Mimesis and the Problem of Rationality:

Discussing Girard and International Relations Theory

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Abstract

The paper argues in favour of deepening the discussion between the thoughts of the French philosopher, anthropologist, and literary theorist René Girard and international relations theory. For Girad, mimetic rivalry is the main cause of interpersonal violence. He thus addresses a fundamental problem of international relations theory: the problem of anarchy as it is outlined, for example, in Hobbes' *Leviathan* which also acknowledges the conflicting potential of desire. For Girard, this problem is ultimately solved by the scapegoat mechanism, the canalization of mimetic violence, focusing on the Other as the foundation of society. Nevertheless, international relations theory has also pointed out that identity is formed prior to the construction of the Other. The paper addresses both Girard's insights for international relations theory as well as genuine disciplinarian insights, ultimately bringing them into a fruitful discussion, arguing that the anthropologist insights of Girard can enrich thinking about Self, Other, and identity in international relations theory.

Key words

Anthropology, constructivism, identity, mimetic theory, realism, Raymond Aron, religion, René Girard

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Mimesis and the Problem of Rationality:
Discussing Girard and International Relations Theory

This paper argues in favour of deepening the discussion between the thoughts of the French philosopher, anthropologist, and literary theorist René Girard and international relations theory, particularly the tradition of Realism. For Girad, mimetic rivalry is the main cause of interpersonal violence. He denies the Rousseauean (Liberalism's) belief of the natural amicability of humans as well theories which assume a natural (instinctive) aggressive drive of humans. Girard thus addresses a fundamental problem of international relations: anarchy as it is outlined in traditional thoughts of Realism, such as Hobbes' *Leviathan* which also acknowledges the conflicting potential of desire. For Girard, this problem is ultimately solved by the scapegoat mechanism, the canalization of mimetic violence, focusing on the Other as the foundation of society. For Girard, this problem is debunked by the Judeo-Christian tradition focusing on the victim rather than on the exclusivist approach of constructing Self and Other. Nevertheless, international relations theory has also pointed out that identity is formed prior to the construction of the Other. Collective identities are always overlapping. Thus, the paper addresses both Girard's insights for international relations as well as genuine disciplinarian insights, ultimately bringing them into a discussion, arguing that the anthropologist insights of Girard can enrich thinking about Self, Other, and identity in international relations theory within a broad theoretical framework of Realism and singular scholars such as Raymond Aron who belongs, to a certain degree, to the tradition of Realism. Aron is the scholar who is, especially due to his work on the military strategist Clausewitz, most prone to discuss insights of Girard regarding rationality and anthropology in international relations.

The paper will therefore proceed as follows: First, I will point out some arguments for choosing certain theories and scholars of international relations and bringing them into discussion with the work of Girard. Second, an overview of Girard's most influential thoughts will be provided in order to connect them to theoretical as well as practical issues of international relations. This particularly concerns the issues of competition, violence and the problem of anarchy, meaning the development from Hobbes' violent "war all against all" due to the fear of violent death to the current global system also characterized by anarchy–the absence of a "global Leviathan." Anarchy, in terms of Realism, also includes issues of identity, and identity related variables in international relations, relying, for example, on Carl

Schmitt's concept of friend and foe and Hans Morgenthau's similar conception of international relations. Finally, the paper will turn to one particular issue of international relations: the threat of a global apocalypse, facing the potential of nuclear weapons in the world today. While reflecting on Clausewitz, Girard recently turned, for the first time, to a prominent, and often forgotten or ignored scholar of the fairly poor European tradition of Realism: Raymond Aron. It is in the discussion of rationality, war, and deterrence that Girard's theory and international relations theory can get in touch, illustrating the possibilities and borders of linking the two.

1 Girard's mimetic theory

Until now and to my knowledge, only one comprehensive attempt to make use of Girard's thoughts for international relations has been made. This attempt was undertaken by Scott Thomas in his study *The Global Resurgence of Religion*.[1] In large parts this section will follow his groundwork on the issue. Girard's mimetic theory, a distinct Christian anthropology, consists of three core elements:[2] (1) mimetic desire, (2) the scapegoat mechanism as the origin of culture, and (3) a theory of religion emphasizing the difference between pagan myth and the Biblical revelation. The following lines primarily take emphasis upon the first two elements, leaving the distinct theological approach of the third rather aside.

The world today, according to Girard, is in a state of a constant competition due to mimetic rivalry on a global scale.[3] Girard uses the Greek word *mimesis* in order to point to the connection between *desire* and *imitation*. However, it is not the desire for a definite or original object; desire rather means to follow the desire of others.[4] Imitation therefore does not mean to simply copy others. What is desired is socially constructed. How the desire is constructed occurs in a "triangular desire,"[5] consisting of the Self, the Other (mediator), and the object that is desired by the subject "because the person knows, imagines, or suspects that

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[1] Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), particularly chapter 5.

[2] For the following summary of Girard's main thoughts, particularly regarding competition and enmity, see Wolfgang Palaver, "Competition and Enmity: René Girard's Contribution to Political Theology,".

[3] René Girard and Henri Tincq, "What is Happening Today is Mimetic Rivalry on a Global Scale," *South Central Revue* 19, no. 2/3 (2002).

[4] René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origin of Culture*, With Pierpaolo Antonello at Joao Cezar de Castro Rocha (London: Continuum, 2008, Original edition 2000), 59–60.

[5] René Girard, "Triangular Desire," in *The Girard Reader,* ed. René Girard, and James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad and Herder, 1996)

the model or mediator desires it as well. Therefore, the goods or objects people desire, and their ideas about what to desire, are based on the ideas and desires they learn from others."[6] As long as the desired object is non-exclusive such as, for example, education, mimetic rivalry may even lead to social improvement. Once an exclusive object is desired, mimetic rivalry is prone to violence. Since man, unlike animals, is not restrained in violence, for example in following an instinct, unleashed mimetic desire may lead indeed to Hobbes' "war all against all" since no instinctive brakes can prevent humans to destroy themselves. Mimetic desire causes "disunity among those who cannot possess their common object *together*" and therefore creates "solidarity among those who can fight the same enemy *together*."[7] The blow of one of the rivals eventually can and will most often fascinate others that they imitate this action in striking a weaker one. "The war of all against all suddenly becomes a war of all against one. The single victim is expelled or killed. Girard calls this unconscious, collective deed the *scapegoat mechanism*."[8]

One of the main purposes of culture, following Girard's arguments, is the containment of the mimetic rivalry which is inherent to every culture. The second core assumption of Girard's theory is thus the scapegoat mechanism as the origin of culture meaning the spontaneous psychological mechanism when we, by mistake, accuse one to be guilty. In a lengthy analysis, especially of ancient literature and the "figures of desire,"[9] Girard identifies the scapegoat as the origin of culture since the scapegoat–the victim–is demonized and divinized at the same time.[10] The sacred, which is blessed and cursed at the same time, is essential for the functioning of society.[11] This is because the scapegoat, a kind of replacement, is a sacrificial substitution to protect society from its own inherent destructive tendencies due to mimetic rivalry.[12] There is a tradition, and even practice, in every world religion that

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[6] Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, 124.

[7] René Girard, *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 186., René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World: Research undertaken in collaboration with Jean-Michel Ougourlian and Guy Lefort*, Translated by Stephen Bann (Books II & III) and Michael Metteer (Book I) (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 26.

[8] Wolfgang Palaver, "Competition and Enmity: René Girard's Contribution to Political Theology,".

[9] René Girard, *Figuren des Begehrens: Das Selbst und der Andere in der fiktionalen Realität* (Wien: LIT, 1999).

[10] René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

[11] As one of the first, Scott Appleby recognized this "ambivalence of the sacred" and its importance regarding international politics. R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000). However, just pointing to the "ambivalence" of religion may prove to be too less. For one thing religion certainly can be a source for conflict *and* for conflict transformation. It certainly can also "function" as *neither* of those two. Secondly, it is highly problematic, as some of the more contemporary studies in religion and IR are doing it, to see religion, or even special "branches" of religion such as Christianity or Islam, as one unified social phenomena. Although one tradition may share a certain, at least thin common theological standard, this does not mean that this is accepted or interpreted everywhere in the same way.

[12] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Translated by Patrick Gregory (London: Athlone Press, 1988).

through the adjustment toward the holy, the "blessed" side of the sacred, evil can be banned from human life. "Evil" refers to the mimetic desire that Girard calls the source of violence.[13] Already Plato and St. Augustine pointed out the interdependence between imitation and religion: we always imitate what we admire.[14]

> The great religious traditions do not only understand the connection between imitation and religion they are also very well aware of the terrible dangers coming along with imitation if it turns into envy. In the Biblical tradition it is of course the tenth commandment of the Decalogue that shows this awareness most clearly. Girard has strongly emphasized the importance of this Biblical text. … The Christian tradition has also always emphasized the longing for God as our highest good–our *summum bonum*– as a way to overcome and avoid envious rivalry.[15]

For Girard, mimetic rivalry is the main cause of interpersonal violence. He thus denies the Rousseauean belief of the natural amicability of humans and theories which assume a natural (instinctive) aggressive drive of humans.[16] We therefore have to recognize the Decalogue, particularly its first commandment, which "addresses God who as our highest good enables us to reach mimetically out for him without being at the same time forced into envious destruction."[17] This acknowledgement leads to a life that does not end up in the deadlock of mimetic rivalry. It is thus that Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of spiritual goods to build peace in the world:

> It is easy to see that material goods do not have unlimited capacity for satisfying the needs of man: They are not in themselves easily distributed and, in the relationship between those who possess and enjoy them and those who are without them, they give rise to tension, dissension and division that will often even turn into open conflict. Spiritual goods, on the other hand, are open to unlimited enjoyment by many at the same time, without diminution of the goods themselves. Indeed, the more people share in such goods, the more they are enjoyed and drawn upon, the more then do those goods

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[13] See particularly Girard, *The Scapegoat.*, Girard, *Violence and the Sacred;* Hamerton-Kelly, Robert, ed., *Violent Origins. Walter Burkert, René Girard & Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1987). For a concise introduction to this issue, particularly in the context of Christianity, see especially Giles Fraser, *Christianity and Violence: Girard, Nietzsche, Anselm and Tutu* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001).

[14] Plato, *The Republic*, Edited by G.R.F. Ferraris. Translated by T. Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 205; Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, Translated by H. Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 324.

[15] Wolfgang Palaver, "Competition and Enmity: René Girard's Contribution to Political Theology,". Especially the biblical Decalogue addresses this problem by stating that "You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, of donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Exod. 20: 17.

[16] René Girard, *Das Ende der Gewalt: Analyse des Menschheitsverhängnisses* (Freiburg im Breisgau Wien et al.: Herder, 1983), 204.

[17] Wolfgang Palaver, "Competition and Enmity: René Girard's Contribution to Political Theology,"., Wolfgang Palaver, "Envy or Emulation: A Christian Understanding of Economic Passions," in *Passions in Economy, Politics, and the Media: In Discussion with Christian Theology,* ed. Wolfgang Palaver, and Petra Steinmair-Pösel (Münster: LIT, 2005), 150–151.

show their indestructible and immortal worth. This truth is confirmed, for example, by the works of creativity–I mean by the works of thought, poetry, music, and the figurative arts, fruits of man's spirit.[18]

The sacred, in terms of Girard, is sensitive toward violence arising out of mimetic rivalry and "understands" it, meaning that it is realistically acknowledging it. It is fundamentally realistic toward the existence of violence and teaches us what to do and what not to do to avoid the flaming up of violence.[19] Taking the Decalogue seriously and keeping to the religious rituals will transform the violent scapegoat mechanism to a ritual one. This can also be understood as a call for a deeper religious discourse in the public like what Jürgen Habermas called for. Secular language that eliminates what was meant originally produces irritations: When sin became transformed into guilt, when misdoings against religious rules became transformed into offence against secular-human law, something got lost.[20]

2 Why Girard and international relations?

Basically I argue that there are at least two causes that justify discussing the insights of Girard and issues of international relations, particularly its theories. First, in recent years we can witness a certain revival of the synthesis of international relations theories and genuine political theory. Particularly, political theology has come to terms–most often in turning to the German philosopher of international law Carl Schmitt–with international relations issues.[21] The "global religious resurgence" as Scott Thomas has coined it, almost forced new strings of discussion in international relations theory.[22] Prominent philosophers–sometimes not genuine philosophers of religion–such as Charles Taylor and his *A Secular Age* or Jürgen Habermas' discussion with the former Cardinal Ratzinger and now pope Benedict XVI turned to issues of religion and international relations.[23] And, indeed, for a long time the subject of international relations has been a highly secularized one, being almost surprised by events with an almost genuine religious background or justification and an almost worldwide religious

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[18]   John Paul II, *Address to the United Nations General Assembly* (1979); available from http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_jp02u1.htm; Internet.

[19] René Girard, *Das Heilige und die Gewalt* (Düsseldorf, Zürich: Patmos, 2006), 381.

[20] Austin Dacey, *The Secular Conscience: Why Belief Belongs in Public Life* (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 2008); Jürgen Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), 24.

[21] Nicolas Guilhot, "American Katechon: When Political Theology Became International Relations Theory," *Constellations* 17, no. 2 (2010); Odysseos, Louiza, and Fabio Petito, eds., *The International Political Thought of Carl Schmitt: Terror, Liberal War and the Crisis of Global Order* (London: Routledge, 2007).

[22] Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations.*

[23] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung. Über Vernunft und Religion,* 7th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 2005).

"resurgence."[24] On the global scale, we can identify two most dynamic religious upsurges: the Islamic one, which is, due to its assumed but rather poor evaluated political ramifications better known and, secondly, the Evangelical upsurge which is–on the global scale–even wider.[25] International politics therefore, simply because of numbers, "cannot be fully or properly fathomed without addressing its embedded religious and moral dimensions."[26] Religion is indeed "the missing dimension of statecraft"[27] and made its "return from exile"[28] into international relations and therefore its theories. My second argument for bringing Girard's thoughts in discussion with international relations theory is the growing relatedness between genuine international relations theories and domestic political issues, particularly regarding conflict.[29] Failed states and humanitarian intervention, for example, led to changes in thinking about inter-national politics, placing an ever strengthening emphasis upon global politics, global governance, and, consequently, on the Other and strangers.[30]

Realism, particularly Neo-Realism, is said to be genuine about the "third image"–the international level–largely ignoring, in terms of Kenneth Waltz, the "first" and "second image," meaning "man" and "the state."[31] Although that it seems obvious that both 20th century "fathers" of Realism and Neo-Realism, Morgenthau and Waltz, did never meant to strictly divide between the domestic (e.g. concerning political systems such as democracy) and the international or systemic level, this is what is largely and falsely assumed.[32] However, recent scholarship of Realism, dealing primarily with traditional, rather materialistic issues of

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[24] For the longstanding dominance of secularism in international relations see particularly Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Peter Berger coherently argues that "secularism has been falsified." Peter L. Berger, "Secularization Falsified," *First Things (*February 2008).

[25] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* ed. Peter L. Berger (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999)

[26] Carlson, John D. and Eric C. Owens, "Introduction: Reconsidering Westphalia's Legacy for Religion and International Politics," in *The Sacred and the Sovereign. Religion and International Politics,* ed. John David Carlson, and Erik C. Owens (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 5. Originally in italics.

[27] Johnston, Douglas M., and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[28] Hatzopoulos, Pavlos and Petito Fabio, ed., *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[29] See, for example, Jack S. Levy, "International Sources for Interstate and Intrastate War," in *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World,* ed. Chester A. Crocker. 2nd print. (Washington, DC: United States Inst. of Peace Press, 2008)

[30] Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[31] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[32] Michael C. Williams, "Waltz, Realism and Democracy," *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (2009); Williams, Michael C., ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Hartmut Behr and Amelia Heath, "Misreading in IR Theory and Ideology Critique: Morgenthau, Waltz and Neo-Realism," *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009).

international relations, also addresses the importance of cultural factors and identity-related variables.[33] In defining Realism most scholars place emphasis on skepticism, relationality, power, and power politics. Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman suggest three principles and core assumptions of Realism. First, human beings cannot survive as individuals but rather in a group. Group centricity and thus tribalism is therefore a fact of social and political interaction. Second, politics is consequently a struggle, but also cooperation, between self-interested groups under the conditions of uncertainty and fear.[34] Third, power is a given thing in social and political interaction and a necessary requirement for groups to achieve their goals.[35] Morgenthau has already pointed out that the state–an institutionalized form of a self-interested group–is essential but by no means self-sufficient, as well as this particular form of political interaction is open towards change. Changing trends in culture and therefore also religion, as Girard emphasizes, have without doubt an effect on the conduct of international affairs. Classical Realism in terms of Morgenthau, with its rather negative anthropological assumption ("lust for power"), is thus prone for a discussion with a cultural-anthropological approach as Girard's. In turning to Girard's thoughts it will become obvious that it is–due to the discussion of rationality in international politics–unavoidable to turn to one, probably the only scholar of international relations, recently quite frequently cited by Girard: Raymond Aron. Although a bit of a renegade in the community of 20th century Realists and more or less the only European Realist, Aron can certainly be characterized as one of them among Morgenthau and Waltz.[36]

Finally, it is also Girard and international relations–meaning also political science–because Girard, from time to time, pronounced the need to abolish political science and other sciences about social interaction and turn instead to anthropology. This paper is not about defending the honour of international relations as a distinct sub-field of political science but to bring both strings of science into a fruitful discussion. It is therefore that I argue, although only for the sake of a better understanding, along with Morgenthau, for the autonomy of the political sphere because, as Morgenthau argued in his most prominent piece *Politics among Nations*:

> This realist defense of the autonomy of the political sphere against its subversion by other modes of thought does not imply disregard for the existence and importance of

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[33] Rawi Abdelal et al., "Identity as a Variable," *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 4 (December 2006).

[34] Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[35] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy,* ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14–15.

[36] Marco Cesa, "Realist Visions of the End of the Cold War: Morgenthau, Aron and Waltz," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 11 (2009).

these other modes of thought. It rather implies that each be assigned their proper sphere and function. Political realism is based upon a pluralistic conception of human nature. Real man is a composite of 'economic man,' 'political man,' 'moral man,' 'religious man,' etc. … Recognizing that these different facets of human nature exist, political realism also recognizes that in order to understand one of them one has to deal with it on its own terms. That is to say, if I want to understand 'religious man' I must for the time being abstract from the other aspects of human nature and deal with its religious aspect as if it were the only one. Furthermore, I must apply to the religious sphere the standards of thought appropriate to it, always remaining aware of the existence of other standards and their actual influence upon the religious qualities of man. What is true for this facet of human nature is true of all the others.[37]

One may wonder about the value added bringing Girard and international relations into discussion. As it will turn out in due course, there are different aspects of possible value to gain. First of all it is the insights from anthropology which can contribute to a more and more globally interconnected world–in a world, in terms of Barry Buzan, "from international to world society"[38] meaning the development towards human aspects of international politics. International relations are, after all, a realm of human experience as the English School scholar Martin Wight once stated.[39] A discussion between Girard and international relations therefore also could help to expound the problems of the cultural foundations of international order.

3   Mimetic theory and international relations

There are several points in Girard's anthropological framework worth bringing in discussion with international relations theories. Of mere general use are his insights about religion as such. In a time where international relations struggle to integrate religious phenomena into its framework, every theory that can enrich such a discussion is worth considering. Perhaps with the single exception of the Constructivist scholar Vendulka Kubálková and some more general approaches, no comprehensive and convincing attempt has been made to address religion and theories of international relations.[40] But since this paper is not about religion in

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[37] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace,* 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 12.

[38] Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society?: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[39] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), 1.

[40] Vendulka Kubálková, "Towards an International Political Theology," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000); Nukhet A. Sandal and Patrick James, "Religion and International Relations Theory: Towards a Mutual Understanding," *European Journal of International Relations*, no. OnlineFirst, published on July 27 (2010); Jonathan Fox and Nukhet A. Sandal, "Toward Integrating Religion into International Relations Theory," *ZIB - Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 17, no. 1 (2010). The already mentioned *The Global Resurgence of Religion* contains an interesting approach of putting together religion and the English School of

the various frameworks of international relations theory, and since Girard himself claims that his theory is an anthropological and not genuine religious one, I will now turn to other issues of international relations and his theory. As outlined above, put in rather simple terms, Girard's theory consists of three major themes: mimetic desire, the scapegoat mechanism and a theory of religion emphasizing the difference between pagan myth and the Biblical revelation. I will discuss some interesting themes of international relations and its theories related to those three topics before turning to one case in more depth. Those are Constructivism and the "politics of identity," Realism particularly in terms of Hans Morgenthau's classical Realism, and, among others, particularly the French scholar of international relations Raymond Aron.

3.1 Constructivism and the politics of identity

After the Cold War and the primacy of rationalist approaches, Constructivism was at the forefront, as Lapid and Kratochwil put it, of acknowledging *The Return of Culture and Identity in International Relation Theory*. It therefore challenged the dominant paradigm of Neo-Realism such as Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* as well the major post-Cold War contributions from Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*.[41] Therefore, in following Girard's argument that what is desired is socially constructed, one immediately comes to think of (social) Constructivism as the most appropriate partner for discussion.

In 1966 sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann pointed out *The Social Construction of Reality*.[42] Ever since then, Constructivist scholars, in one way or another, relied on those premises developing them further, approaching international relations. Two of the probably most influential works in the field, Nicholas Onuf's *World of Our Making* and Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics*, relied on a social construction of politics leading eventually into Wendt's famous dictum that "Anarchy is what states make of

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international relations. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations.* See also Scott M. Thomas, "Faith, History and Martin Wight: The Role of Religion in the Historical Sociology of the English School of International Relations," *International Affairs* 77, no. 4 (2001).

[41] Lapid, Yosef, and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in International Relation Theory* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: McGrwa-Hill, 1979); Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man,* [New ed.] (New York, N.Y., London: Free Press, 2006); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

[42] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).

it."[43] It is Wendt's merit that he has pointed out that the "structure" of anarchy changes along the lines as the identities of states change. The English School, a plural approach and one of the bases for Constructivism, in its concept of international society points out the intersubjective structure as discussed by Wendt.[44] Constructivists like Wendt, however, have illustrated the importance of the link between this intersubjective structure and collective identity formation via integration and exclusion. "Conceptions of self and interest tend to 'mirror' the practices of significant others over time" in terms of Wendt. Furthermore, the "principle of identity-formation is captured by the symbolic interactionist notion of the 'looking-glass self', which asserts that the self is a reflection of an actor's socialization."[45] Reflecting on the Other in terms of practical policy advice as Samuel Huntington's approach seems to do in order to achieve integration at the price of active othering, however, seems to be a too high price to pay.[46] "Integration and exclusion are two sides of the same coin, so the issue here is not *that* exclusion takes place, but *how* it takes place"[47] as Iver Neumann has pointed out.

Although it is highly problematic to equal the desire of man with the desire of political actors such as states, it cannot be denied that what is desired, for example the pursuit of the national interest, is a result of imitating other actors. In "human conduct in a world of states," accepting a "global covenant,"[48] in terms of Robert Jackson, it is unlikely that one state would or even could exclude itself form the framework of conducting politics in the mainstream way. It may be, therefore, that Wendt argued that in an arena where almost everything is contested, the one common denominator is to say that states are "actors" or "persons" which is to attribute them properties–such as rationality, identities, interests, beliefs, etc–which are first associated with human beings.[49]

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[43] Nicholas G. Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics,* 11th print (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)., Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1992).

[44] Christian Reus-Smit, "Imagining Society: Constructivism and the English School," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 4, no. 3 (October 2002). For a comprehensive introduction to the English School see Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics,* 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[45] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," 404.

[46] Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.*

[47] Iver B. Neumann, "Self and Other in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 2 (1996), 168.

[48] Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[49] Alexander Wendt, "The State as a Person in International Theory," *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004).

To desire what is recognized as a standard proceeding is only logical. It is thus that many so-called Third World states suffer from an internal lack of positive role models to imitate. The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran since the Revolution in 1979, for example, can be explained in large parts in taking two intertwined factors into account: the ideology of Islamism as a kind of countering the "evilness" of modernity as represented by the West and a distinct Third World ideology as can be seen in the rhetoric of the former non-aligned movement. The regime cannot appreciate the engagement (for example, in offering civil nuclear faculties) of the West since this would mean to lose the concept of the enemy. It is the desire to gain such (nuclear) power as the West generates out of its own power. It is not a desire to simply copying the West in any regard (for example, in the political system) but to follow what others desire, even if it's only the will for (nuclear) power.

One of the most interesting questions while looking at Girard's theory of mimetic desire is to think about why some societies are more violent than others. That is, rather, to say why some societies manage to contain the mimetic desire more than others. Thomas Hobbes pointed to the fatal consequences of mimetic rivalry in politics: "If any two men desire the same thing which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies, and in the way to their End ... endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another."[50] Scholars of war and international relations alike have pointed to the "politics of identity,"[51] explaining conflicts after the Cold War as a problem of in-groups and out-groups. Particularly ethnic and religious conflicts such as in civil wars from Rwanda to the Balkans consist of elements which seem to have nothing in common with traditional material interests. The interests at stake are rather social, cultural or of religious nature. But this does not mean that they are irrational. Their particular condition can, however, make them "nasty, brutish, and long."[52]

It maybe therefore that if I know my brother or neighbour best, then mimetic rivalry becomes most intense and ends in the most brutal conflicts. No one was more aware of this fact than Carl Schmitt in his *Concept of the Political* defined by the distinction between friend and foe.[53] In his memoirs, Schmitt gets more pronounced in his conception of "the enemy." He asks, "who can I acknowledge as my enemy? Certainly only the one who can question myself. And only I, myself, or my brother can question me really. Every Other proves to be my brother and the brother proves to be my enemy. The enemy is our own question as

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[50] Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 87.
[51] Krause, Jill, and Neil Renwick, eds., *Identities in International Relations* (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Richard Ned Lebow, "Identity and International Relations," *International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2008).
[52] Monica Duffy Toft, *Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1.
[53] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Gestalt."[54] The friend-enemy distinction in terms of Carl Schmitt is thus inherent to the primordialist's approach of international relations. Nevertheless, primordialists like Samuel Huntington assume this distinction as a given thing and tend to ignore the abolishment of this distinction within Christianity. Primordialists thus claim that religion is a constitutive as well as a causal element in international affairs (for example, due to the constitution of new blocks, characterized by culture and religion). Therefore, they ignore the fact that the necessity of in-groups versus out-groups is not that necessary for the foundation of identity.[55] The answer of primordialists, facing the status of current international affairs is therefore a typically Neo-Realistic one. Tools and strategies, familiar from the Cold War, like power politics, superior military power, deterrence, non-intervention principle, etc. are said to be required. Girard, however, points to a different understanding of violence as it is assumed by the theory of in- and outgroups or the "clash of civilizations."[56] Rather, the problem of violence is one within, not genuinely between groups since we are all mimetically desire beings.[57] It is only through the scapegoat mechanism that societies transform their manifest internal violence into an external one represented by the friend – enemy distinction.

3.2   Realism: distinct spheres of politics and the desire for power

Hans Morgenthau developed a similar concept of "the political" like Carl Schmitt, relying on a model of intensity: "In his view, politics was never an either/or state of affairs, but always a matter of degree, necessarily depending on *how* intense–and *potentially* violent–a conflict had become."[58] For Morgenthau, conflict and thus politics "was a pervasive facet of human existence. Interstate conflict remained exceptional chiefly because it typically constituted a particularly intense–and thus explosive–form of antagonism. It was there that we most commonly encounter what Schmitt described as potentially violent conflicts between friend and foe."[59] It is also therefore that Morgenthau, having a rather pessimistic view of the human

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[54] Carl Schmitt, *Ex Captivitate Salus: Erfahrungen aus der Zeit 1945/47* (Köln: Greven Verlag, 1950), 89–90. My translation.
[55] Richard Ned Lebow, "Identity and International Relations,". See also Allport's study, first published in 1954, suggesting that in-group attachment does not require hostility against any other stereotype like out-group. Gordon W. Allport and Kenneth Clark, *The Nature of Prejudice,* 25th anniversary ed., [31. print], unabridged. (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Books, 2003).
[56] Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.*
[57] Girard*, Das Ende der Gewalt*, 87.
[58] William E. Scheuerman, *Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond,* Key contemporary thinkers (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 33.
[59] Scheuerman*, Hans Morgenthau*, 34.

nature that he famously stated in the disarmament debate that "[people] do not fight because they have arms. They have arms because they deem it necessary to fight."[60]

A good example of Morgenthau's sense of violence within and between societies is provided in *Politics among Nations*: most of the constituted modern societies condemn violence as a norm in the physical sense while struggling for power within the society. But all societies, so the simple observation, endure the killing of enemies in the struggle for power, for example during war.[61] Girard, Schmitt, and Morgenthau therefore address a simple but important observation regarding diplomacy: the relations between groups (either states or societies) are always different from the relations within groups.[62] Now, neither Schmitt nor Morgenthau mentions mimetic desire or the scapegoat mechanism. However, knowing that both of them relied on Hobbes insights which are, at least partly, build on the insight that if any two desire the same thing conflict is programmed, it is obvious that Schmitt's as well as Morgenthau's theories are aware of the problem of mimetic power–especially since both acknowledge the intensity of internal conflict. Some time before his seminal study *Politics among Nations* appeared, Morgenthau wrote in 1945 about the *animus dominandi*. In his piece "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil," his later famous term "lust for power" came close to Girard's reflection on desire. Interestingly enough, Morgenthau described this "lust for power" as "*desire* for power" in relation to others.

> The other root of conflict and concomitant evil stems from the *animus dominandi*, the desire for power. This lust for power manifests itself as the desire to maintain the range of one's own person with regard to others, to increase it, or to demonstrate it. In whatever disguises it may appear, its ultimate essence and aim is in one of these particular references of one person to others. Centered as it is upon the person of the actor in relation to others, the desire for power is closely related to the selfishness of which we have spoken but is not identical with it.[63]

Parallel to Girard's conception of mimetic rivalry, which also points out the initiating point of mimetic desire beyond the concern of plain survival, a simple selfishness effort, Morgenthau pointed out that the desire for power

> concerns itself … with his position among his fellows once his survival has been secured. Consequently, the selfishness of man has limits; his will to power has none. For while man's vital needs are capable of satisfaction, his lust for power would be

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[60] Hans J. Morgenthau, "Does Disarmament Mean Peace?," in *Arms and Foreign Policy in the Nuclear Age,* ed. Milton J. Rakokove (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 422.
[61] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 30.
[62] Paul Sharp, *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 293.
[63] Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil," *Ethics* 56, no. 1 (October 1945), 13.

satisfied only if the last man became an object of his domination, there being nobody above or beside him, that is, if he became like God.[64]

Acknowledging the position taken by Girard that violence is not a problem between groups but rather one within them, it is obvious that we have to acknowledge the most elementary human relations while addressing the problem of violence. As we have seen an instant ago, Morgenthau's Realism addressed this rather anthropological issue as well. The simple selfishness instinct or will for survival has its limits. The desire for power, concerned with man's positions among his fellows, however, has no limits and is therefore prone to conflict escalation.

Girard sees the only escape from the potential of violence in the mimetic desire in turning to the recommendations of the Sermon of the Mount. Opposite to pagan myth, Girard argues that the Biblical revelation is directed toward unveiling the scapegoat mechanism in criticising the collective prosecution of innocent scapegoats. In the flow of unveiled violence, it only produces a contagion of violence.[65] Turning to the Sermon of the Mount and therefore the cultural mechanisms of Christianity as an escape from the scapegoat-mechanism, resulting from mimetic desire, is certainly not what Carl Schmitt or Hans Morgenthau have accepted or recognized. Schmitt did not because, in his opinion, the demand to love one's enemy was a private one, having no connection whatsoever to the insuperable enmity between groups.[66] Morgenthau did not so because he was convinced of the necessity of the distinction between the official and private sphere of politics because Realism, in Morgenthau's own words,

> maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place. The individual may say for himself: 'Fiat justitia, pereat mundus (Let justice be done, even if the world perish),' but the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care.[67]

Robert Kaplan, for example, goes as far as requesting a "pagan ethos"[68] for leadership. He therefore does not acknowledge the dangers of unveiled violence. But one might assume that

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[64] Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil," 13.

[65] Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York NY: Crossroad Publ. Co., 1997). "It is the contagious rage of the mob or the crowd that we have seen so often–the genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing under the watchful eye of UN peacekeeping troops … the riots in Los Angeles after the beating of Rodney King …" Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, 133.

[66] Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt, 2002), 29–30.

[67] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 9.

[68] Robert D. Kaplan, *Warrior politics: Why leadership demands a Pagan Ethos* (New York: Random House, 2002).

Kaplan should know better.[69] Especially during his journeys, described in such prominent books as *The End of the Earth* or *Balkan Ghosts*, he was interested in how various societies respond to results of state failure by redefining themselves along different, non-material lines such as ethnicity.[70] Others, however, have emphasized that in-group cohesion does not necessarily require out-group hostility (for example, produced by the scapegoat mechanism), that identities are far more flexible than assumed (for example, by Huntington), and that collective identities are always overlapping and cannot be framed as a coherent system.[71] Also, a newer branch of the English School does address just those problems. While it does not address a religious background, it certainly acknowledges the insights of the dangers in stopping at the recognition of politics, especially international politics, as a friend-foe distinction. In turning to cosmopolitanism, solidarists like Andrew Linklater, emphasise the individual over the interest of the state and pursue therefore a solidarist society, opposed to a plural one:[72]

> A pluralist society of states is concerned with reducing inter-state harm and incorporates 'international harm conventions' within its institutional framework, whereas a solidarist society of states incorporates 'cosmopolitan harm conventions', designed to reduce harm done to individual citizens located in separate communities. 'International good citizens' are states, or governments acting for the states, who act to protect the respective social goals of the pluralist, solidarist and other interrelations.[73]

Finally, it is unavoidable to mention one particular phenomenon in international affairs once more: the "ambivalence of the sacred" as Scott Appleby has called it regarding the potential for both – conflict and conflict resolution.[74] Most of those descriptions go back to the distinction made by Émile Durkheim describing this phenomenon as "the sacred and the

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[69] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001).

[70] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia ; a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997)., Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History,* 1st Picador ed. (New York: Picador; Distributed by Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2005). Legend even holds that Bill Clinton's reading of *Balkan Ghosts* is the reason why he did not want to intervene there.

[71] Richard Ned Lebow, "Identity and International Relations,"; Iver B. Neumann, "Self and Other in International Relations,".

[72] Cosmopolitanism in this context is understood as Thomas W. Pogge defines it. He identifies three characteristics of all styles of cosmopolitanism: (1) "individualism:" individuals are accorded the status of "ultimate units of [moral] concern;" (2) "universality:" this (status) applies equally to all human beings; and (3) "generality:" this (status) carries "global [moral] force." Thomas W. Pogge, "Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty," in *Political Reconstructing in Europe: Ethical Perspectives,* ed. Chris Brown (London: Routledge, 1994), 89–90; Caroline Walsh, "Rawls and Walzer on Non-Domestic Justice," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6 (2007), 423–24.

[73] Linklater and Suganami*, The English School of International Relations*, 8.

[74] Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation.*

profane"[75] or, in other words, the sacred and the secular. And indeed, having a look at international relations today, it seems that, there are a growing number of "battles" between the sacred and the profane. Mark Juergensmeyer has argued that religious nationalism holds the potential to start a "new Cold War" between religious groups and the secular West.[76] If this is true, then Girard's anthropological theory of violence can be of future use since almost all theories of violence in the context of international relations rely on Max Weber's dictum of the state's legitimate use and monopoly of violence.[77]

3.3 Rationality in the face of the Apocalypse? Girard and Aron

In *Battling to the End* (original *Achever Clausewitz* – "Thinking Clausewitz to the End") René Girard starts his interpretation of the Prussian General and author of the famous treatise on strategy, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz, with the thesis that, if the trend toward extremes continues, it will lead directly to the extinction of all earthly life.[78] For the first time in history, man is able to use military potential to destroy the earth and the human race multiple times. At the example of Raymond Aron and his rather rational approach in *Clausewitz: A Philosopher of War*, Girard tries to evoke the end of political science in favour of anthropology. Aron himself, however, pointed out that only the "simple-minded" leave it with the alternative of apocalypse or passivity.[79]

The French philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron (1905-1983) is mostly known for his sober-minded Realism and liberal pluralism in studies of international politics, parallel to the philosophical approach of Isaiah Berlin.[80] In his work, Aron placed particular emphasis on the persistence of "the political," meaning the necessity to set action, especially under uncertain conditions. He therefore asks himself always the simple question: "What would I do

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[75] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Transl. by Joseph Ward Swain (Mineola N.Y.: Dover Publications Inc., 2008); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Transl. by Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt, 1987).

[76] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994)., Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State from Christian Militias to Al Qaeda,* Rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). See also Sabina Mihelj, "'Faith in nation comes in different guises': Modernist versions of religious nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007).

[77] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, Hrsg. von Johannes Winckelmann, 5., revidierte Aufl. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1980), I, §17. "The state," Morgenthau pointed out in 1945, "has become indeed a 'mortal God.'" A "God" which "actually delimits the manifestations of the individual desire for power." Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil,".

[78] René Girard and Benoît Chantre, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010); Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* New and rev. ed; with introduction and notes by Colonel F.N. Maude (London: Kegan Paul Trench Trübner & Co., 1908).

[79] Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Den Krieg denken* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen-Verlag, 1980), 482.

[80] Brian C. Anderson, *Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

if I were in the shoes of the actor?"[81] We therefore must assume a rational actor; otherwise any thinking about politics would be useless. Just like Clausewitz, Aron emphasizes that means can indeed be chosen on a rational basis, but the end has not to be so. The option for war as an instrument of politics can thus be indeed rational but not so its object. Due to the plurality of interests and ideologies it is unrealistic to grasp the object of international politics purely theoretically. Not even, as Realists claim, the survival as the end of foreign policy can be proved.[82] In studies about civil wars and genocide, for example during the 1990s in the Balkans, the confusion of means and ends gets obvious. Genocides in the Balkans have been motivated by politics of identity.[83] However, they seldom have been spontaneous, chaotic, or de-centralized actions. In other words, not a means in itself but rather a means to pursue a certain policy and a certain aim.[84]

Girard introduces his reception of Aron with a critical acclaim. During the Cold War, when actors "believed" in the use of deterrence and foreign policy had certain "meaning," Aron's insights were justified. Such a certain "meaning" of foreign policy–for example the surviving of the state or a certain ideology–today does not any longer exist. Anthropology, therefore, which takes into account the radical nature of violence, should replace political science. Aron, so the argument of Girard, tried to frame everything with a political, rather than with a warlike lens.[85] Thus, the allegation of Girard that it is unrealistic to see, as Aron does, "absolute war" (meaning nuclear war) as nothing than a (theoretical) conception. Viewing war as an "isolated act" is a product of enlightenment and its rationality.[86] Positivists, such as Aron, the argument of Girard goes on, believe in rationality in order to close their eyes in front of the possible dangers of our time.[87] Girard uses the example of the Cuban Missile Crisis to summarize his critique at Aron: What if Nikita Khrushchev would have drunk too

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[81] Anderson, *Raymond Aron.*

[82] Murielle Cozette, "Realistic Realism?: American Political Realism, Clausewitz and Raymond Aron on the Problem of Means and Ends in International Politics," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 2004), 443. The interest of survival and conservation of power is particularly emphasized by so called "defensive" Realists. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics.* Others ("offensive" Realists) assume an interest of the maximization of power John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). For a recent comparative piece of this issue see especially Shipping Tang, "Fear in International Politics: Two Positions," *International Studies Review* 10 (2008).

[83] Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

[84] Sinisa Malesevic, "The Sociology of New Wars?: Assessing the Causes and Objectives of Contemporary Violent Conflicts," *International Political Sociology*, no. 2 (2008), 107.

[85] Girard and Chantre, *Battling to the End*, 4.

[86] Girard and Chantre, *Battling to the End*, 6.

[87] Girard and Chantre, *Battling to the End*, 119.

much and would have lost rational control?[88] – A rather weak argument to accuse international relations theory of a lack for the sense of anthropology.

For Aron, violence, also in the nuclear age, is always a persistent element of international politics. But it is neither an ultimate end nor an exclusive mean. International politics is always conducted under the shadow of war but this is not to understand that it is the only motive or interest.[89] What Aron instead criticizes at the rational strategy of (nuclear) deterrence, and what Girad does not see, is the lack of experience. The concept of deterrence is built on knowledge without experience. Rather, the strategists went from analysis directly towards forecast and, even more, to doctrine. Unthinkable terror, once passion is inflamed and massacre is unleashed, Aron also acknowledges, tends to turn into an appearance of normality.[90] The massive bombing of German cities and the civilian population caused horror, for example, in Great Britain – after the war. It is therefore abbreviated to imply that Aron misjudges the extreme nature of violence.

But what follows if we assume, just as Aron with Clausewitz, also in the nuclear age, that war is understood only as an instrument of politics, as a phase and not, as it is often falsely assumed, the end of traditional politics? Only that we can and even must understand and approach "the political" and politics under the aspect of rationality. This is not to say that international relations can and should be understood under the aspect of rational choice. After all, as Keohane pointed out, rationality is "a theoretically useful simplification of reality rather than a true reflection of it."[91] Statesmen, political actors, are neither pure poker players who count on their luck and bluffs, nor pure rational chess players – just as Aron, in the tradition of Realism, does. It is useless, in analytical terms, to grant individuals such an important power of decision. Historians, as Aron holds, justifiably warn us of our affection to confuse personal patterns with the political process at which end a specific person or group of people come to a decision for war peace or. But those who abandon the fiction of the rational acting condemn themselves to hopelessness. If we assume that we are toys of mysterious powers, what can we do other than awaiting the salvation from revolution or death due to nuclear apocalypse?[92] Weapons, Aron holds with Morgenthau, produce permanent risk, not

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[88] Girard and Chantre, *Battling to the End*, 83.

[89] Raymond Aron, *Frieden und Krieg: Eine Theorie der Staatenwelt* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 1963), 397–428.

[90] Aron, *Clausewitz*, 459.

[91] Robert Owen Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 108.

[92] Aron, *Clausewitz*, 486–487.

permanent war.[93] Man, not weapons, causes war. That is particularly because the most fundamental concept in international politics seems to be uncertainty.[94] Nevertheless, if also the use of nuclear weapons follows the same blind powers such as the back and forth of people, what hope remains? asks Aron. The possibility of boundless violence constrains actual violence, which is why Aron thought of absolute war just as a pure theoretical option.[95]

At least, it seems, one thing is common to both Girard and Aron: the insight that it is man, not weapons, who discloses the possibility of the apocalypse. Because, finally, also Aron, quite some time before Girard, acknowledged the anthropological insight that the difficulty of peace is more a problem of the humanness than the animalistic nature of man. In a chapter of the "roots of war as an institution," Aron ends in addressing the dangers of the uncontrolled mimetic rivalry not stopped by instinct just as Girard does: Only man is capable of preferring his own truth to humiliation and revolt. The hierarchy between master and servant will never be definite. "Tomorrow the masters will not need the servants any longer and then they have the power to exterminate them."[96] In the 1970s Aron pronounced his understanding of rationality and Enlightenment which Girard criticises as too rational:

> I belong to the school of thought that Solzhenitsyn calls rational humanism, and says has failed. This rationalism does not imply certain of the intellectual or moral errors Solzhenitsyn attributes to it. Montesquieu maintains a balance between the Eurocentrism of the Enlightment and historicism. … In what sense can we decree the failure of rational humanism? The rationalist is not unaware of the animal impulses in man, and the passions of man in society. The rationalist has long since abandoned the illusion that men, alone or in groups, are reasonable. He bets on the education of humanity, even if he is not sure he will win his wager.[97]

4 Conclusion

Having had a look at Girard's anthropological theory and various themes of international relations, it seems obvious that there is still much to learn from each other. However, Girard's theory is certainly in danger of being overstretched and oversimplified. It is in danger of being overstretched, for example, in using it for every phenomenon that comes along in international relations. The use of anthropological assumptions in order to better understand certain conflicts, especially the problem of unveiled violence, has a potential for issues of

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[93] Aron, *Clausewitz*, 489.
[94] Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Uncertainty," in *Security Studies: An Introduction,* ed. Paul Williams. Reprinted. (London, New York: Routledge, 2009)
[95] Aron, *Clausewitz*, 495.
[96] Aron, *Frieden und Krieg*, 428. My translation.
[97] Raymond Aron, *In Defense of Political Reason: Essays*, Ed. by Daniel J. Mahoney (Lanham Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 170.

international relations in a globalized and interconnected world. It is furthermore in danger of getting oversimplified, for example, in using the scapegoat mechanism as an effortless excuse for explaining certain policies. Considering the often occurring double standards in international politics and the insight that the scapegoat mechanism, in terms of Girard's cultural theory, only "works" if the perpetrators are convinced of the guilt of the victim, it is obvious that it is first and foremost an anthropological theory. International relations theory, however, as Constructivism illustrates, has come to terms with an already large body of literature dealing with the formation of the Self–in terms of Waltz the "first image"–which is certainly intertwined with that of the other "images." However, also rather genuine "third image" approaches to international relations illustrate the danger of what Girard calls a constant competition due to mimetic rivalry on a global scale.[98] Robert Gilpin pointed out that international relations are not only about power but also about wealth.[99] So called "neoclassical Realists"[100] such as Fareed Zakaria, illustrated this point with regard to the globalization of economic growth producing political confidence and national pride leading, eventually, to the "rise of the rest"[101] which is, without doubt, a conflicting one. Desiring what others desire–such as economic growth and wealth–could be a point where Girard's theoretical approach of mimetic desire and rivalry can meet the aspirations of "the rest."

However, adapting anthropological theories, starting with the "first image," to the other two images may proof to be too less to explain each and every political action.[102] Other theories, such as, for example, psychological and socio-psychological ones have shown potential for explaining certain particular issues such as, for example, perception and misperception.[103] But it is certainly too confident to use a one-size-fits-all approach. The example of Raymond Aron and Girard's discussion of Clausewitz and the danger of a nuclear Apocalypse illustrated that, living in this world, we cannot do otherwise than assume, at least some, rationality in politics. This does not mean that international relations scholars, such as

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[98] René Girard and Henri Tincq, "What is Happening Today is Mimetic Rivalry on a Global Scale,".

[99] Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[100] The term "neoclassical Realism" was first coined by Gideon Rose in a 1998 *World Politics* article. Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51 (October 1998).

[101] Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008). Similarly Parag Khanna describes the "rise of the rest" as the phenomena of "How Emerging Powers are Redefining Global Competition." Parag Khanna, *The Second World: How Emerging Powers are Redefining Global Competition in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

[102] Interestingly enough, however, is that it is most often other disciplines–from theology to political science–than anthropology which argue for more anthropology in order to understand contemporary politics.

[103] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976); Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

Aron, were not able to point to the dangers of violence provoked by mimetic desire, unstoppable by instinct. Probably the best and all we can ask for "while the military force heaps itself up around us" is what the historian and English School scholar Herbert Butterfield already asked: "Can the world be made more tolerable in spite of this power which solidifies in great masses amongst nations and empires?"[104] It is therefore that international relations, while looking to anthropological theories such as the one of Girard, must bet, in the words of Aron, "on the education of humanity, even if he is not sure he will win his wager."[105]

Probably the best attempt to pinpoint the discussion between Girard and his accusation of the blind rationality of political science and international relations theory can be found in Morgenthau's *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics.* There, already in 1946, when modern international relation theory was still in its children's shoes, the decried Realist who is still said to think only in terms of harsh power politics and pure rationality pointed out the misunderstandings of the philosophy of rationalism turning into an "instrument of social salvation:"

> The philosophy of rationalism has misunderstood the nature of man, the nature of the social world, and the nature of reason itself. It does not see that man's nature has three dimensions: biological, rational, and spiritual. By neglecting the biological impulse and spiritual aspirations of man it misconstrues the function reason fulfils within the whole of human existence, it distorts the problem of ethics, especially in the political field; and it prevents the natural sciences into an instrument of social salivation for which neither their own name nor the nature of the social world fits them.[106]

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[104] Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954), 12.
[105] Aron, *In Defense of Political Reason*, 170.
[106] Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 5.

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