

## Chapter One

### ON SACRED GROUNDS

Sacred places are sites of infinite beauty. Be they the medieval cathedrals of Europe, the great mosques of the Middle East, or the splendid temples of Asia, the structures that crown sacred places count among the greatest achievements of the civilizations that produced them, extraordinary in their artistry, architecture, and sheer investment of human effort. They are sites of supreme serenity and majesty, overwhelming the visitor in their scale, detail, and wealth.

At the same time, many sacred places have a history of extreme violence and bloodshed. Conflicts over sacred space have triggered ethnic and international conflict and have appeared as symptoms or as byproducts 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, and the mass exodus of 700,000 refugees into India and contributed to the outbreak of the second Indo-Pakistani war. 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 war and led to violent military backlashes against the movement and the Hindu population of Sri Lanka. In the decade following the Iranian

revolution, pilgrim deaths in Mecca from violent protests, terrorist attacks, and one hostage crisis in the Grand Mosque exceeded one thousand. Over six hundred mosques were destroyed by Serbs during the ethnic war in Bosnia.

Around the globe, disputes have erupted over the ownership of sacred sites, the desecration or destruction of tombs, temples, churches, mosques, and shrines, and demands for free exercise of controversial rituals on pilgrim routes or burial grounds. These disputes afflict sacred places across states, regions, and religious traditions: it is difficult to conceive of a sacred site of significance that has not, at some point in its history, been subject to conflict and contention, nor is there a corner of the globe free of such disputes at present time.<sup>1</sup> Appealing to religious absolutes, conflicts at sacred places mobilize tribal, nationalist, and ethnic sentiments and lead to violence that spreads rapidly beyond the boundaries of the sacred place. As in Jerusalem, conflicts over sacred space are often at the core of longstanding disputes, thwarting attempts at peaceful resolution by offering opportunities for the escalation of violence.

In spite of the prevalence of disputes over sacred space and their grave consequences, the causes and characteristics of conflict over sacred space remain understudied. Indeed, conflicts over sacred places have yet to be recognized as an independent category of disputes worthy of special attention. Although the importance of specific conflicts has been noted by historians, geographers, students of comparative politics, and even lawyers and novelists,<sup>2</sup> no attempt has been made by political scientists to generate systematic and general findings beyond recognizing the mobilization potential of conflict over sacred space. 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.<sup>3</sup>

This volume is an investigation into the causes, properties, and potential means for the management of conflicts over sacred sites. My research is guided by two basic questions: Why are so many sacred sites plagued by intractable conflict? How can these conflicts be mitigated?

### **The Causes and Consequences of Conflicts over Sacred Places**

Sacred sites are prone to conflict because they provide valuable resources for both religious and political actors. To believers, sacred sites offer the possibility of communicating with the divine, receiving divine favors, and achieving insight into the deeper meanings of their faith. These characteristics can lead to competition between religious groups who wish to control a sacred

space in order both to exclude rivals from practicing potentially conflicting (and thus sacrilegious) rituals and to assert their own legitimacy.

Because believers value these sites, they become attractive targets for political actors as well. By controlling sacred sites, political actors hope to control believers, the religious movements they form, the leadership hierarchies of these movements, and their assets. The characteristics of sacred sites thus create the potential for conflict not only between competing religious groups but also between religious groups and political actors.

Conflicts over sacred places are particularly difficult to resolve because sacred sites pose an indivisibility problem: they cannot be shared. Political scientists have tended to dismiss indivisibility as an unlikely cause for conflict, arguing that most contested goods are entirely divisible.<sup>4</sup> Sacred places are one exception to that rule. They are indivisible because the religious prerequisites for safeguarding these sites from desecration require believers to have complete and exclusive control over them. Thus, competing groups may resort to violence in order to gain control of such a site.

If sacred places are highly contested but cannot be shared, how can these conflicts be controlled or even suspended? The mitigation of conflicts over sacred places requires recognizing that the religious elements of these conflicts are inextricably intertwined with their political elements. Sacred places translate religious ideas into political action. The management of conflicts over sacred sites thus requires cooperation between political leaders who are interested in promoting conflict resolution and religious leaders who are capable of shaping and reshaping the meaning, value, and parameters of sacred places to believers. At the very least, the mitigation of conflicts over sacred places requires consultation between political leaders and religious experts who can shed light on how the religious meaning, value, and parameters of a sacred site impact the political needs of a religious community.

Such a synthesis may seem counterintuitive to those readers immersed in a Western Enlightenment tradition that considers the separation of religion and politics to be a precondition for concord. Political leaders with similar preconceptions have sought to manage conflicts over sacred sites by means of purely political maneuvers, such as attempting to force competing groups to share a sacred space, dividing the space between competing groups or excluding one or more groups from a contested space. These strategies have consistently failed because they did not satisfy the underlying religious needs of parties to these disputes.

Political leaders who succeed in eliciting the cooperation of religious leaders are often able to manage conflicts over sacred places. They may even succeed in suspending conflict over sacred sites if they can mobilize influential

religious leaders who are able to redefine the meaning, value, or parameters of a sacred site in a manner conducive to conflict resolution. Because a reconfiguration of sacred space along these lines requires the confluence of political will, significant religious authority, and an appropriate window of opportunity, it is a relatively rare event. Where such cooperation has occurred, however, the interaction between a society, its political leaders, and its religious leaders offers insight into the dynamics of religious and political decision making and into the intersection between religion, politics, and conflict.

### **Methodological Challenges**

Scores have lost their lives as a result of Catholic-Protestant violence over marching routes in Northern Ireland. Hundreds have died in Jewish-Muslim disputes over sacred sites in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Thousands of Hindus and Muslims have been killed in conflicts over temples and mosques in India. 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.

My primary reason for studying conflicts over sacred places is the potential that these cases harbor for understanding how religion, politics, and conflict intersect. An analysis of conflict over sacred space allows me to focus in on one clearly defined instance in which a religious phenomenon, namely, the sacred, is translated into a political outcome, namely, conflict. In so doing, I wish to draw in equal measure on the disciplines of religious studies and political science, building a bridge between two disciplines that have not enjoyed a sustained interaction in the post-Enlightenment West.

The events of September 2001 brought increased public attention to the link between religion and violence. Ill prepared for a nuanced study of religion, many international relations scholars fell back on familiar tropes and resorted to framing religious phenomena in traditional political terms. In these works, religion is treated as yet another ideology, a form of identity, a manifestation of soft power, or a transnational actor. Few of these analyses delve into the content of religious beliefs, doctrines, practices, or rituals. Fewer yet attempt to provide a causal chain that links the political phenomena that need to be explained to their religious foundations.<sup>5</sup>

The primary obstacle political scientists face in writing about religion and politics is methodological. In the absence of a continuous exchange between the

two disciplines, political science and religious studies have followed diverging trajectories and developed distinct and often incongruous ontological and epistemological practices. This is unfortunate because, as I intend to show below, religion and politics are inextricably intertwined. Not only can political ideas have significant implications for religion (a topic of investigation beyond the scope of this volume) but religious ideas can have undeniably political implications. This is particularly true in the case of sacred space where religious requirements are tantamount to political demands.

The mainstream of American political science scholarship remains committed to positivist, materialist, and pragmatic social science aimed at testing falsifiable hypotheses and conducting reproducible research. Political scientists strive for analyses that yield generalizable results and lend themselves, potentially, to prediction and policy making. On the other hand, students of religion in general and sociologists of religion in particular are as interested in material conditions as they are in the ideational factors that form the backdrop for these material conditions. They often abandon the pretense of objectively studying facts in favor of a subjective point of view that accepts beliefs at face value. Instead of trying to simplify or abstract from their subject matter, they tend to approach their area of research with an attention to detail, context, and complexity. This kind of analysis is not necessarily positivist, rarely interested in causal inference, and entirely unsuitable for prediction or policy guidance.

A study of sacred places that draws in equal measure on insights from the study of religion and the study of politics thus entails sacrifices as well as opportunities. Sociologists and anthropologists of religion would pause to consider the challenges in defining the key terms of their analyses, concepts like “the sacred,” “desecration,” and even “religion.” They would also balk at addressing Confucian, Jewish, and Hopi sacred space in one and the same chapter. I have sought to define the key elements of this analysis as tersely, comprehensively, and pragmatically as possible and, in tension with my instincts as a student of religion, have attempted to draw conclusions about sacred space across religious groups as well as across space and time, often setting aside contextual differences in order to arrive at generalizable hypotheses, causal arguments, and modest policy implications. I have dodged altogether the responsibility of grappling with the definition of “religion.”

At the same time, treating religion seriously poses challenges to political science methodology. Grappling with beliefs in miracles or in one’s ability to communicate with the gods requires the introduction of flexibility into the standards of evidence and proof to which political scientists are accustomed. The nature of the available evidence permits cautious conclusions about likely causes, common trends, and probable outcomes, but the number of cases is too

small and the range too varied to permit very rigorous comparative tests, particularly when dealing with the constricted universe of successfully managed disputes over sacred sites. Much of my effort, particularly in the second half of this volume, is therefore dedicated to producing and illustrating hypotheses rather than testing or falsifying arguments.

The result is a deductive argument with elements that may strike political science scholars as unusual but, I hope, not entirely alien. Sociologists of religion may find my efforts at generalizing and abstracting discomfiting but, I hope, not entirely illegitimate. Ultimately, I shall have achieved a modicum of success if students of politics and students of religion view my efforts with an equal amount of suspicion.

### **International Relations, Sociology of Religion, and Social Constructivism**

The gulf separating the disciplines of international relations and religious studies need not be exaggerated. The emerging social constructivist movement, in particular, has opened avenues for dialogue between these two areas of study. Social constructivism's ability to partially bridge the gap between the sociology of religion and political science stems from its roots in both sociology and politics.<sup>6</sup> Constructivism emerged concomitantly with the resurgence of interest in religion and international affairs, as political scientists began experimenting with interdisciplinary theories that would enable research into questions involving ideas, identities, beliefs, norms, or culture. Rather than trace the causal impact of ideas, constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas in constituting identities and interests.<sup>7</sup>

Social constructivists problematize social facts and explore how agents employ ideas to shape these facts. Religion is one such fact and sacred space is one such idea. Agents constrain and shape social structures, which in turn constrain and shape agents, a process termed "structuration."<sup>8</sup> This process accounts for the institutionalization of identities and interests over time, as agent-driven and structure-driven effects reinforce one another. At the same time, structuration can also explain changes in identities and interests that emerge as agent and structure respond to one another.

Social constructivists share with students of religion an interest in how beliefs develop, spread through societies, and shape the identities of these societies.<sup>9</sup> Constructivists share with political scientists an interest in how ideas interact with material interests and power to constrain or enable action.<sup>10</sup> Later in this volume, I will employ this approach to elaborate how religious

actors produce the social fact that is sacred space and how their ability to do so is constrained by the beliefs of their followers.

Social constructivism has successfully occupied some of the middle ground between sociology and political science.<sup>11</sup> But it has neither made an attempt nor succeeded at bringing the majority of scholars from both disciplines into its fold. Whereas some scholars in the field of religious studies take the construction and deconstruction of sacred space very far, other have no desire to take a critical view of religious structures or beliefs. Such scholars choose instead to adopt an interpretivist stance and study these structures as given. Applied to the case of sacred space, such an approach would lend insight into how believers view sacred sites, detail the functions this space fulfills for believers, explore how believers use the space, and examine conflicts from the vantage point of participants.

The political science community has received social constructivism with similar skepticism and has persisted in privileging material factors over ideational factors and emphasized causal arguments over constitutive logic.<sup>12</sup> Regarded through this lens, conflicts over sacred places result from bargaining failures. Force is introduced into these conflicts when parties cannot reach agreement on how to divide or substitute for these spaces.

These three approaches—the interpretivist, the materialist, and the constructivist—offer contrasting accounts of the causes of conflicts over sacred sites and diverging explanations for the role that religious actors might play in ameliorating these disputes. Used in isolation, each approach provides a distorting lens through which to view this problem. In the interpretivist account, sacred sites are coveted because they offer access to the divine, and religious actors are capable of shaping these sites because of divine power vested in them. This understanding ignores the political dimensions of these conflicts and places religion out of the reach of politics.<sup>13</sup> In the materialist account, conflicts over sacred places are mere real estate disputes, and religious actors become political actors in disguise. This position subsumes religion within politics and overlooks the ideational aspects of these conflicts. Finally, by focusing all attention on the construction of sacred space by religious leaders, social constructivists risk exaggerating the ease with which such space can be created, reconfigured, and abolished. Constructivists must be able to explain how ideas about the sacred differ from other types of ideas, what distinguishes religious leadership from political leadership, and how power constrains and enables the reconfiguration of these ideas.

These three accounts are contrasting but not contradictory. Indeed, the one does not make sense without the other. By combining insights from all three, I hope to arrive at an understanding that is as sensitive to the weight of religious

ideas as to the processes through which such ideas are constructed and redefined, as well as their material underpinnings and their political ramifications.

Because I see these three approaches as complementary, I employ them in succession in the chapters that follow. In chapter 2, for example, I use an interpretivist approach to understand the functions that sacred space fulfills for believers, followed by a constructivist framework designed to explain how sacred sites become institutionalized. In chapter 3, I borrow the concept of indivisibility from political science in order to gain a handle on the challenge of sharing sacred space. Yet the three components of my indivisibility definition rest on the interpretivist analysis from chapter 2. My efforts at weaving these theoretical strands together culminate in chapter 6, in which I use all three approaches to delimit the conditions under which religious leaders can reshape sacred space in a manner conducive to conflict resolution.

### **Power and the Sacred**

The study of conflicts over sacred space that follows seeks to be as sensitive to the religious aspects of these conflicts as it is to their political dimension. By anchoring the analysis in a social constructivist approach, I can expose both the manner in which social beliefs and practices surrounding sacred space produce political outcomes and the way in which political capabilities and interests shape social understandings of sacred space.

At the same time, I wish to differentiate my analysis from prior research on the politics of sacred space in three important ways. First and foremost, I am more interested in the political ramifications of religion than in the religious ramifications of politics. Second, I recognize the power of religious leaders to influence disputes over sacred space without requiring these actors to engage in interfaith peacemaking. Third, while I am interested in the conditions under which the parameters of sacred space can be manipulated, I do not regard this space as being infinitely malleable or without inherent significance prior to manipulation. It is worth dwelling briefly on these differences in order to clarify what it is that I am *not* arguing in this volume. Three research programs in religion and politics that bear some similarity to my argument deserve scrutiny.

The first of these research programs, initiated by Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht, investigates the manner in which political power shapes sacred space.<sup>14</sup> Friedland and Hecht's work focuses on the manner in which political movements utilize sacred sites as nationalist resources in order to mobilize followers, forge a national identity, and legitimize their political programs.

This exploitation of sacred space is most effective, the authors argue, for those movements that seek to replace the secular underpinnings of a state with religious foundations.

The study of sacred space and its political ramifications in this volume seeks to complement Friedland and Hecht's analysis of political interest and its impact on sacred space. The difference between the two accounts is one of emphasis. I have placed religious actors and interests at the starting point of my analysis in order to investigate how religious principles regarding sacred space produce a political effect, namely, conflict. In emphasizing that political actors and interests configure sacred space in turn, Friedland and Hecht complete the structuration cycle: political agents shape and are shaped by religious structures, just as religious agents shape and are shaped by political structures. Given the significant strides already made in exploring how political power shapes sacred space, I have chosen to launch my analysis from the understudied aspect of this recursive cycle: the religious microfoundations of political violence. Consequently, the argument in the following pages places religious actors and religious ideas front and center.

A second research program in religion and politics, the study of faith-based peacemaking, bears some similarity to the argument proposed in this book. Douglas Johnston, R. Scott Appleby, Marc Gopin, Muhammad Abu-Nimer, and others have emphasized the potential role that religious leaders and religious organizations can play in mediating international and sectarian disputes.<sup>15</sup> These authors have suggested that religious actors are uniquely suited for promoting interfaith dialogue because they can draw on religiously embedded notions of justice, reconciliation, and nonviolence, while also credibly signaling their neutrality to warring parties.

The argument I propose below bears some similarity to this literature. Yet my focus in the coming pages is not on bilateral approaches to conflict resolution, in which religious actors act as intermediaries to bridge the differences between disparate religious communities, but on unilateral conflict management, in which religious leaders persuade their own followers to reconceptualize the meaning of sacred space in a manner that can reduce conflict over a sacred site. These same actors are intimately involved in conflicts over sacred places and can thus provide both opportunities for and constraints on the moderation of these disputes. If snubbed, they are as likely to aggravate a conflict as they are to mitigate it.

The third research program that I wish to differentiate my argument from is the poststructuralist study of sacred space. Poststructuralists have focused on the manner in which sacred places are read, legitimated, reinterpreted, and appropriated, as well as the political implications of these acts. The very

definition of a space as sacred, according to some scholars in this tradition, is a political act tantamount to conquest and appropriation.<sup>16</sup> Sacredness is entirely contingent on power, and thus conflict and sanctity are synonymous: it is the struggle over the legitimate use and ownership of a space that makes it sacred.

In the absence of such a struggle, sacred space has no real substance. “Nothing is inherently sacred. Not full of meaning, the sacred, from this perspective, is an empty signifier,” write David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal: “Since a sacred space could signify almost anything, its meaningful contours can become almost infinitely extended through the work of interpretation.”<sup>17</sup> Along similar lines, Jonathan Z. Smith writes: “There is nothing inherently or essentially clean or unclean, sacred or profane. There are situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed.”<sup>18</sup> These authors seek to “subvert” the kind of interpretivist approach to sacred space that I use as the foundation for my argument in the next chapter by accusing it of “analytic naivete.”<sup>19</sup>

I find this poststructuralist analysis of sacred space to be both counterintuitive and unhelpful in the context of seeking pragmatic solutions to conflicts over sacred sites. The suggestion that all actors are equally capable of shaping space at will is unpersuasive, particularly in the absence of a distinction between the respective abilities of actors to do so or a discussion of the manner in which precedent, tradition, habit, and path dependence constrain the abilities of even the most influential actors to shape space. In other words, poststructuralist approaches seem to overlook the fact that actors seeking to implement change face existing social facts that are resistant to change. The historical and social weight that rests on sacred sites, as a function of decades, even centuries, of continuous practice, grants these locations a very real permanence that can be difficult and costly to challenge. Symbols are not merely superstructure: power has a cultural as well as a material base.<sup>20</sup>

Poststructuralist approaches also tend to be hopelessly vague in their definition of sacred space: a leading study insists that an inventory of sacred space “would *have to* include the following sites: cities, homes, schools, cemeteries, hospitals, asylums and prisons, tourist attractions, museums, and even shopping malls.”<sup>21</sup> Seemingly uninterested in providing an accurate diagnosis of the causes of conflict over sacred space, let alone offer policy recommendations for addressing such disputes, authors in this intellectual tradition are prone to adopting opaque language that can be difficult to decipher. What are we to make of the claim that sacred places “formed a recursive series of metaphoric equivalences”?<sup>22</sup>

Though the approach presented in this volume is distinct from the three research programs examined above, I have borrowed components from all

three in constructing my argument. Where appropriate, I have incorporated lessons regarding the political foundations of conflicts over sacred sites in order to complement my focus on the religious foundations of these conflicts. Estimating the importance of a sacred site, for example, a task tackled in the next chapter, requires taking into account both religious principles and the manner in which political events, exogenous to these principles, have an impact on how a society values a site. I adopt the faith-based peacemaking literature's insight that religious leaders cannot be overlooked as one strives to resolve sectarian disputes. I will argue, however, that the power of religious actors in mitigating disputes stems not from their stance as neutral parties but rather from their implication in the construction and maintenance of sacred places. I also embrace the poststructuralist appreciation of the role that society plays in shaping and transforming the parameters of sacred space. Yet I qualify the ability of actors to do so based on their location in the religious hierarchy, the importance of the relevant sacred site, and the quality of change attempted. Unlike many in the poststructuralist tradition, I am less interested in changes in the manner in which sacred places are read or interpreted and more interested in changes in the rules governing access to and behavior within sacred places that are conducive to conflict resolution.

The first challenge facing a comprehensive analysis of conflicts over sacred sites is the variety of sacred places across religious movements. I introduce a semblance of order into the subject matter in the next chapter in two steps. First, I define the boundaries of the category of sacred places by introducing attributes common to all these places and by examining the functions that they fulfill for believers. Second, I classify sacred sites based on the extent to which they have become institutionalized. I then show that institutionalization determines the *centrality* and *vulnerability* of sacred places. Unlike alternative ways of categorizing sacred places, this typology permits an estimate of the importance of a sacred site to believers and, in turn, an evaluation of the likelihood of confrontations over these sites.

In chapter 3, my analysis turns toward political science for insight into why sacred places become contested in the first place. Unlike disputes over secular territory, conflicts over sacred sites must contend with an indivisibility problem. This indivisibility problem stems from the manner in which believers view their sacred sites and is anchored, in turn, in the characteristics of sacred space that I elucidated in chapter 2. Sacred sites are indivisible because believers perceive the sanctity of these sites to be dependent on their integrity, because believers perceive the boundaries of these sites to be unambiguously defined, and because believers will not relinquish a site in exchange

for substitutes. Since these conflicts cannot be resolved by means of partition, sharing, or side payments, as would standard territorial disputes, conflict erupts whenever more than one group makes claim to a sacred site.

Chapter 4 analyzes how the potential difficulty posed by indivisibility is translated into a concrete problem whenever a sacred place becomes the subject of contest between groups. That such disputes are common derives from the value that sacred sites offer to competing religions, ruthless rulers, real estate developers, or conquerors. Five widespread historical trends create rivalry over sacred spaces, either among religious groups or between religious and secular forces. Disputes stem from the splitting of religions into rival factions, the fusion of opposed beliefs through syncretism, competition over sacred space as real estate, the use of sacred space as a force multiplier, and the vulnerability of sacred space as a social symbol.

Are conflicts over contested sacred sites inevitable? Because of the indivisibility challenge, cases of peaceful coexistence at sacred places are few and far between. Two exceptions to this pattern bear scrutiny: believers from competing religious groups can worship peacefully in one and the same space if that space is of exceedingly low centrality and vulnerability or if a third party is willing to invest significant resources to regulate access and monitor behavior. This last scenario, while common, offers a partial solution at best to the conflict between the parties. Rather than resolve the dispute, the presence of an enforcer merely constrains the groups' ability to express their claims by means of violent action. Resolution by fiat creates tensions that seethe under the surface, threatening to erupt as soon as one party perceives a change in the balance of power.

Chapter 5 is the first of three chapters in this book to offer case studies of policy responses to conflicts over sacred space. In contrast to the policy recommendations that follow in the second half of the volume, this chapter focuses on causes of conflict *mis*-management. The two cases examined in this section are the Indian government's failure to prevent disaster at the Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhumi in Ayodhya in 1992 and the mishandling of the Israeli-Palestinian Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary dispute in 2000. The Hindu-Muslim conflict in Ayodhya culminated in the destruction of the disputed mosque and led to sectarian violence across India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Jerusalem conflict proved pivotal to the collapse of the Camp David negotiations and the ensuing intifada. Both cases demonstrate the futility of applying traditional conflict resolution approaches to sacred space, such as attempts at forcing groups to share disputed space or barring groups from that space altogether.

The second half of this book offers an alternative vision for addressing disputes over sacred spaces, anchored in an argument about the power of

religious leaders to shape opinions about the meaning and significance of these sites. I present the theoretical basis for this argument in chapter 6, as I investigate the capabilities of religious actors and the limits thereon. Viewed from a social constructivist vantage point, sacred space, like other social institutions, is the product of social interaction. The initiation rites enshrining the laws, symbols, and social practices that define a sacred institution must, however, be constructed by experts, since they involve complex rituals that must take place in the presence of the divine. This should lead us to suspect that religious actors may be able to redefine sacred space in a manner supportive of dispute resolution. The ability of religious actors to reconfigure sacred space depends on a tripartite balance of power among the political leadership, religious leadership, and the community to which the site is sacred.

Chapters 7 and 8 offer two detailed case studies of the reconfiguration of sacred space by religious actors leading to successful conflict suspension. In the first case, conflict between Muslim and Jewish worshippers on the Noble Sanctuary/Temple Mount in Jerusalem was averted for two decades as the result of an unprecedented ruling by rabbinical authorities in the aftermath of the Six Day War. This ruling, issued in October 1967, prohibited Jewish access to this sacred site and thus drastically, if temporarily, reduced the likelihood of interfaith conflict at the site. The Israeli government encouraged this ruling and created the conditions for its proclamation.

In the second case, the intervention of Muslim religious authorities successfully resolved a dramatic hostage crisis in Islam's holiest shrine, the Grand Mosque in Mecca, in November 1979. The unique relationship between the House of Saud and the Saudi *ulema*, drawing on the historical bond between ibn Saud and the descendants of Abd al-Wahhab, enabled the ulema and the Saudi regime to collude in permitting the use of force in the Grand Mosque.

I conclude, in chapter 9, with the implications of my argument for the management of conflicts over sacred places and for the analysis of territorial disputes and religiously motivated violence more generally. Aside from obtaining information about the parameters of sacred sites from experts, I urge decision makers to consult religious leaders in order to obtain insight into the meaning and significance of sacred sites to believers. These leaders may even be able to assist in the management of conflict over sacred places by modifying the definition and significance of these sites to believers.

Beyond the immediate realm of sacred space, my analysis also has implications for the study of territorial disputes. The indivisibility of sacred places can shed light on the manner in which territorial disputes become increasingly resistant to resolution. Religious actors can imbue contested secular territory with religious characteristics so as to mobilize believers in defense of a

territory. Disputed territory can even take on quasi-sacred qualities over time if participants begin conceiving of the space as civil-religious sacred space. Influential leaders can undo this process and resolve the most entrenched territorial disputes by persuading their domestic audiences to rethink their perceptions of the disputed territory.

I end this volume by discussing the future of research on religion and international relations. Concerned with current trends in the analysis of religion and international politics, I propose an approach that traces the pathways by which religion affects international affairs to their origins in the content and meaning of religion while at the same time offering generalizable implications at the international level of analysis. This *thick religion* methodology requires a sensitivity to theology, religious organization, iconography, ceremony, and belief but also a willingness to generalize from particular religious movements, regions, or instances to arrive at broader conclusions for the study of international relations.