing literature has offered no theoretical explanations for the indivisibility of sacred space: the impediment to sharing, dividing or finding substitutes for contested sacred places.

In this article, I strive to fill these gaps. I begin with a phenomenological discussion of sacred space: an analysis of the manner in which the elements of the sacred as perceived by believers combine to produce a real, and indivisible, challenge. I offer a definition and typology of sacred places, and discuss two parameters, centrality and exclusivity, for assessing the potential role of a sacred space in a

Usborne, "Attacks on Jews Worldwide 'Worst Since Nazi Germany'," *The Independent*, 28 October 2000, 16; Chani Cohen, "UN Must Condemn Wave of Antisemitic Violence," *Jerusalem Post*, 20 October 2000, 5A; "Attackers Try to Torch Synagogue in Southern France," CNN *International*, 12 October 2000; and "Jewish Face Violent Upsurge," CNN *International*, 18 October 2000, at www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/10/18/jews.violence/index.html

    9. Yair Sheleg, "A Rise in the Extent of Anti-Semitism in 2001," *Ha'aretz*, 9 April 2002, 1.

    10. For fictitious accounts of the Temple Mount dispute in Jerusalem, for example, see Robert Stone, *Damascus Gate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Tom Clancy, *Sum of All Fears* (New York: Putnam, 1991); and the award-winning Israeli film *Ha-Hesder (Time of favor)*, Joseph Cedar, 2000. The legal history of disputes over sacred sites in Israel is covered comprehensively in Shmuel Berkovits, *The Battle for the Holy Places: The Struggle over Jerusalem and the Holy Sites in Israel, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District* (Or Yehuda, Israel: Hed Arzi, 2000). For recent histories of the Jerusalem dispute see, for example, Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Bernard Wasserstein, *Divided Jerusalem: The Struggle for the Holy City* (London: Profile Books, 2001); Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (New York: Free Press, 2000); Nadav Shragai, *Har Ha-merivah: Ha-ma'avak al Har Ha-Bayit: Yehudim u-Muslemim, Dat u-Politikah Meaz 1967* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1995); Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht, *To Rule Jerusalem* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

    11. Only a handful of texts on conflicts over sacred space go beyond studies of a single event or repeated disputes over one sacred site. See Richard M. Eaton, "Temple Desecration in Pre-Modern India," *Frontline* 17, no. 25 and 26, 22 December 2000 and 5 January 2000; Roger W. Stump, *Boundaries of Faith: A Geographical Perspective on Religious Fundamentalism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Ifrah Zilberman, *Yerushalayim Ve-Ayodyah: Deyokano Shel Haktsanah Datit-Politit* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim Leheker Yisrael, 1997); Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht, "The Bodies of Nations: A Comparative Study of Religious Violence in Jerusalem and Ayodhya," *History of Religions* 38, no. 2 (November 1998): 101–49.

given conflict. I then demonstrate the manner in which indivisibility arises from the integrity, boundaries and nonfungibility of sacred places. Additionally, four contingent factors determine whether or not indivisibility will lead to conflict: the splitting and merging of religious traditions that leads to conflicts among religious groups, and the material and political value of the sacred space that leads to conflicts between religious and secular actors.

I conclude with a typology of policy responses to the problem of sacred space, exemplified by the recent negotiations over Jerusalem at Camp David. Two ideal types of prevailing policy approaches to disputes over sacred space emerge: A Hobbesian view that rejects the symbolic dimension of these disputes and treats them as standard territorial disputes, and a Huntingtonian view that construes the intractability of these disputes as the products of religious forces beyond the influence of political actors. I suggest an outline for an alternative approach that can take the phenomenological indivisibility of sacred space seriously, while considering ways to problematize the social production and deconstruction of the sacred in pursuit of a solution for these disputes. In the body of this article, however, I limit myself to an exposition of the problem: the causes and characteristics of conflict over sacred space.

Conflicts over sacred space are a pervasive and global phenomenon. They have triggered ethnic and international conflict, appeared as symptoms or as by-products of existing conflicts. A dispute in 1852 between Christian denominations over rights in the churches of the Holy Land led to French and Russian intervention on behalf of the Catholic and Orthodox communities in Jerusalem, eventually triggering the Crimean War. In 1964, Hindu-Muslim riots in response to the theft of a relic from the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir, led within six days to 160 deaths, 600 injuries, the mass exodus of 700,000 refugees into India, and contributed to the outbreak of the second Indo-Pakistani war.[12] In 1998, a suicide attack by Tamil separatists that destroyed Sri Lanka's holiest shrine, the Temple of Buddha's Tooth, terminated negotiations to end fifteen years of civil year and led to violent military backlashes against the movement and the Hindu population of Sri Lanka.[13] In the decade following the Iranian revolution, pilgrim deaths in Mecca from violent protests, terrorist attacks and one hostage crisis in

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12. The relic was a hair of the Prophet Muhammad, kept in a glass tube within a silver casket in the mosque. See Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (London: Pall Mall, 1968), 213; Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in the Crossfire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 197; Alastair Lamb, *The Kashmir Problem: A Historical Survey* (New York: Praeger, 1968), 74; Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 41.

13. Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, "War Will Get Worse Before It Gets Better," *Straits Times* (Singapore), 4 February 1998, 24; Mark Nicholson, "Promise of Peace Still Not Fulfilled," *Financial Times* (London), 3 February 1998, 1.

the Grand Mosque exceeded one thousand.[14] Over 600 mosques were destroyed by Serbs during the ethnic war in Bosnia.[15] Dozens of people have lost their lives as a result of Catholic-Protestant violence over marching routes in Northern Ireland, hundreds in Jewish-Muslim disputes over sacred sites in the West Bank, and thousands in Hindu-Muslim clashes over temples and mosques in India.

Around the globe, disputes have erupted over the ownership of sacred sites, the desecration or destruction of tombs, temples, churches, mosques and shrines, or over demands for free exercise of controversial rituals on pilgrim routes or burial grounds. Appealing to religious absolutes, conflicts at sacred sites mobilize tribal, nationalist and ethnic sentiments, leading to violence that spreads rapidly beyond the boundaries of the sacred place. In regions such as South Asia, the Balkans and the Middle East, where political and religious boundaries often coincide, disputes over sacred sites have sparked interethnic riots and armed confrontations that have exacerbated preexisting conflicts. As in Jerusalem, conflicts over sacred space are often at the core of longstanding disputes, thwarting attempts at peaceful resolution by posing an indivisibility problem and by offering spoilers opportunities for escalating violence.

## A TYPOLOGY OF SACRED SPACE

WHAT DOES it mean for space to be sacred? Sacred spaces are religious centers at which the heavenly and earthly meet, a means of access between the human and the divine world.[16] Three functions are characteristic of sacred places: they are places of communication with divinity through prayer, movement or visual contact with an image of the divine; they are places of divine presence, often promising healing, success or salvation, and they provide meaning to the faithful by metaphorically reflecting the underlying order of the world. These three characteristics combine to turn the sacred space into a religious center for the believer, spiritually or even geographically. Mount Meru to Hindus, Mount Gerizim to the Samaritans, the Temple Mount to Jews, Calvary to Christians and Mecca to Muslims are all historical, spiritual and cosmological centers, places at which creation took place, at which space and time began and will eventually end, axes connecting heaven and earth around which the world revolves.[17] Pilgrims

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14. According to one Iranian source, 500 pilgrims were killed and 4,800 wounded in a single confrontation with Saudi forces in July 1987. See Zafar Bangash, *The Makkah Massacre and the Future of the Haramain* (Kuala Lumpur: Open Press, 1988).

15. "Violence Flares in Bosnia Ceremony," CNN *International*, 18 June 2001, at www.cnn.com/WORLD/.

16. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958).

17. Ibid., 375.

who journey to sacred places travel toward the center, seeking in the sacred space a microcosm of the universe and of the specific religion it represents.

The great religious traditions display a wide diversity of sacred spaces, varying in shape, location, importance and purpose. Their prevalence has suggested to some students of religion that religious space is an essential, perhaps the most essential, component in all great religious traditions.[18] Sacred space can be constructed, such as a temple or shrine, or interpreted as sacred, such as a mountain or river. It provides a means of access between the human and the divine world, a rupture in the ordinary domain through which heaven peeks, where the divine issues forth into the human realm.[19] Sacred places are imbued with forms, actions and objects that convey religious meaning. The art, architecture, music and drama that embellish these places represent an ideal of that religion in its purest form.

The foremost characteristic of a sacred space is that it is "a defined place, a space distinguished from other spaces."[20] The sanctity of the place may be communicated by the gods through a special sign, as was Mount Sinai, or the location may become holy because a religiously significant event took place there, as did the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem.[21] It may have been imbued with sanctity because of the presence of relics, like the catacombs in Rome or the great medieval cathedrals of Europe, or because its shape hints at the link which it establishes between the mundane and the divine. Rivers, mountains, forests and lakes are often venerated because they reach toward, or reflect, the realm of the gods. Once a religious presence, a hierophany, has been identified in a place, it grants the place a permanent sanctity.

The great religious traditions have radically differing conceptions of time and space, so it is not surprising that they also display a diversity of sacred spaces. Catholic, Christian Orthodox or Jewish sacred space clearly defines an area of spiritual significance whereas Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Protestant or Shinto shrines display the tension between local sanctity and the denial of any localization of divine presence.[22] As a matter of practice, however, all religions demonstrate an awareness of the human need for spiritual focus.[23] Their shrines are therefore

18. Kenneth Bolle, "Speaking of a Place," in *Myths and Symbols: Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 127–40.

19. Joel P. Brereton, "Sacred Space," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 12:526–35. Alan Morinis, ed., *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (New York: Greenwood, 1992).

20. Brereton, "Sacred Space," 526.

21. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 367.

22. Douglas Davies, "Introduction: Raising the Issues," in *Sacred Places*, ed. Jean Holm (London: Pinter, 1994), 1–7.

23. Clinton Bennet, "Islam," in Holm, *Sacred Places*, 88–114.

equally clearly defined areas in which certain kinds of behavior are sanctioned and a strong link with the divine is suggested and expected.

It is important, for the purposes of this research, to attempt some measure of estimating the relative importance of a sacred place to a society of believers. I suggest two parameters that can indicate the attachment of a group to a sacred site and the price it attaches to maintenance or change in its status quo. The first parameter, *centrality*, locates the space in the spiritual landscape of the group. Although all sacred places are centers, some are closer to the divine than others. The centrality of a place to a group depends on its relative ability to fulfill the three functions listed above: communication, presence and meaning. Shrines within Japanese homes or the trees and rocks in which local deities reside are inferior to Ise, the central shrine at which the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, protector of the Japanese nation, resides.[24] Christian pilgrimage shrines may attract pilgrims worldwide (Lourdes), nationally (Czestochowa), regionally (Ocotlan) or on an intervillage level ("valley shrines").[25] Whereas the most central shrines reflect the structure of the cosmos, smaller and less significant shrines often reflect the structure of the central shrine and may even derive their sanctity from it. The divine presence is less immanent in a synagogue or mosque than it is in Jerusalem or Mecca, toward which synagogue and mosque are orientated.[26]

The second parameter, *exclusivity*, measures the degree to which access to the sacred space and behavior within it are circumscribed, monitored and sanctioned. All that is sacred is at the same time dangerous and one must not come in contact with it unprepared or desecrate it. "Gestures of approach," such as covering or revealing the head in Judaism, Sikhism and Christianity, removing shoes in Islam or even washing the mouth in Shintoism, take place on the threshold of the sacred place and emphasize its otherness. Religious codes may delimit dress and prohibit a narrow range of activities within the sanctuary or forbid all but a narrow range of behaviors. Access to many sacred places is limited to members of the religion (Mecca), members of a gender (monasteries or convents), members of a caste (Mount Athos in Greece) or single chosen individuals (the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple). Although some sacred places are less exclusive than others, all sacred places place some restriction on access, appearance or behavior. The community views failure to abide by these regulations as sacrilege that can incur the wrath of the divine.

Centrality and exclusivity are independent parameters. Sites of extreme centrality, such as the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome to Roman Catholics, may be delimited

24. Ian Reader, "Japanese Religions," in Holm, *Sacred Places*, 187–202.
25. Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 239.
26. Seth Kunin, "Judaism," in Holm, *Sacred Places*, 115–48.

by relatively few prohibitions as regards entry, dress or conduct. Exceedingly re-stricted sites, such as the Greek Orthodox monasteries at Meteora, isolated at the summits of vertical rock formations, can play a marginal role in the religious identity of the group. Combined, the centrality and exclusivity parameters define the two-dimensional continuum against which we can evaluate the potential role of sacred places in disputes. The more central the site to the identity of the reli-gious community, the more likely the community is to take action in response to challenges to the integrity of the site. The more exclusive the site, the greater the risk that foreign presence or conduct will be interpreted as an offensive act.

Members of the religious community strive to control entry and exit from sacred sites, and monitor behavior within them. This control, albeit derived from religious reasoning, is, ultimately, political. It calls to mind the control by secular society over its most central and exclusive of modern sacred spaces, the state, where sovereignty is expressed through the ability to monitor entry and exit, and control behavior within clearly defined boundaries. Thus, religiously motivated actors translate the inherent characteristics of sacred space into political action.

## THE PROBLEM OF INDIVISIBILITY

CENTRALITY AND exclusivity supply measures for assessing the sensitivity of a sacred space in international, ethnic or sectarian conflict. The phenomenon of sacred space concretizes religion, giving it an earth-bound, material facet. As a hierophany, a "sacred making itself seen," the sacred space becomes tangible: it can be owned, built upon, dug in, fought over. Why, however, should sacred space become embroiled in conflict to begin with? Once involved in conflict, why can disputes over sacred space not be resolved by dividing, sharing or replacing the sacred place? In this section I wish to contribute to current, actor orientated, approaches to indivisibility in international conflict by offering a phenomeno-logical approach to indivisibility in the case of sacred space. I argue that a good or issue is perceived as indivisible if it is perfectly cohesive, has unambiguous boundaries and cannot be substituted or exchanged for another good or issue. All sacred places fulfill these three conditions. This quality of sacred places, combined with the historically contingent conditions that may accompany the creation and management of sacred places impedes attempts at resolving disputes over sacred space.

### CURRENT APPROACHES TOWARD INDIVISIBILITY

The international relations literature defines indivisible conflicts as situations in which the utility functions of risk averters are such that no compromise settlement

is mutually preferable to conflict.[27] Scholars have suggested several actor orientated accounts of indivisibility. James Fearon has argued that indivisibility should be a rare situation in territorial disputes because the multidimensional issues over which states usually bargain could always be linked to other issues or resolved by means of side-payments. Issues may seem inherently indivisible, but "the cause of this indivisibility lies in the domestic political and other mechanisms rather than in the nature of the issues themselves."[28] In the end, Fearon finds explanations based on indivisibility theoretically interesting, but in effect neither compelling nor convincing.

Students of civil war resolution have linked the notions of indivisibility and reputation.[29] A government that expects future separatist challenges to arise has incentives to create a reputation for toughness in territorial negotiations by asserting that the territory is indivisible. The government will make these assertions irrespective of the economic, strategic or "psychological" value of the territory currently negotiated, even when territory is of little value.

In similar vein, Stacie Goddard argues that "there is no inherent property of an issue that determines its divisibility; rather, indivisibility is produced by dynamics internal to interaction."[30] Goddard has used network theory to show how claims made by actors during the negotiation process create increasingly narrow social coalitions and restrict bargaining positions. Indivisibility arises when the actors adopt positions that are incommensurable with all other claims to an issue, removing all possible mechanisms of distribution.

These studies combine rigorous empirical research and strong analytical tools to set the foundation for an understanding of indivisibility. Rather than dispute these findings, I seek to complement this actor orientated view of indivisibility by adding an issue-area dimension.[31] In so doing I hope to offer an understanding of indivisibility that is more intuitive in representing those instances of indivisibility that arise from social facts.

27. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations to War," *International organization* 49, no. 3 (summer 1995): 379–414. Cf. Jonathan Kirshner, "Rationalist Explanations for War?" *Security Studies* 10, no. 1 (autumn 2000): 153–61.

28. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations to War," 381–82 and 408.

29. Monica Duffy Toft "Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War," *Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (winter 2002/3): 81–118.; Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Conflict: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Barbara Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (summer 1997): 335–64.

30. Stacie Goddard, "Uncommon Ground: the Making of Indivisible Conflict," paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Conference, Philadelphia, 28–31 August 2003.

31. cf. Paul F. Diehl, "What Are They Fighting For? The Importance of Issues in International Conflict Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 3 (May 1992): 333–44.

Current approaches toward indivisibility suffer two shortcomings. For one, these approaches are counterintuitive. We associate indivisibility with King Solomon's judgment, just as we tend to think about cakes and pies when contemplating "divisibility."[32] We tend to think of indivisibility in terms of a substance matter or issue that cannot be divided, as opposed to an issue that leads to intractable negotiations. The authors cited here, however, describe indivisibility as the outcome of a strategic interaction, not a quality inherent in a disputed object. Were we to apply their interpretation to the case of Solomon's judgment, we would be led to conclude that Solomon's suggestion of slicing the child in half is problematic not because human babies are perceived as inherently indivisible, but because the specific litigants in that case were engaged in an exchange of signals, alliances, and side-payments, or suffered failures of commitment, that made cutting that specific baby in half difficult. Clearly, we should not reject a model on the basis of its inconsistency with a biblical parable. We should, however, aim at supplementing it by means of a more intuitive account of indivisibility that would be easier to operationalize, test and apply to a wider range of cases, from disputed territory to babies.

The second problem with prevailing views on indivisibility is that they take the social construction of reality too far. The authors cited above all argue that indivisibility is the creation of actors involved in disputes, either because the mistrust between parties prevents credible commitment that should be able to solve any indivisibility problem with ease, or when crafty negotiators make claims that territory cannot be compromised over as ploys to dissuade future separatist challengers, or because indivisibility is an unfortunate side effect of a negotiation in which coalitions have become too restricted. These accounts seem to imply an "ideas all the way down" sociology of indivisible issues: Agents create and destroy the indivisibility of issues unremittingly, often unwittingly.[33] It should thus be impossible to identify indivisible issues ex ante, because they will not exist prior to interaction. This constructivist approach has the consequence of diverting the research agenda away from the question of the resolution of indivisible disputes. The implied assumption is that the very same entrepreneurs that create indivisibility are capable of mitigating indivisibility.

INDIVISIBILITY AS AN ISSUE-AREA CHARACTERISTIC

These studies give insufficient credence to the existence of fundamental social facts, those types of issues that actors cannot easily define and redefine. Some

32. Steven J. Brams and Alan D. Taylor, *From Cake Cutting to Dispute Resolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

33. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

beliefs constitute the identity of agents and create the structural constraints within which they act. These include analytical truths, but also certain beliefs about reality, basic human needs or embedded intersubjective beliefs. One example of the latter type of belief is the inviolability of places central to the religious beliefs of a community. Another example is the benevolent predisposition that humans have toward their own progeny. It is our confidence in this social fact, that mothers wish their infants well, that enables us to identify one of the litigants in Solomon's trial, the woman who supports cutting the child in half, as an impostor. A human who can contemplate cutting up his or her own baby is either a lunatic, that is someone outside the intersubjective network, or not a parent, that is someone whose identity is not constituted by that social fact.

Contrary to Fearon's claim about the dearth of indivisible issues, we can think of several categories of indivisible issues.[34] James Rosenau, pioneer of the issue-area typology in IR, has argued that status issues, involving both intangible means and intangible ends, tended to create persistent contention and intractable disputes.[35] Edward Mansbach and John Vasquez developed this notion further and argued that issues characterized by transcendent stakes posed the greatest difficulties for dispute resolution because they were both intangible and indivisible, often equated with fundamental values, norms and rules of the game.[36] Roy Licklider has argued that culturally grounded and deeply held beliefs, such as ethnic identities, give rise to indivisible disputes.[37] Fred Iklé has claimed that indivisibility occurs in civil wars whenever "partition is not a feasible outcome because belligerents are not geographically separable, one side has to get all, or nearly so, since there cannot be two governments ruling over one country…"[38] Paul Pillar agrees that disputes over sovereignty in civil war pose indivisibility problems if "neither side can get

34. Barry O'Neill, "Risk Aversion in International Relations Theory," *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (December 2001): 617–40.

35. James N. Rosenau, "Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics*, ed. Barry R. Farrell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), pp. 88–92; James N. Rosenau, "Foreign Policy as an Issue-Area," in *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1967), chapter 2. Cf. Thomas L. Brewer, "Issue and Context Variations in Foreign Policy: Effects on American Elite Behavior," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17, no. 1 (March 1973): 89–114; Richard W. Mansbach and John A. Vasquez, *In Search of Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Richard W. Mansbach and John A. Vasquez, "The Effect of Actor and Issue Classifications on the Analysis of Global Conflict-Cooperation," *Journal of Politics* 43, no. 3 (August 1981): 861–74; John A. Vasquez, "The Tangibility of Issues and Global Conflict: A Test of Rosenau's Issue Area Typology," *Journal of Peace Research* 20, no. 2 (June 1983): 179–92.

36. John A. Vasquez and Richard W. Mansbach, "The Role of Issues in Global Co-operation and Conflict," *British Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 4 (September 1984): 411–33; John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

37. Roy Licklider "How Civil Wars End: Questions and Methods" in *Stop the Killing: How Civil Wars End*, ed. Roy Licklider (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 3–19.

38. Fred Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 95.

most of what it wants without depriving the other of most of what it wants."[39] In separate papers, Cecilia Albin and Ian Lustick have examined how perceptions of indivisibility, linked to core needs and values, have created obstacles to the resolution of the Jerusalem dispute.[40] I argue in this article that sacred places form a coherent set of cases that are perceived as inherently indivisible.

It seems, then, that while in some cases indivisibility is the creation of actors or a product of the construction of identities, alliances and preferences during a dispute, in other cases it is a characteristic of the disputed issue that precedes the dispute. Actors may possess the skill to redefine issues in certain cases, but this assumption may not apply to other cases, such as the case of sacred space. I will bring the social construction of sacred space back into the picture toward the end of this article to suggest some very limited conditions under which certain actors can shift the meaning of sacred space to mitigate indivisible disputes.

## A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF INDIVISIBILITY

My goal is to arrive at an intuitive definition of indivisibility, yet the simplest definition as found in the Oxford English Dictionary, "incapable of being divided," seems to miss the point entirely. What we are concerned with here is not the viability of the task, but the perceptions and preferences of the parties to the undertaking. Economists and game-theorists take us a step closer to actor preferences by defining indivisible goods as "goods, whose value is destroyed if they are divided."[41] This works for economists, because they assume that goods are both fungible and discrete. In politics, however, many of the issues at stake are not "goods" at all, and can be nonfungible as well as overlapping or hazy in demarcation. Thus a definition of indivisibility that seeks to shed light on political disputes needs to make these two assumptions, issue boundaries and nonfungibility, explicit.

We arrive at a simple three part definition of indivisibility: First, as per the economic definition, *integrity*. The parties must hold that the issue cannot be parceled out or subdivided without significantly diminishing its subjective value. Second, *boundaries*. The parties must mean the same thing when they refer to the issue they are bargaining over. If there is no overlap between the issue boundaries as

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39. Paul R. Pillar, *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 24.

40. Cecilia Albin, "Negotiating Indivisible Goods: The Case of Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (March 1991): 45–76; Ian Lustick, "Reinventing Jerusalem," *Foreign Policy*, no. 93 (winter 1993–94): 41–59.

41. Brams and Taylor, *From Cake Cutting to Dispute Reolutions*, 51. See 51 n. 1 for an exhaustive lists of references within the game theory literature.

they perceive them then the issue is, at least in part, divisible. Finally, *nonfungibility*. The parties must believe that the issue cannot be substituted for or exchanged for something of equal value. Each of these three conditions is necessary, but not by itself sufficient, for achieving indivisibility. Combined, they offer the necessary and sufficient conditions for a phenomenological definition of indivisibility. This is a phenomenological definition, because it focuses not on the objective characteristics of a good or issue but on its qualities as perceived subjectively by parties to a dispute. What matters is not whether the good can, in fact, be divided physically, but whether the parties perceive it as the kind of good that can be divided.

Given these three conditions, it becomes clear why Solomon's judgment strikes us intuitively as an indivisible scenario. The infant cannot be divided without diminishing its value to the mother. The litigants are arguing over a single clearly defined issue, namely ownership of the child's body (this is not a dispute about visitation rights) leaving no room for negotiation over parts of the issue. Neither mother will accept a side-payment in return for relinquishing her child. In most territorial disputes, however, these three conditions are not met. In the Israeli-Syrian dispute over the Golan Heights, for example, the parties are competing over a single strategic plateau, but it is not at all clear that their definitions of what constitutes the Golan Heights overlap, since the plateau has no obvious natural or legal boundaries. Both parties could, in theory, occupy parts of the disputed region, or derive utility from occupation of the plateau by a third party. This dispute fails to meet the third condition for indivisibility, if the parties can find alternative ways of providing for strategic defense, other than physically occupying the heights.

All sacred spaces fulfill the conditions for indivisibility. Sacred places are coherent monolithic spaces that cannot be subdivided, they have clearly defined and inflexible boundaries, and they are unique sites for which no material or spiritual substitute is available. Each of these characteristics is a necessary but insufficient component in creating the indivisibility problem of sacred space. Unfortunately, perhaps, these three dimensions are present wherever space has been defined as sacred.

### THE INTEGRITY OF SACRED SPACE

All territory is three-dimensional (or, from a cartographer's point of view, two-dimensional) and is therefore infinitely divisible. Metaphysically speaking, sacred space is one-dimensional. The sociologist of religion and foremost student of sacred space Mircea Eliade coined the term *axis mundi* (world axis) to describe the function of the sacred space as both a center around which the world revolves,

and a link between the mundane and the divine. Spiritually and functionally, the sacred place is a one dimensional axis, not the space with physical length and depth that it appears to be.

This does not mean that large and complex sacred structures, such as the Royal Mosque in Isfahan or the Wat Phra Keo in Thailand, have to be uniform. Shrines may contain numerous stations, subdivisions or areas with varying degree of sanctity relative to the "center" of the sacred space, but the components are always integrated by means of ritual, symbol and law to form a coherent whole. Only in relation to the marginal components, such as the aisle, transept, apse and choir in a gothic cathedral, does the altar achieve its position as holy of holies, and the entire structure attain its spiritual uniformity. The total structure cannot be divided, separated into subcomponents or parceled out without being deprived of its sacred function.

THE BOUNDARIES OF SACRED SPACE

Because the sacred is defined as that which is set apart from and contrasted with the profane, strict regulations circumscribe the difference in behavior inside and outside this space and delimit the ability of certain groups to enter. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim poses the sacred-profane dichotomy as the very basis of all religious belief: "Since the idea of the sacred is always and everywhere separated from the idea of the profane in the thought of men, and since we picture a sort of logical chasm between the two, the mind irresistibly refuses to allow the two corresponding things to be confounded, or even put in contact with each other..."[42]

The result is a spatial definition of sacred space that is *unambiguous*. Spaces such as "the Midwest," "home," "Europe," or "the Rockies" have boundaries that are undetermined, vague or contested. The boundaries of sacred space need to be very well defined and easily recognizable. Members of the community can consult visual symbols and sacred texts to determine precisely where the sacred begins and ends. The conspicuous gestures of approach necessary for entering sacred places, rituals that confirm and routinize the recognized borders of the sacred place, are even visible to outsiders. Although sacred spaces differ in the quality and severity of rules circumscribing access and behavior, as noted in the section on exclusivity above, even the most "inclusive" sacred places enforce their rules through a clear definition of site boundaries. This rigid demarcation of sacred space creates boundaries that are unequivocal.

42. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 55.

THE NONFUNGIBILITY OF SACRED SPACE

When sacred places are constructed in response to a divine sign or to mark the location of a religious event or the resting place of a holy person, there is clearly no substitute for the precise location they occupy. Even sacred places that are constructed by individuals, such as cemeteries or parish churches, provide, once consecrated, a unique link with the divine, a center and an axis connecting heaven and earth:

> Objectively, and not only subjectively, a sacred place is different from the surrounding area, for it is not a place of wholly human creation or choice. Rather, its significance is grounded in its unique character, a character that no purely human action can confer on it.[43]

The more central the space in the religious landscape of the community, the greater the divine power vested in the place and the greater the obligation of the community to defend the sanctity of the space. This obligation is owed, not only to all members of the community, but to future generations, deceased ancestors and the gods themselves, leaving the community with no ability or desire to bargain over the space with rivals. The director of the Islamic Trust in Jerusalem phrased it thus: "This is a mosque. It is not subject to any negotiations. . . We can't deal in details in such a place. This is God's will that there be a mosque here. We can't say, 'Let's change God's will.'"[44]

## Conflict and Sacred Space: Contingent Factors

THE THREE characteristics of sacred space examined above create a perception of indivisibility at each and every sacred space. Yet the indivisibility of an issue need not create a problem: Parents are not usually troubled by the indivisibility of their infants' bodies. For indivisibility to become a concrete difficulty, actors must actually find themselves in situations of conflict over the indivisible issue.

Four widespread historical trends create rivalry over sacred spaces, either among religious groups, or between religious and secular forces, and can thus turn the abstract issue of indivisibility into a tangible conflict. These rivalries may stem from the splitting of religions into rival factions and the fusion of opposed beliefs through syncretism, competition over sacred space as real estate, or competition over the political control of sacred space. The resulting disputes need not be indivisible in the sense of entailing disputes over sovereign right to a disputed shrine.

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43. Brereton, "Sacred Space," 526.
44. Mary Curtius, "Holy Site Paramount Among Obstacles to Mideast Peace; Religion: Much of the Israeli-Palestinian Dispute Comes Down to a 36-Acre Compound in Jerusalem," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 2000, A1.

They may involve competition over access, struggles to maintain the integrity of the site, disagreement over conduct within shrines or political confrontations on and around sacred places that are complicated by the centrality and exclusivity of the site.

### SACRED SPACE AND SECTARIAN RIVALRY

When religious traditions split into rival branches they create competition over a common sacred space. Disputes over tombs in the West Bank, such as the Tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem or the tombs of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah in Hebron, stem from the shared reverence of Jews and Muslims to their common patriarchs. In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, as well as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Greek Orthodox, Latin, Armenian, Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian Christians compete over control. Two churches that seceded from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the *Reorganized* Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), have conducted a legal battle over an empty lot at the intersection of River and Walnut streets, in Independence, Missouri. According to Mormon revelation, this vacant lot was the site of the garden of Eden and will be the site of the future Temple of Christ, to be established upon his Second Coming.[45] Such disputes come about where theological disagreements or challenges to leadership have led to irreconcilable rifts in religious movements. By staking claim to a sacred site that once united the religious movement, each rival asserts its claim as inheritor of the true faith.

### THE LAYERING OF SACRED SPACE

The layering of sacred spaces one on top of another is a product of successive conquests and syncretism. Syncretism is the process by which religious movements incorporate the beliefs, rituals, festivals and sacred sites of other religions into their traditions.[46] Because sanctity rests in location, as well as in the structure that

45. Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), xviii and 334–35. The Church of Christ is now in possession of the lot. The RLDS has its headquarters and world conference auditorium at the two adjacent corners of this street intersection. The dominant LDS church, the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has a small visitor center on the fourth corner of the intersection: it accepts the validity of the Temple Lot site, but has had no basis for a legal claim over the real estate. In January 1990, a member of the Church of Christ who converted to the mainstream Church burned the Church of Christ structure adjacent to the lot. He reported that "God had ordered him to cleanse the church site." James Walker, *The Watchman Expositor* 7, no. 2 (1990), at http://www.watchman.org/lds/fire.htm.

46. Christmas is one example of the ability of Christianity to incorporate pagan festivals into its calendar. Compare also the relationship between Christian Easter and Jewish Passover,

marks the location as sacred, the physical destruction of sacred structures does not diminish the sanctity or centrality of sacred sites. Conquerors have thus sought to integrate these sites into their traditions in a combined attempt at displacing the local tradition while utilizing the convenience of a ready-made focal point to introduce their own religious practices. The outcome is a series of competing claims to strata along the sacred axis, an archeological palimpsest of sorts, demanding different and often conflicting rites from members of opposed religious affiliations. Mosques-turned-churches in Andalusia, churches-turned-mosques in Asia Minor, synagogues-turned-churches in Israel and Jordan, christianized Sun Dance Lodges in the American Midwest and the synthesis of Shiite and Zoroastrian practices in central Iranian shrines, all bear witness to processes of voluntary or forced syncretism in sacred spaces.[47]

The Haram el-Sharif, or Temple Mount, in Jerusalem is located atop the ruins of three successive Jewish Temples, the same site having been occupied at various points in history by a Templar church, a temple for Zeus, a temple of Jupiter and a Jebusite shrine.[48] Each successive conqueror in the history of the city succeeded in weaving the Temple Mount into its religious traditions: the Jews by identifying the location of the Jebusite shrine with Mount Moriah, on which Abraham had prepared to sacrifice Isaac, and by building their most sacred temple on it; the Muslims by claiming that Muhammad had visited this same mountaintop in the miraculous journey described in the opening lines of Surah 17 of the Qur'an.

Similarly, the dispute over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India, leading to the destruction of the mosque and deadly Hindu-Muslim riots, was rooted in the belief that the Muslim Emperor Babar had destroyed a Hindu temple marking the birthplace of the god Ram in order to construct a mosque on the same location. Although this religious-historical claim is highly unlikely in this particular instance, it is not unreasonable given the frequency of mosque constructions in place of Hindu shrines by Mughal rulers, often incorporating building materials

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or the relationship between the Muslim Ashura and the Jewish Yom Kippur. For syncretism see Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, eds., *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism* (Routledge, London, 1994); Jerald D. Gort, Hendrik M. Vroom, Rein Fernhout and Anton Wessels, eds., *Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989).

47. For the case of Sun Dance lodges in Wyoming see Ake Hultkrantz, "Pagan and Christian Elements in the Religious Syncretism Among the Shoshoni Indians of Wyoming," in *Syncretism*, ed. Sven S. Hartman (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksel, 1969), 15–40. For Shi'ite-Zoroastrian shrines see Michael J. Fischer, "Sacred Circles: Iranian (Zoroastrian and Shi'ite Muslim) Feasting and Pilgrimage Circuits," in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 131–44.

48. Martin Lev, *The Traveler's Key to Jerusalem: A Guide to the Sacred Places of Jerusalem* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Francis E. Peters, *Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Karen Armstrong, ibid.

from destroyed shrines to construct the mosques.[49] Hindu nationalists argue that at least three mosques, in addition to the Ayodhya mosque, bear evidence of construction on top of desecrated Hindu temples, and have claimed the right to conduct Hindu rituals in these mosques. These mosques, now all guarded by Indian military troops, are the Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura, the Kashi Vishwanath temple/Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi and the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi. This last mosque was allegedly constructed from the ruins of twenty-seven Jain and Hindu temples.[50] Ironically, Hindu claims to the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya emerged initially in 1855 as a backlash against a Muslim claim to a Hindu site in Ayodhya, arguing that the Hanumangarhi, the temple dedicated to Hanuman, had been built atop a mosque.[51]

Claims to specific strata in layered sacred space can be the product of conquest or the figment of a fertile imagination. In the former case, the vanquished find their sacred sites appropriated by religious traditions with conflicting practices. In the latter cases, sectarian forces seek to undermine rival groups by introducing revisionist readings of the archeology of their sacred sites. Since the difference between these two scenarios depends on one's reading of history, they can be exceptionally difficult to tell apart.

SACRED SPACE AS REAL ESTATE

Attributing sanctity to mundane space creates clashes with secular forces who want to use the land for development, exploration or tourism.[52] Most often these disputes involve a disenfranchised religious party on one hand, and a party moved by financial interests, on the other hand. As a result, these disputes are usually conducted beneath the threshold of violent confrontation.

Members of the Pit River, Modoc and Shasta Tribes in California have protested the construction of geothermal plants on their sacred ceremonial hunting and

49. K. N. Panikkar, "A Historical Overview" in *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Rise of Communal Politics in India*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (London: Zed Books, 1991), 22–37. See also Ifrah Zilberman, *Yerushalayim Ve-Ayodyah*, ibid.; Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht, "The Bodies of Nations," ibid.

50. Richard M. Eaton, ibid.; "VHP Body Threatens Stir over Prayer Ban at Mosque," *Hindustan Times*, 14 December 2000, online at www.hindustantimes.com/nonfram/151200/detCIT12.asp; "Ominous Rumblings," *The Hindu*, 17 November 2000; "VHP Bid for Puja in Delhi Mosque," *The Statesman*, 14 November 2000.

51. S. Guhan, "Dark Forebodings" in *Ayodhya and the Future of India*, ed. Jitendra Bajaj (Madras: Center for Policy Studies, 1993), 78–79.

52. Territorial disputes or border disputes between states have included sacred shrines within the disputed territories, most famously in the landmark ruling of the International Court of Justice in the *Temple Case*, pertaining to a disagreement between Siam and Cambodia over ownership of the Preah Vihear temple. Since these disputes relate to sacred space as real estate *only*, and not as space of any religious significance, they are not discussed in this article.

gathering grounds at the Medicine Lake Highlands. Native Hawaiians protest the desecration of their sacred sites by tourists, vendors, and developers. Across the Americas, Native Americans are rallying to protect sacred mountains from development and are involved in several disputes with National Park Authorities, museums and archeologists over bones and ritual vessels removed from their sacred burial grounds.[53] Orthodox Jews routinely protest against road construction or archeological excavations that risk desecration of presumed ancient Jewish graves.[54] Sacred space may be revered for its spiritual significance, but its material facets attract secular forces interested in exploiting the territory as a resource.

A significant exception to the restrained nature of these disputes arose from a fatwa, an Islamic ruling, issued by the exiled son of a wealthy Saudi construction magnate in 1996. In the "Ladanese Epistle: Declaration of War," subtitled "Expel the Infidels from the Arab Peninsula" the author, Osama bin Laden, argued that the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia constituted a desecration of the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina.[55] His call for a Jihad against the U.S.-led West, first implemented through a 1996 attack against U.S. forces in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, culminated in the attacks of 11 September 2001.

SACRED SPACE AS POLITICAL TOOL

A final common trend typifying the history of sacred spaces is the control of sacred space for political purposes. Secular leaders have sought to dominate sacred space, either to symbolize their control over the community, by virtue of the social, economic and political centrality of that space in the daily life of the community, or in order to exert influence on pilgrims that frequent the site. Because maintaining the sanctity of the site and gaining access to it to perform ritual are central needs of

53. Claims to sacred mountains include the Northern Wintu and the Yurok of California for Mount Shasta, the Blackfoot and Cree for Chief Mountain in Montana, Arizona tribes for Mount Graham, Shiprock (or TseBitaI) for the Navajo in New Mexico, and the Pueblos of New Mexico for the Sandias, and Medicine Deer Rock in Montana. See, for example, Brian Reeves and Margaret Kennedy, eds., *Kunaitupii: Coming Together on Native Sacred Sites* (Archeological Society of Alberta, 1993); Roger C. Echo-Hawk and Walter R. Echo-Hawk, *Battlefields and Burial Grounds: The Indian Struggle to Protect Ancestral Graves in the United States* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1994); Ron E. Hassner, "Native American Sacred Grounds," in *Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics*, ed. Laura Olson and Paul Djupe (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 301–2.
54. "Police Fire Tear Gas at Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Protesters," *Toronto Star*, 4 January 1993, A3; Dina Shiloh, "Bones of Contention," *Jerusalem Post*, 25 July 1997, 11; Laura King, "Jerusalem Tomb Dig Divides Israel; Excavations Seen as Affront to Jewish Dead," *Toronto Star*, 9 August 1998, A12.
55. Usama Bin Muhammad Bin In Laden, "Ladanese Epsitle: Declaration of War; Expel the Infidels from the Arab Peninsula," published August 1996 in the London-based *Al Quds Al Arabi*. It was followed in February 1998 by "Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders: World Islamic Front Statement."

the community, shrewd rulers have barred access, desecrated or destroyed sites, or funded the construction or restoration of sacred sites as means for penalizing or rewarding their subjects.

Four Sacred Wars were fought among the ancient Greeks over the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. The notables of Hellas, Rome and the neighboring Asiatic kingdoms, from Xenophon and Aristotle to Alexander the Great and Cicero, sought advice from the Delphic oracle before embarking on legislative, military or economic ventures. Thus, control over the sanctuary, the ability to influence its priests and oracles or gather intelligence from them, had profound political implications.

In first-century Jerusalem, Roman rulers kept a military garrison at the Jewish Temple and safeguarded the garments of the Great Priest necessary for conducting ceremonies. The Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., in response to the Jewish rebellion against Rome, had the direct effect of annihilating the political, social and religious center of Judea, and causing the dispersion of Jews across the Empire. Rome's victory was symbolically depicted in a relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome, showing Roman troops carrying away the sacred vessels from the ruined Jewish Temple.

Muslim rulers in India of the twelfth to eighteenth century desecrated Hindu temples not only because of iconoclastic instincts, but also in order to punish rebellious communities, gain control over commercial activity centered around these temples or remove, and thus symbolically disable, the gods that functioned as patrons of rival Hindu rulers.[56] The monarchs of Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Jordan, on the other hand, have sought to mark their status as leaders of the Muslim world by founding monumental mosques in their capitals, enlarging and embellishing existing shrines and by vying over the honor of funding the clergy and restoring the shrines in Jerusalem.

Control over shrines is most crucial when these shrines attract masses of pilgrims from around the world. Pilgrimage offers the host regime opportunities for sanctioning rival regimes or demonstrating exceptional generosity and hospitality. To opponents of the host regime, these mass events offer a forum for organized protests and subversive activities. The presence of potentially hostile pilgrims is most likely to cause conflict at sites already disputed because of sectarian rivalry, such as the Muslim shrines in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Saudi Arabia controls the shrines in Mecca and Medina, the two most sacred mosques in Islam, and Iraq controls 33 shrines and 18 burial sites of central importance to Shiite Muslims, yet both states have been predominantly ruled by Sunni regimes. Saudi Arabia and Iraq have placed restrictions on the numbers of Shiite pilgrims from Iran, or

56. Eaton, ibid. Eaton lists 80 incidents of temple desecration in the period 1193 to 1729.

barred pilgrimage altogether during the Iran-Iraq war or after the Iranian revolution. Iran's Shiite regime, on the other hand, has exploited the presence of Shiite pilgrims at these sites to spread its revolutionary messages and incite unrest.

A 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, by armed gunmen ended in an assault on the mosque by Saudi forces, sanctioned by a unique edict from the Saudi religious elite, the *ulema*.[57] The insurgents, led by Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah al-Qahtani, held 1,000 pilgrims hostage for several days, while the Saudi government grappled with the difficulties of using force inside Islam's holiest shrine. In 1986, Iranian Revolutionary Guards, posing as pilgrims, were apprehended trying to smuggle weapons and explosives into the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The following year more than 450 pilgrims were shot in the mosque and surrounding streets by the Saudi National Guard, after a demonstration by Iranian pilgrims. The year after that, sixteen Kuwaiti pilgrims were beheaded after two bombs exploded in the vicinity of the Mosque, killing one pilgrim and wounding sixteen.

The sacred cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq have repeatedly played center stage in power struggles between the Shiite community and Iraq's Sunni rulers. Repressive 8th and 9th century rulers, such as al-Mansur, al-Rashid and Mutawakkil, sought to control the Shiite community by demolishing the mosques in Najaf and Karbala. Their successors sought to curry favor with their Shiite subjects by repairing the damage done by their predecessors or by embellishing the mosques with brass, bronze, and gold. These mosques became not only centers of agitation against Sunni rule but fortified strongholds into which Shiite rebels could withdraw at times of unrest.

In 1979, a Shiite worshipper opened fire at Iraqi security forces attempting to monitor the Karbala ceremonies, killing four.[58] The Mosque of Husayn in Karbala, Iraq, was the site of the lynching of 71 Saddam Hussein loyalists that started the 1991 Shiite uprising. Repression of this uprising, that was to cost the lives of some 300,000 Shiites, involved the dynamiting of Shiite mosques and libraries across Iraq and the desecration of cemeteries.[59] The uprising ended with

57. See, for example, Edward Cody, "Armed Men Seize Mecca's Great Mosque," *Washington Post*, 21 November 1979, A1; Edward Cody, "Saudis Press to End Siege at Mecca," *Washington Post*, 22 November 1979, A1; Edward Cody, "Saudis Capture Most of Gunmen Holding Mosque," *Washington Post*, 23 November 1979, A1; James Buchanan, "The Return of the Ikhwan—1979," in *The House of Saud*, ed. David Holden and Richard Johns (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981), 511–526; William Powell. *Saudi Arabia and Its Royal Family* (Secaucus: Lyle Stuart, 1982).

58. Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 51–52 and 55; Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1999), 101.

59. Report to United Nations Human Rights Commission by Max van der Stoel, cited in Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'ites of Iraq* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994), 279.

an Iraqi siege against rebel strongholds in the two great mosques of Karbala and the Mosque of Ali in Najaf. After pounding the shrines with tank shells, artillery shells and Scud missiles, the area within a 500 yard radius of the mosques was said to resemble London at the height of the German blitz.[60] Seeking to pacify the Shiite community after the revolt, Hussein ordered the mosques restored and donated 400 pounds of gold and 600 pounds of silver for decoration of the domes of the sacred shrines.[61]

In April 2003, a tense standoff ensued in Najaf between a furious crowd of Iraqi civilians and soldiers from the U.S. 101st Airborne Division on their way to the residence of a local Shi'ite ayatollah. Some two-hundred Shi'ite residents of Najaf, presuming that the convoy was heading for the Mosque of Ali located on the same street, confronted the soldiers, blocked their path and exclaimed: "In the city, OK. In the mosque, No!" Realizing the explosive potential of the situation, the astute platoon commander urged his troops to smile, lower their weapons and kneel "in a surreal act of submission," before retreating.[62] Sunni-Shiite tensions continued to play themselves out at Iraqi shrines, even after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. On March 3rd, 2004, as Shiite Iraqis were observing the rites of the holy day of Ashura publicly for the first time in twenty-five years, bombs tore through the crowds at the great mosques in Baghdad and Karbala. The attacks killed over 180 worshippers, making this the deadliest day since the U.S. invasion of Iraq a year earlier.[63]

Pilgrim sites have served as foci for political confrontations in South Asia as well. In 1980, a fanatical preacher and leader of an extremist group within the Sikh separatist movement, Sant Jarnail Bhindranwale, sought refuge from the Indian

60. Nakash, ibid. Also Douglas Jehl, "From Southern Iraq, Hints of a New Wave of Sectarian Unrest," *New York Times*, 3 October 1999, A16; Liz Thurgood, "Saddam Drive on Shiite Holy Cities," *Guardian*, 23 July 1991; Ed Vulliamy, "Blood and Hatred Stain Shrines at Iraq's Holy Places," *Guardian*, 1 May 1991.

61. John Swain, "Saddam Stamps on Embers of Southern Revolt," *Sunday Times*, 29 November 1998; Doug Struck, "Tourists in Iraq See Ample Signs of Carnage, Portraits of Hussein," *Phoenix Gazette*, 17 February 1995; John Lancaster, "Iraq Turns Shiite South into Tourist Showcase; Islamic Shrines in Once Rebellious Area Have Been Polished Up as Signs of Saddam's Success," *Washington Post*, 16 February 1995, A32. These measures proved only partially successful in pacifying the Shiite rebellion. In November 1998, an assassination attempt against Saddam Hussein's second-in-command was narrowly averted at the entrance to Imam Abbas Mosque in Karbala. Three months later the Iraqi regime reprised by assassinating the spiritual leader of Iraq's Shiite community, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq Sadr, with his two sons outside the mosque in Najaf, for preaching contrary to government orders.

62. "U.S. Troops Go Softly at Sacred Site," *Hobart Mercury*, 5 April 2003; "U.S. Soldiers Kneel to Calm Angry Crowd: Mighty American Army Tries to Win Over Iraqi Civilians," *Ottawa Citizen*, 4 April 2003, A6.

63. John F. Burns, "A Region Inflamed: Violence; At Least 143 Die in Attacks at Two Sacred Sites in Iraq," *New York Times*, 3 March 2004, A1; Dexter Filkins and Eric Schmitt, "A Region Inflamed: Security; Other Attacks Averted in Iraq, A General Says," *New York Times*, 4 March 2004, A1; Vall Nasr, "Iraq's Real Holy War," *New York Times*, 6 March 2004, A15.

police in the Sikh temple complex at Amritsar, in the Punjab, India.[64] The seventeenth century Darbar Sahib complex houses the Golden Temple, representing the temporal power of God in Sikhism, as well as the Akal Takht, the seat of Sikh temporal authority. Rather than consult the temple priests, or confer with the Sikh community, special forces began planning a complex operation against the preacher. The operation, code named "Blue Star" was a disaster. The Indian army was incapable of flushing out the insurgents without damaging the temple and, after suffering extreme losses, used six tanks and approximately eighty high-explosive squash-head shells to reduce his fortified positions to rubble. This led to the surrender of the insurgents and Bhindranwale's death but also burned much of the library and many of the invaluable manuscripts within, destroyed the Akal Takht and severely damaged the Golden Temple and the Treasury.[65]

Fearing that Sikhs would wish to preserve the damages to the temple for propaganda purposes, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi refused to permit Sikh priests to conduct the ritual cleansing and restoration of the Temple, a complex ceremony called *kar sewa*. The priests, in turn, pronounced a sentence of excommunication on Gandhi as *tankaiya*, religious offender. Sikh riots were followed by mass mutinies in Sikh regiments across India—600 men in one case, 1,461 men in another, the most serious crisis of discipline in the Indian army since independence.[66] Six months after the event, on 31 October 1984, Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, unleashing months of intercommunal rioting in the Punjab and across India. The human cost of the violence unleashed on the Sikh community remains undetermined to this day.

Although the control of sacred space for political purposes is only one aspect of conflicts over sacred space, it has received the lion's share of attention from students of religion and conflict. Political actors powerful enough to wrest control over access and behavior within sacred space from religious actors, gain considerable influence over the congregation. When the target site is a pilgrimage shrine, this influence extends to the citizens of neighboring, even rival, states and can have international as well as domestic repercussions. The communities at the mercy of

64. Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985); Sanjoy Hazarika, "Sikh Chiefs: Fundamentalist Priest, Firebrand Student and Ex-General," *New York Times*, 8 June 1984, A6; William Claiborne, "Sikhs in Punjab Plan 'Martyrs' Force; New Outbreak of Violence Feared," *Washington Post*, 18 April 1983, A13; William K. Stevens, "Sikh Holy Leader Talks of Violence," *New York Times*, 3 May 1984, A9; William Claiborne, "India's Sikhs Warn Against Crackdown," *Washington Post*, 23 March 1984, A19.

65. See for example William Claiborne, "250 Sikhs are Killed; Indian Army Attacks Golden Temple," *Washington Post*, 6 June 1984, A1; William K. Stevens, "308 People Killed as Indian Troops Take Sikh Temple," *New York Times*, 7 June 1984, A1.

66. Tully and Jacob, ibid., 194–99; William Claiborne, "Demonstrators Vow Backlash; Sikhs Violently Protest Temple Attack," *Washington Post*, 8 June 1984, A1; William K. Stevens, "Sikhs Protesting Raid on Shrine; 27 Die in Riots," *New York Times*, 8 June 1984, A1.

these regimes have responded by organizing resistance on and around the sacred places.

## POWER AND INDIVISIBILITY

T HE INTEGRITY, boundaries and nonfungibility of sacred places create conditions for indivisible conflict. Historical contingency creates competition between disparate religious communities, or between a religious group and a secular actor, over one and the same space. The boundaries of the contested space are inflexible and highly visible and the space within the rigid boundaries is coherent and indivisible. Because disputes about sacred space involve religious ideals, divine presence, absolute and transcendent values, there is no room for compromise and no substitute for the disputed space.

Absent any one of these four components, conflict over sacred space would be as resolvable as common territorial disputes, where flexible border definitions and infinite divisibility allow for a variety of conflict resolution approaches. If history did not create competition or overlap of sacred spaces, the indivisibility of those spaces would be a moot issue. If the spaces overlapped but had boundaries that were flexible, indivisibility could be overcome by manipulating the dimensions of the disputed space. Even with rigid boundaries and overlapping claims, territory that can be parceled out or exchanged need not lead to indivisible disputes. The coming together of these four factors, combined with the need for political control that arises from the centrality and exclusivity of sacred space, creates a combustible combination: territory of supreme value, disputed and indivisible.

Because de facto indivisibility depends on more than just religious ideas, there are exceptions to the rule, where third parties have been able to force division of sacred space. These forced arrangements of shared control over sacred space, however, tend to be unsatisfactory to either party, highly unstable, routinely violent and short lived. These divisions by fiat repress the conflict, creating tensions that seethe under the surface, threatening to erupt as soon as one party perceives changes in the balance of power.

For example, upon conquering the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron in 1967, Israel forced a division of the large prayer hall into Jewish and Muslim prayer areas. Within months of the war the site became a center of Jewish-Muslim violence and bloodshed, in spite of elaborate prayer schedules designed to keep the parties apart.[67] Jewish worshippers refused to remove their shoes when entering the prayer

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67. See, for example, William Claiborne, "5 Israelis Die in Arab Raid, Worst Ever in West Bank," *Washington Post*, 3 May 1980, A1; William B. Ries, "Palestinian Protests Erupt after Moslem

area, as is Muslim custom, whereas the Muslim worshippers made it a point to issue calls to prayer via loudspeaker during Jewish prayer. In spite of overwhelming Israeli military presence that converted the shrine into an army stronghold, dozens have died in knife and gun attacks, from molotov cocktails and rubber bullets. The shrine in Hebron became "the only house of worship anywhere with its own army commander."[68] Congregations pray under twenty-four-hour camera surveillance, separated by head-high aluminum barricades, and keep their sacred texts in fireproof safes for fear of desecration. These measures have all proven futile, as the brutal attack of February 1994 demonstrated: Thirty-nine Palestinians were gunned down by a deranged Jew during prayer in the Tomb, and an additional sixteen died in subsequent violence, setting the Arab-Israeli peace process back by months.[69]

Arrangements at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, believed to be the site of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, are slightly more placid, but infinitely more complicated. The arrangement is based on the status quo enforced by the Ottoman Empire in 1757, confirmed in 1852 and rigorously enforced by the State of Israel today. It divides the church into minute segments and subsegments with clearly delineated areas of responsibility for the competing religious groups, Greek Orthodox, Latin, Armenian, Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian. Pillars have been numbered, walkways divided tile by tile, doors halved and candelabras dissected, with each party zealously guarding its rights to clean and decorate the segments allotted to it, while maintaining its claim to the entire church. This status quo is possible only because of the balance of power among the hapless claimants and the presence of a third party with power preponderance over them all. The parties prefer to place a wide range of decision-making capabilities in Muslim or Jewish hands, rather than see themselves exploited by their Christian rivals. Unable to agree, for example, on who should control entrance and exit to the shrine, the keys to the only entrance to the church were placed in the trustworthy hands of a Muslim family in the twelfth century, where they remain to this day.

As result of this fragile status quo, several areas of the church remain contested, and the entire structure is in a grave state of disrepair, since disagreements have

Prayers," *UPI.*, 19 February 1988; "Israeli Soldier Kills Mom of 10 Who Stabbed His Partner," *Toronto Star*, 15 September 1986, A10; Bob Hepburn, "Israeli Settler Kills Axe Attacker—West Bank Incident Leaves Palestinian Dead," *Toronto Star*, 15 November 1993, A3.

68. Dan Fisher, "Disputed Tomb of the Patriarchs; Arabs, Jews, Pray under Same Roof, Under Guard," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 March 1986, A1.

69. Associated Press, "Gunman Slays 20 at Site of Mosque," *New York Times*, 25 February 1994, A1; "Mosque Massacre Incites Arab Rioting," *Miami Herald*, 26 February 1994, A1; Bill Hutman and Alon Pinkas, "Wave of Riots after Hebron Massacre; Kiryat Arba Doctor Slays 39; Over 29 Palestinians Die in Aftermath," *Jerusalem Post*, 27 February 1994, 1.

stalled repair procedures for 35 years. Another area of disagreement pertained to the rebuilding of a wall torn down in 1982, because the reconstruction had created a 3 inch band of new, and therefore disputed, floor area. The wall was eventually constructed by the Israeli government in 1998, in response to a request for intervention by the wrangling churches.[70] A dispute over a well-cover led to blows between Armenians and Greek Orthodox priests. With their rivals, the Copts, preoccupied with the holiest rite of the year, the ceremony of the Holy Fire, the Ethiopians have been known to exchange the locks on the disputed Chapel of Michael.[71]

Because the inherent characteristics of sacred space create an indivisibility problem, de facto division can only come about by fiat. Historically, these forced divisions of sacred space have proven unstable and violent. More importantly, imposed divisions of sacred space do not resolve the underlying disputes. Artificially sustaining the status quo creates opportunities for constant friction between parties to the dispute. In the absence of satisfactory closure, each party reserves the right to renew the struggle for the disputed site whenever it perceives shifts in the underlying balance of power that sustains the fragile division of space.

## POLICY RESPONSES TO DISPUTES OVER SACRED SPACE

THE INHERENT characteristics of sacred space create a theoretical problem of indivisibility. Contingent processes create competition over sacred space that, combined with the problem of indivisibility, create conflict over sacred space that cannot be resolved by negotiation or compromise. Yet the conflict cannot be eliminated by destroying the structures that mark the sacred site, and forced divisions of sacred spaces are unstable, violent and short lived. How then have decisionmakers attempted to deal with disputes over sacred space, for example, during recent negotiations over Jerusalem at Camp David in July 2000?

The simple answer to this question is "not well." The most common policy responses to conflicts at sacred space can be represented as one of two ideal types. At one extreme, Hobbesian pragmatists have rejected the importance of the symbolic dimension of these disputes and have treated them as standard territorial disputes. At the other extreme, Huntingtonian pessimists have accepted the intractability of these disputes as the products of religious forces beyond the influence of political actors.

70. Berkovits, ibid., 235–36.
71. Ibid., 278–80.

The Hobbesian approach is the product of a renowned Western political tradition, running from Aristotle through Machiavelli to Hobbes, that rejects the distinction between religious and political interests. Instead, this approach seeks to strip conflicts of their symbolic pretenses to expose underlying material interests. Proponents of this view argue that disputes over sacred space should be approached with the same repertoire of tools as all other territorial disputes: negotiation or arbitration, leading to exchange, partition, compensation or compromise. Deferring to the symbolic coating of these disputes, argue Hobbesians, will create unnecessary difficulties by expanding the set of actors and issues in what would otherwise be an elementary, if complex, political enterprise. They dismiss the likelihood of indivisible conflicts and reject the possibility of indivisibility as inherent in disputed territory. Real-political pragmatists argue, to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw's quip, that the crucial question to be addressed in resolving these disputes has little to do with the identity of the space; it is merely a question of bargaining over its price.

The negotiations over Jerusalem at Camp David in July 2000 were symptomatic of this approach. Initial analyses of the negotiations suggest that the Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif dispute, treated as one issue among many in preparation for the negotiations, turned out to be the "make or break" issue that eventually prevented the parties from reaching an agreement.[72] Negotiators reached some common ground on security issues, on Palestinian refugees, on Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian areas, even on dividing the modern city of Jerusalem, but reached an impasse on the issue of sovereignty over the sacred site at the heart of the old city. Palestinian Authority president Yasser Arafat encouraged his delegation to demonstrate flexibility, "but do not budge on this one thing: the Haram [el-Sharif] is more precious to me than everything else."[73] Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak confessed to his delegates: "I have no idea how this will end, but I am sure that we will face the world united if it turns out that this agreement failed over the question of our sovereignty over the First and Second Temple. That is the Archimedean point of our existence, the anchor point of the Zionist struggle…we are at the moment of truth."[74]

Neither party had prepared seriously for this eventuality before the negotiations. The Jerusalem issue was treated throughout as a demographic, administrative, municipal and legal problem, not as a religious problem. Israeli political scientist Menahem Klein, who participated in the negotiations in advisory capacity, writes:

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72. For references see n. 1, supra.
73. Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, 172 (my translation).
74. Ibid., 181 (my translation).

> The professional back channels did not sufficiently treat Jerusalem as a religious city. They treated the sacred city with respect but at a distance and with some fear. It was easier to conduct discussions about preservation of historical structures in the old city than to discuss the link between the religious and the political sanctity at the religious and historical heart of the city. A small number of meetings dealt with the religious issue and few religious leaders participated in those. . .[75]

Before Camp David, the Israeli team consulted security experts, lawyers, political scientists, sociologists, engineers and architects, but met few religious experts or leaders.[76] In hindsight, this failure to communicate with religious actors emerged as the Achilles' heel of the negotiations. Klein continues:

> Whereas the dialogue between experts and politicians had been going on for years, the dialogue with religious actors was in its infancy. Too few back channels were opened between experts and religious actors, and between Jewish-Israeli religious actors and Muslim or Christian Palestinian actors. . . The absence of a comprehensive and intensive religious dialogue at two levels—within each of the relevant religious movements and between them—was to have negative consequences at Camp David. There the religious-nationalist issue arose suddenly and came to stand at the heart of the dispute.[77]

The failure to seriously incorporate religious actors and experts in preparing for the negotiations had two direct consequences: both parties were caught off guard by the demands on sacred space raised by their opponents, and the religious leaders excluded from the process succeeded in influencing the negotiations from without. Palestinians confessed as much surprise at Israeli demands to the Temple Mount as at the religious rationale that accompanied these demands and rejected the Israeli claim that the Jewish Temple had stood at the site as unsubstantiated and irrelevant. Instead, the Palestinian delegation interpreted the Jewish desire to pray at the site as a first step in the construction of a Jewish Temple on the ruins of the Muslim holy places, a goal actually espoused by a minority among the most radical Jewish factions. The secular makeup of the Israeli team, on the other hand, prevented the Israeli delegates from familiarizing themselves with the complexities of the Jewish legal position on Jerusalem. Instead, they perceived the most extreme Jewish stance on the issue as the most authentic position and turned it into a matter of stiff principle in the negotiations.[78]

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75. Klein, *Shattering a Taboo*, 20–21 (my translation).
76. The Israeli negotiator Gilad Sher cites a chance conversation with a Jewish diamond merchant as a main source of information on how the religious sector in Israel viewed the negotiations. Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, ibid., 117, 131, 265, 330–31.
77. Klein, *Shattering a Taboo*, ibid., 18, 21.
78. Ibid., 106–8.

U.S. president Bill Clinton compared his frustrating attempts at resolving the Jerusalem dispute to "going to the dentist without having your gums deadened."[79] At the climax of the negotiations, Arafat reportedly broke off a discussion with U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright in anger, because Albright mistakenly referred to the site by its Judeo-Christian name.[80] One negotiator recalled Arafat's parting words to Clinton: "To tell me that I have to admit that there is a temple below the mosque? I will never do that."[81] Barak later explained Israel's negotiation position to Clinton's successor, George W. Bush: "The Temple Mount is the cradle of Jewish history and there is no way I will sign a document that transfers sovereignty over the Temple Mount to the Palestinians. For Israel that would constitute a betrayal of its holy of holies."[82]

Meanwhile, outside Camp David, religious leaders on both sides of the divide issued rulings to block compromise over the holy sites. An American proposal to divide the four quarters of the old city equally between the two parties was scuttled by the leaders of the Latin-Catholic church, the Greek-Orthodox church and the Armenian-Orthodox church in Jerusalem. They argued that the proposal would separate the Christians of the Armenian quarter from those residing in the Christian quarter.[83] The Chief Rabbinate of Israel published a legal ruling prohibiting absolutely the "transferring any sovereignty or ownership, directly or indirectly, to foreigners on the Temple Mount," adding that "the very discussion of this issue constitutes blasphemy. . . ."[84] The foremost Muslim authority in Jerusalem, the mufti Sheikh Sabri Akrima, issued a ruling denying Jewish rights to the Western Wall at the foot of the Temple Mount.[85] Mocking American attempts at dividing the sacred sites at the heart of the dispute, Sheikh Sabri Akrima scoffed: "Does

79. Brian Knowlton, "Mideast Talks Collapse," *International Herald Tribune*, 26 July 2000, 4; Marc Lacey and David E. Sanger, "Again, Clinton is Left Frustrated at Mideast," *International Herald Tribune*, 27 July 2000, 7.

80. Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, ibid., 266.

81. Mary Curtius, "Holy Site Paramount Among Obstacles to Mideast Peace; Religion: Much of the Israeli-Palestinian Dispute Comes Down to a 36-Acre Compound in Jerusalem," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 2000, A1. See also Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, ibid., 266. Palestinian negotiator Abu Mazen has stated: "They claim that 2000 years ago they had a sacred place there. I doubt that claim." Klein, *Shattering a Taboo*, 51, quoting *Kol al-Arab*, 8 August 2000.

82. Klein, ibid., 80, quoting *Ha'aretz*, 25 January 2001 (my translation).

83. Klein, ibid., 53.

84. Klein, ibid., 57–58. For a ruling prohibiting the division of Jerusalem see advertisement by Rabbi Joseph Yithak HaCohen Gutnik in *Ha'aretz*, 26 July 2000, A8. For rabbinical refusal to accept Palestinian rule over the Temple Mount, and proposals to construct a synagogue on the site, see Ross Dunn, "Temple Mount Synagogue 'May Provoke War'," *The Times*, 8 August 2000; Etgar Lefkovits, "Rabbinate Denies Accepting Palestinian Administration on the Temple Mount," *Jerusalem Post*, 4 July 2000, 4.

85. See Reuven Hammer, "Jewish Connection to the Temple Mount," *Jerusalem Post*, 28 February 2001, 8.

al-Aksa belong to the Americans? Is it a cake, that Clinton can divide? Al-Aksa belongs to the Muslims alone, and we will not accept any compromise."[86]

Political leaders, however, continued to cling obstinately to real-political assumptions even when confronted with evidence of the obstructive power of religious actors, and despite the collapse of Camp David over the Temple Mount issue. This dismissive attitude toward religion as an independent force in the dispute was superbly demonstrated by chief Israeli negotiator for Jerusalem, Shlomo Ben-Ami, in an interview one month after the collapse of the negotiations:

> Indeed, a discussion about the sanctity of the Temple Mount did take place. It is interesting that you go into negotiations on a political issue, or almost a real estate issue, as it were, and it becomes a theological discussion... But we are not going to turn this conflict or this process, which is essentially political, into a religious war.[87]

The independent impact of authentic religious interests on political processes catches the Hobbesian pragmatist off guard. Its counterpart, the Huntingtonian pessimist, on the other hand, accepts this force at face value. Reflected in Samuel Huntington's theory of religious identity as inextricably associated with conflict,[88] this approach accepts religion as a mysterious, irrational and disruptive force inexorably interfering with the conduct of politics. The indivisibility of sacred space is accepted as a factor beyond the control of decision makers. Again, no attempt is made to critically examine the meaning of sacred space, not, in this instance, because the significance of sacredness is dismissed, but because it is accepted axiomatically as a dead end in negotiations.

Understandably, decision makers are loath to publicly express their resignation regarding the future resolution of disputes over sacred space. No such reluctance is apparent in media coverage or analyses of ongoing disputes. To wit, the media response to the failure of the Camp David negotiations: News analyses, under the headline "Jerusalem, City of Faith, Defies Rational Solution," vacillated between expressions of awe at the Jerusalem phenomenon, "resisting rational analysis and seemingly impervious to creative compromise" and resignation. "When the subject is Jerusalem," exclaimed one Israeli columnist, "pragmatism is replaced by anxiety and rational interests are replaced by slogans. It is as if some 'force

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86. "Troops Removed from the Temple Mount in '91 at Shamir's Orders," *Yedioth Aharonot*, 8 September 2000, 19 (my translation).

87. Press Conference with Foreign Journalists by Acting Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, Jerusalem, 23 August 2000, at http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/home.asp

88. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (summer 1993): 22–49; Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

majeur' has decided that Jerusalem must remain a city that defies all solutions."[89] An American editorial reinforced this point: "It may be that this is one of those historical conflicts that cannot be settled by mutual agreements, that survive until a new relation of force obliges an end."[90]

## REDEFINING DISPUTES OVER SACRED PLACES

THIS ARTICLE started with an account of the violent repercussions that ensued from the failure to resolve the Jerusalem issue at Camp David. In that case, as in the failure to predict or contain the conflagration of the Ayodhya dispute or the disastrous consequences of the military operation in Amritsar, the policy approaches represented here as the ideal types Hobbesian pragmatism and Huntingtonian pessimism, failed to mitigate or resolve disputes. Instead of seeking insight into the religious dimension of these disputes, decision makers treated these crises either as purely political problems to be addressed by standard political tools, or as insurmountable obstacles. While it is beyond the stated scope of this article to offer recommendations for resolving disputes over sacred space, some of the elements necessary for a balanced approach were already implied in the preceding discussion. I would like to conclude with an outline of the requirements for a better-adjusted approach to addressing conflicts over sacred space, and with a suggestion for one possible avenue for future research in this understudied field.

A balanced approach to addressing disputes over sacred space must set itself twin tasks. On the one hand it must counter the pragmatism of the Hobbesian approach by adopting a phenomenological view of sacred space. This approach has predominated in this article: it takes the symbolic weight of sacred space seriously by recognizing the unique characteristics of the sacred as perceived by believers, characteristics that set these disputes apart from secular territorial disputes, in particular the difficulties caused by indivisibility. On the other hand, this balanced approach must be capable of countering the pessimism of Huntingtonian fatalism by means of a critical facet, one that utilizes politics and agency to transform disputes over sacred space by introducing flexibility into the definition of that space.

One possible avenue for inquiry is the role of religious leaders in creating and shaping sacred space. Can religious actors be co-opted into the negotiation process

89. Lee Hockstader, "Jerusalem, City of Faith, Defies Rational Solution," *International Herald Tribune*, July 21, 2000, 1, quoting Akiva Eldar, journalist for *Ha'aretz*.
90. Flora Lewis, "Danger Mounts, but the Mideast Time Isn't Ripe," *International Herald Tribune*, 1 August 2000, 6.

in a manner conducive to the redefinition of sacred space? If the category of the sacred is a social construct, the combined product of the charismatic authority that sanctifies a site and the social practice that embeds this sanctity in intersubjective beliefs, then religious actors should be uniquely capable of introducing some flexibility into the rules governing sacred space under constrained conditions. For example, the role of the Saudi *ulema* in suspending the prohibition on the use of force in the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the 1979 hostage crisis, seems to suggest that the indivisibility of sacred space can be mitigated under restricted conditions by tapping into sources of religious authority.

Religious leaders also hold information about the boundaries and meaning of sacred space that can prove critical in negotiations. Moreover, as the Jerusalem negotiations at Camp David demonstrate, the power of religious leaders to block compromises when excluded from the negotiation table is daunting. Left to their own devices, religious actors are capable of punishing decision makers who attempt to resolve disputes over sacred space by fiat, and may be equally capable of exasperating existing disputes and mobilizing the mass of believers by increasing the value of disputed sites.

Clearly, it is not always easy or even possible to induce or coerce religious leaders to cooperate in the conflict management process. Even those religious leaders who happen to share the goals of the political echelon might not be able to assist in reconfiguring the dispute without either facing dismissal and replacement by religious actors that enjoy broader support in the religious hierarchy, or being ignored, even ousted, by their own constituency. Future research may shed light on the relationship between the ability of religious actors to ameliorate the disputes and a range of variables, such as the position of the actor in the religious hierarchy, the centrality and exclusivity of the disputed space, the type of change demanded and the balance of power between the political, religious and societal forces involved in the dispute.

This article set itself the limited task of filling a gap in the literature on disputes over sacred space by explaining the causes and characteristics of these conflicts. I argued that conflicts over sacred space are frequent and destructive. Conflicts over sacred sites trigger ethnic, sectarian and international conflict, escalate conflict and are manifestations of violent conflict at its most atrocious. Understanding the role of sacred space in conflict entails analyzing the inherent characteristics of sacred space.

All sacred places are spaces set apart, centers for a religious community and axes linking heaven and earth. Although the variety of sacred spaces is infinite, all are places imbued with meaning, allowing communication with the divine and presence of the divine on earth. Two independent parameters, centrality and exclusivity, define a two-dimensional continuum for assessing the importance of

sacred space in any given dispute: the more central the site in the spiritual landscape of the community and the more restricted access to and behavior within the space, the more likely it is that challenges to the sacred site will lead to conflict.

The integrity, boundaries and value of sacred space create conditions for indivisible conflict over sacred space. The space is coherent and its boundaries are inflexible and highly visible. Because sacred places involve religious ideals, divine presence, absolute and transcendent values, there is no room for compromise and no substitute for the disputed space. This creates an indivisibility problem, a situation rare in territorial conflicts. Historical contingency leads to competition between disparate religious communities, or between a religious group and a secular actor, over one and the same indivisible space. When political actors are impervious to the power of religious actors, this indivisibility problem can be overcome unilaterally by means of coercion. Forced divisions of sacred space, however, tend to be unstable, unsatisfactory to all parties involved and highly sensitive to change in the status quo.

Sacred places are not plots of land to be partitioned by diplomats according to political priorities, no matter how good their intentions. They may, for considerable segments of the population, entail meaning that is absolute, irreplaceable and indivisible. Nor are disputes over sacred space a thing of the past. The costs of mismanaging disputes over sacred space in the twenty-first century will be substantial and measured in human lives. Resolving disputes over sacred space creates challenges unlike any encountered in disputes over "secular" territory, but may entail unique opportunities for colluding with actors that have a monopoly over the definition of the disputed space. Ignoring these aspects out of a belief that disputes about sacred space are a matter of mere politics, as have the American, Israeli and Palestinian teams to the Camp David negotiations, transgresses the boundary between the foolhardy and the hubristic.