



SUSTAINABLE DIPLOMACY  
ECOLOGY, RELIGION, AND  
ETHICS IN MUSLIM–CHRISTIAN  
RELATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

Among policy makers and scholars of foreign affairs, the predominant form of analyzing relations between nation-states has long been through the lens of a *Realist* worldview. An approach that views all nation-states' political interactions as being motivated exclusively by the desire to acquire, retain, and project power, the Realist view of international relations is based on a broad set of secularist-materialist assumptions regarding human exchanges.<sup>1</sup> While a Realist analysis can provide many remarkable insights as to the motivations of nation-states in the context of economic and military competition and conflict, it is less capable of anticipating, and less inclined to privilege, the impact of individual human motivations, religious and social movements, and identity-based politics on the conduct of international relations.

A religious analysis of international relations widens the origins of nation-state behavior to include not only policy formation based on economic and geostrategic considerations, but also other critical factors.<sup>2</sup> Such factors are found within a nation's modern religious culture, which is influenced by its spiritual history, and the structure of belief of *the people*, and not simply the institutions, which make up a country's leadership as well as its constituency. An exploration and analysis of the religious culture in a nation-state will thus play the central role in determining the parameters of a religious analysis of international relations.

For the purposes of this book, the term "religious culture" will refer to a particular dimension of the social milieu in which all people live, and that is most often distinguished by geographic locale, ethnicity, and nationality. Religious culture teaches people to use language, metaphors, and appeals to moral and ethical norms that are drawn from the dominant religious traditions of their particular geographic locale, but that for many have ostensibly become secularized. As a political phenomenon, religious culture comes into play in the following contexts: (1) in the use of religious symbols or language by a national government or other actors to convey particular meaning or justify supposedly secular actions to its own general populace or other international actors; (2) through religious language and imagery as a vehicle for conveying meaning and value between members of the general population; (3) as an appeal by the state and individuals to moral and ethical norms drawn from what were originally religious sources (particularly, but not limited to, the dominant religious tradition of the respective nation-state); (4) the cultivation by national leadership of the perception that the state acts in concert with, or out of sincere respect toward, the dominant religious institutions and traditions in the nation-state; and (5) the governmental use of religious ties and traditions to fortify

the legitimacy of the state leadership and apparatus in the eyes of the people.

This book will assert that by acknowledging the intimate tie between religion and power, a clearer understanding of nation-state conduct, as well as various potential means of improving transnational cooperation, can be attained. To separate the secular from the religious, as most international relations analysis prefers to do, is to block an important angle of interpretation regarding the motivation and behavior of national leaders. It is also probable that in separating religion from political power, the observer runs the risk of not seeing what is taking place on the ground. As the anthropologist Henry Munson, Jr. has noted:

The relation between religion and power is invariably distorted when we focus exclusively on the overtly political aspects of religion or the overtly religious aspects of power. Without some idea of how a religion is understood by ordinary people in their everyday lives, we cannot begin to assess the political impact of the religious rhetoric of rulers and rebels. Conversely, if we restrict our attention to the overtly religious facets of power, we exaggerate their significance and ignore others—like force, fear, and the rage of people who cannot find work.<sup>3</sup>

### Thesis/Questions

In light of the limitations of the Realist approach, this book will argue the critical importance of employing a religious analysis of international relations, as an indispensable addition to existing approaches for interpreting and improving relations between nation-states. To this end, this book will propose a method for constructing a religious analysis of international relations with the specific goal of providing *a new means of identifying the theo-ethical motivations of a nation-state and its population in its relations across international borders*. This goal will be pursued by applying this new method of religious analysis to a particular case study: the modern relationship between Spain and Morocco.

The objective of this book is informed by the central hypothesis that many of the theo-ethical norms that affect and guide the life of a nation's people (including its leaders) can be identified through observing a nation-state's religious traditions through the hermeneutic of the land it occupies. To accomplish this task, the modern analyst of international affairs must examine the "Ecological Location" of the nation's population and its "Ecological Footprint."

A creation of the Christian ethicist Daniel Spencer, Ecological Location is a means of examining the human relationship with the greater Creation, including the human's relationship with the land he or she inhabits and/or controls.<sup>4</sup> By illumining the human relationship to greater Creation, Ecological Location provides other insights into the norms guiding human conduct. These insights include new approaches to understanding

community formation, relationships with those identified as “other,” and the words and phrases people use to describe how human relationships with human and nonhuman members of Creation are established, understood, and maintained. Such social and linguistic phenomena not only describe what a people need and do in order to survive, but also what the religious culture in their respective countries has taught them to believe about the origin, purpose, and value of the human and nonhuman world. By identifying and understanding the Ecological Location of one’s own nation, as well as in the country or countries with which it is in dialogue, a diplomat comes into possession of an important means of communication and bridge-building. For by determining the common points of agreement within the Ecological Locations of two different nation-states, one may identify common ground for cooperation that translates across differences of nationality, religion, ethnicity, and culture. Simultaneously, Ecological Location can be a highly insightful means of beginning to expose the roots of conflict and the nature of inequalities that exist within and between communities.

An equally important tool to analyze the case study is found in Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees’ *Ecological Footprint*. Wackernagel and Rees have created a way to measure the impact of an individual, a community, or even a nation upon Earth’s biosphere. By determining the amount of hectares of land a nation uses in generating the amount of natural resources it consumes, Wackernagel and Rees’ analysis calculates how far beyond its borders a nation must go in order to sustain its levels of production, consumption, and pollution. While one nation might live within the means of its own frontiers, another may have an Ecological Footprint that stretches around the globe. The use of the Ecological Footprint in gauging the relationship between two neighboring nation-states or bioregions is invaluable, as it demonstrates not only each nation or region’s level of dependency upon the other, but also the degree to which their existing ecological relationship provides an avenue for conflict resolution and cooperation.

This book will also introduce two new concepts into international relations discourse: Ecological Realism and Sustainable Diplomacy. Underlying both of these ideas is the notion of approaching diplomacy as an ecological discourse. Ecological Realism is the philosophical counterpoint to traditional Realism. In contrast to the anthropocentric assumptions of Realism, Ecological Realism is eco-centric. While Realism focuses on the centrality of military and economic might, Ecological Realism provides new definitions of power that center on the nation-state’s and the bioregion’s ability to ecologically sustain themselves. Ecological Realism argues that the Earth economy is an indispensable arbiter of value, and that human monetary systems do not reflect the realities of resource scarcity or the limits of the natural world.

The fate of humans and nonhumans are inherently linked together through our common location within the Earth’s biosphere. Thus, power

in the context of Ecological Realism focuses on the ability of communities to control their own levels of consumption. Societies are either sustainable or not sustainable. Under Ecological Realism, survival is no longer isolated to one group; it is a collective global goal and an unmitigated good, as all human and nonhuman creatures share the reality of one common fate. For this reason, Ecological Realism requires that the practitioners of diplomacy move beyond an individualistic nation-state to nation-state dialogue and work toward a systemic multilevel approach to foreign relations that focuses on promoting the health of bioregions. Under the rubric of Ecological Realism, either we must all come together to acknowledge the inherent limitations of the biosphere, to act in accordance with the realities of Earth's capacity to support human consumption, or perish together by denying these truths.

Sustainable Diplomacy converts Ecological Realism into policy and practice. To this end, Sustainable Diplomacy maps a terrain that links religion, land, and power in order to analyze the conduct of human communities and their relationship to the biosphere. Sustainable Diplomacy is not only interested in fomenting better relationships between heads of state; rather, it also aims to promote better long-term relations between national populations. This calls for a more intimate and profound understanding of the lives, beliefs, and concerns of people "on the ground." Therefore Sustainable Diplomacy requires willingness to abandon old perceptions and embrace new means of communication. A practitioner of Sustainable Diplomacy must be familiar with the religious beliefs of the populations he or she is engaging, their relationship with the land they live on, and the relationships they carry on with those they call "neighbor." For this reason, Sustainable Diplomacy embraces a systemic approach to international affairs, one in which there is authentic room for NGOs, religious organizations, and various peoples' movements to contribute to policy formation and act as diplomats in their own right. Sustainable Diplomacy's practitioners will be called upon to be creative and innovative actors in an effort to inspire people to "turn to Earth" as a model for conduct and long-term sustainability.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, Sustainable Diplomats will be among the most articulate advocates for bringing religious and ecological analysis of international affairs into the core practices of diplomacy.

In a world of escalating economic competition, the language employed to describe the search for increasingly scarce resources is more and more evident in public discourse. Yet the language of this book comes not from the vocabulary of the marketplace, which in the Realist approach makes a commodity of all nonhuman (and much human) life. Rather, this project is concerned with the language that reflects people's spiritual ties, their subsequent understanding of religious responsibility to their greater surroundings, and their concern for future generations. It is from this language that new policies will emerge, which will meet people where they live while inviting them to seek new directions for the future. Such a language emerges from the awareness of living within a greater biosphere

that is not designed by human hands. This language is heard in conversations that often begin in cafés, at schools, at dinner tables, and in many different places of work rather than in the traditional corridors of power.

### The Case Study

The choice of Spanish–Moroccan relations as the geographic focus of this book is based on four considerations. First, the modern relationship between Morocco and Spain brings into high relief the stark differences between two countries whose economies, political affiliations, government structures, and traditions differ. Second, the Moroccan–Spanish relationship offers a wonderful opportunity to explore how a religious analysis of international relations might serve to interpret relations between what are two increasingly contentious political entities: those nations in conflict whose respective religious cultures are defined by Islam and Christianity. Third, this choice of case study reflects my own long-standing fascination with the study and practice of Muslim–Christian dialogue, and my abiding interest in exploring the ecological dimension of interreligious dialogue within international relations. Finally, despite any and all differences between Morocco and Spain, it is the contention of this inquiry that together, through a common history, genealogy, and geography, Spain and Morocco comprise a single bioregion. The acknowledgment of this common identity could be the basis of an entirely new relationship between these two countries.

My desire to explore the relationship between Spain and Morocco is also drawn from personal experience. During two years of working as an English teacher in Seville, in the southern Spanish province of Andalucía, I spent nearly all of my free time traveling in Morocco. The more time I spent crossing the Moroccan–Spanish border, the more symmetry I came to see between the people, land, language, culture, and architecture of these two nations. Through hearing and learning to speak the heavily Arabic-influenced Andalus dialect of Spanish spoken in Seville, to working in the shadow of the twelfth-century minaret that is the symbol of the city, I began to understand how dependent southern Spanish culture is on its Muslim roots. Likewise, in having the privilege of living in Fez with a Moroccan family while pursuing Arabic studies, my eyes were opened to a deeper level of a rich and fascinating culture. Finally, by spending time with the Spanish-speaking Riffian farmers of Morocco’s northernmost mountain range, and noting over and over the fact that so many northern Moroccans physically and culturally resemble their “European” neighbors across the Strait, it became less and less clear to me what the border that divides Spain and Morocco actually represents.

In Spain and Morocco, one encounters a fascinating history of two nations that have, over the centuries, taken the opportunity to invade and occupy one another’s land and people. This rich common history is the backdrop for the modern conflict, which is the Moroccan–Spanish

frontier: the principal setting of one of the most contested migrations of human beings seeking to cross (both legally and illegally) the North–South split. I believe that this setting, because of the intertwined history and cultural interdependence of the Spanish and Moroccan people, provides one of the best contexts to reflect upon how Muslim–Christian relations can be most constructively negotiated in the future.

### Sources/Methodology

The methodology of this book will be based on comparative textual analyses of both the first-person words of people “on the ground” and selections from the Qur’an and the Bible. These texts will be used to fashion an ethical framework for a subsequent political analysis of three points of conflict between Morocco and Spain: conflicts over land, natural resources, and immigration. Additional scholarly texts and press articles are used, analyzed, and critiqued throughout this book. Among the texts cited will be those drawn from information gathered during 160 hour-long interviews conducted between June and October of 2000 with Spaniards and Moroccans, from Barcelona in northern Spain to Guelmim, near the edge of the Western Sahara. The use of interviews in this book will be guided by the qualitative anthropological approach, which acknowledges that the opinions and observations of individuals can never be seen as normative for an entire group of people. The use of interviews fulfills two goals of this project: (1) to offer the reader an opportunity to hear a variety of voices from across the Spanish and Moroccan social spectrums; and (2) to insure the inclusion of voices that are often excluded in the construction of political policy.<sup>7</sup> These interviews, based on a set of questions that invited the interviewee to describe his or her Ecological Location, captured portraits of farmers, fishermen, artists, students, construction workers, teachers, home makers, religious leaders, and the unemployed, among others. While no set of interviews (or textual analyses) can hope to paint the definitive and/or objective portrait of the highly complex Moroccan–Spanish relationship, I believe that this approach has provided a viable strategy for raising and clarifying some important questions, as well as guiding further study.

Beginning with an overview of one of the principal modern sources of the realpolitik analysis of international relations, this project will move on to engage the following sources: (1) a consideration of the work of some of the major proponents of a religious analysis of international affairs; (2) a synopsis drawn from historical texts recounting the evolution of the relationship between Spain and Morocco; (3) a comparative treatment of some Muslim and Christian scriptural narratives that engage the relationship between human beings and the land, natural resources, and those considered to be “other”; (4) selections from 160 interviews conducted with Spaniards and Moroccans describing their own personal Ecological Locations; (5) an analysis of a variety of books and articles detailing some



of the theological, economic, political, and cultural influences that serve to help describe Morocco's and Spain's Ecological Locations as nation-states; (6) a treatment of the friction caused by Spain's continued holding of land on the Moroccan landmass; (7) the struggle over control of fishing grounds between Spain and Morocco; (8) a consideration of the phenomenon of the Moroccan–Spanish frontier as the setting for the majority of legal and illegal North African immigration into the nations of the European Union (EU); and (9) a survey and critique of the future applications of Ecological Realism and Sustainable Diplomacy, including a treatment of the future of Spanish–Moroccan relations in the context of the EU, the relationship between Muslims and Christians, the growing tensions and opportunities presented by the North–South split, and the importance of coming to view Spain and Morocco as one bioregion.

### *Making New Connections*

This work is an attempt to contribute to the building bridges among the disciplinary perspectives of the fields of Christian and Islamic Ethics, International Relations, History, Anthropology, and Environmental Studies. This project emerges from the conviction that all these fields must be placed into more comprehensive dialogue with one another.

As a Christian ethicist, I have written this text from a particular disciplinary perspective. As a student of diplomacy, Islam, and environmental ethics, I have undertaken in these pages to challenge religious exclusivism, and to invite ethicists from across the religious spectrum into dialogue with a variety of disciplines that are all too often kept separate. While the religious context of this work is Muslim–Christian dialogue, the foundational arguments put forward in this text could apply to many other dialogues among many other faith traditions. Advocating such work from the perspective of Christian Ethics is therefore an invitation to broaden a number of conversations including those within the Christian community itself.

With noteworthy exceptions, the discipline of Christian Ethics is not generally inclined to engage the subject of International Relations comprehensively. Most Christian ethicists approach political ethics from an individual, small group, or domestic context.<sup>8</sup> It is true that the religious implications of political exchanges and the political qualities of interreligious dialogue have been the focus of the work of more than one Christian ethicist. However, when political analysis reaches the level of examining relations among nation-states, most Christian ethicists have traditionally ceded their ground to secular scholars. While Reinhold Niebuhr's "Christian Realism" is one of the more noteworthy exceptions to this rule, its propensity to validate a Realist analysis (along with its admitted attending moral analysis of the Realist world) did little to distinguish Christian ethics from its secular counterparts in political theory.

In contrast to the current approaches with which Christian Ethics has taken to engaging international relations analysis, the approach of this project is a constructive, supplementary, and revisionary challenging of the currently accepted norms. To begin with, this project work is an effort to push beyond the limits of the classical Realist paradigm of International Relations in a manner that encourages others in many fields, including Christian and Islamic Ethics, to question the rationale of Realism's primacy. Second, by modeling an alternative methodology to the dominant approach of foreign affairs analysis, this book, taken as a whole, is an attempt to make persuasive the claim that a religious analysis should be central to the discipline of examining relations among nation-states. In addition, by adapting Daniel Spencer's Ecological Location and Wackernagel and Rees' Ecological Footprint to the task of describing the theo-ethical norms of a particular nation-state, the following pages are an effort to commend the importance of the ecological dimension of religious and political analysis to audiences not yet informed by this perspective. Finally, by modeling a new religious approach to international affairs analysis, through Ecological Realism and Sustainable Diplomacy, it is hoped that this book can be a source of inspiration to those in the field to recognize foreign affairs as a legitimate and critical area for future work in all traditions of Religious Ethics.

### A Synopsis of the Chapters

This book is divided into six chapters, whose content and objectives will be presented in the following order.

Chapter 1, "Interpreting Human Communities in Conflict," will present and critique some of the core precepts that guide a classical Realist analysis of international relations, by focusing on the work of Hans Morgenthau, alongside those who have argued the importance of considering religion in the analysis of relations among nation-states. This chapter will then turn to introducing the concepts of Ecological Location, the Ecological Footprint, Ecological Realism, and Sustainable Diplomacy as tools to employ in the analysis of international relations. Chapter 1 will conclude by naming the normative guideposts or framework of Sustainable Diplomacy: solidarity, participation, sufficiency, equity, accountability, material simplicity, spiritual richness, responsibility, and subsidiarity.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 2, "The Foundations of the Eco-Historical Landscape of Moroccan-Spanish Relations" will present a historical overview of Moroccan-Spanish relations through the lens of Ecological Location. The chapter will conclude by presenting the three sources of conflict between Spain and Morocco that will be the subject of the following chapters: the conflict over land (Ceuta and Melilla), the conflict over natural resources (fishing rights), and the conflict over people (immigration, legal, and illegal).

Chapters 3–5 will follow the same structure. Each chapter will begin with the words of one Spaniard and one Moroccan on the theme of the chapter. Passages from these interviews will be followed by a scriptural comparison of the Bible and the Qur’an on a theme that speaks directly to the topic of the chapter. In light of the statements of the interviewees and scriptural selections, common and contrasting ethical principles will be proposed and analyzed. Each chapter will then present a portion of the Ecological Footprint illuminating an area of Spanish and Moroccan consumption. The chapters will end by returning to the ethical principles first presented, using them as a framework for a political analysis of the point of conflict being considered.

Chapter 3, “The Conflict Over Land: The First Human, Land Use and the Two Cities,” will begin with the words of one Moroccan and one Spaniard on the subject of the Ceuta and Melilla, Spain’s two city-states on the Moroccan land mass, and will follow with a comparison of the Biblical and Qur’anic narratives on the creation of Adam. These two elements will inform the construction of guiding ethical principles for analysis. Chapter 3 will then present an Ecological Footprint analysis of Spain and Morocco on the topic of land consumption. This chapter will then turn to a political analysis of the conflict over Spain’s two holdings on the Moroccan landmass, using the framework of the ethical principles established at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter 4, “The Conflict Over Natural Resources: The Tree of Life and the Tree of Being, the Consumption of Natural Resources, and the Fish Wars,” will begin with the words of one Spanish and one Moroccan interviewee speaking on the subject of resource consumption and scarcity. A comparison of the Christian Tree of Life and the Islamic Tree of Being and the common and contrasting ethical principles drawn from these sources will follow. The chapter will then turn to the portion of the Ecological Footprint that addresses ocean resource consumption. Finally, by using the common and contrasting ethical principles proposed at the beginning of the chapter, chapter 4 will offer a political analysis of the ongoing conflict between Spain and Morocco over fishing rights.

Chapter 5, “The Conflict Over People—The Story of Abraham and Ibrahim and the Strangers, the Consumption of Illegal Human Labor, and the Conflict Over Immigration,” will begin with some interviewees’ reflections on immigration, followed by a comparison of Biblical and Qur’anic treatments of the story of Abraham/Ibrahim and “the strangers.” After offering common and contrasting ethical principles in light of the words of the interviewees and the scriptural accounts, the chapter will then propose expanding the Ecological Footprint to include the impact and cost of illegal labor. In its conclusion, chapter 5 will use the chapter’s earlier established ethical principles as a framework for a political analysis of the ongoing conflict between Spain and Morocco over immigration.

Finally, chapter 6, “The Future of Sustainable Diplomacy” will examine the possible future roles of the Spanish–Moroccan relationship, looking at

the two countries as a common bioregion, as a point of contact between the EU and the Maghreb, and as a relationship between a predominantly Christian and a predominantly Muslim country. The chapter will then turn to the goals of Sustainable Diplomacy, and the impediments to implementing it as a practice. These subjects will be followed by a treatment of the “cross-traditional sins” that plague the followers of both Christianity and Islam, as well as some general common ethical principles. The conclusion of chapter 6 will pose some of the questions that remain in light of this study, and challenge Muslims and Christians to defy traditional calls of religious exclusivism and other forms of separation, and to make a pilgrimage together.

As I have noted, this book will engage several fields: Christian and Islamic Ethics, International Relations, History, Anthropology, and Environmental Studies. Although I am neither a Spaniard, nor a Moroccan, I draw upon these fields as a committed American student who wants to understand the subject at hand on a more profound level. The reader of this text is therefore invited to join me in this inquiry, bringing all your questions, along with an openness to engage in new conversations. With this in mind, I offer this writing as simply one particular interpreter of ideas, who desires many further conversations and many more conversation partners.

## CHAPTER I

# INTERPRETING HUMAN COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT

*There is a mountain between us  
And the roads are closed  
And the messengers are few  
Some people dig springs  
But jealousy prevents water from running  
There is a mountain between us  
I don't need to send any messengers to my God  
There is a mountain between us  
I am standing in front of His gate  
There is a mountain between us  
My friend is as rare as a tajine  
There is a mountain between us  
He is never sated the person who eats it  
There is a mountain between us  
I walk and you walk  
And God's will brought us together  
There is a mountain between us  
Who came first  
And who came last,  
Nobody can tell me  
There is a mountain between us<sup>1</sup>*

*—from a Tamazight song by Ali Ouzineb  
and Mohamed Qat*

Interpreting the dynamics of human communities in conflict presents a variety of challenges. Historians search for the root cause of a dispute in order to seek modern solutions. Economists struggle with the ins and outs of trade and the disparate value of goods and services in the name of striking an understanding. In turn, diplomats grapple with the work of the historian and the economist as they seek a stabilizing balance of power between warring factions or nation-states. All three of these forms of analysis make significant contributions to the work of conflict resolution, and each provides tools and insights lacking in the other two.

“There is a mountain between us,” sings the writer of the song. It is a mountain that both separates and connects, while helping to form the

identities of those who live on either side of it. Those who interpret human conflict are obliged to identify both the barriers and pathways to cooperation. “The roads are closed,” sings the writer of the song, “and the messengers are few.” For the author of these words, the land itself reflects not only the actions but also the temperament of the people. The hard and substantive work of digging wells is negated by human jealousy, which prevents the water from running. In turn messengers, like water itself, are in short supply, perhaps due to the same factors that have blocked the springs. The land is thus a connector, a barrier, and a reflection of human failings. Despite all these variables, however, the Divine appears to be constant. “I don’t need to send any messengers to my God. . . . I am standing in front of His gate,” sings the writer. God is present and access to God is not contingent on the quality of any road. “I walk and you walk, and God brought us together.” The mountain remains, but its ability to separate is laid aside. God’s transcendence allows humans to move beyond what appear to be insurmountable barriers. And what were formerly seen as barriers now serve a different role.

Who came first  
And who came last,  
Nobody can tell me  
There is a mountain between us<sup>2</sup>

The human relationship to land and to the Divine are thus seen as the means to building human relationships, rather than the source of acrimony and conflict.

What is missing in the prevailing analyses of relations among nation-states? What are the questions not being asked by the dominant schools of thought in seeking conflict resolution? Could the land and the greater biosphere play a role in promoting understanding between different nation-states? Is the role of religion potentially positive in the work of conflict resolution?

This chapter is an attempt to go beyond the boundaries of the prevailing schools of international affairs by raising the issues of power, language, religion, sustainability, and transnational cooperation in a new light, informed as much by the concerns of international relations theorists as it is by theologians and farmers. The degree to which such a project succeeds is based on its ability to find a common language that crosses the boundaries of varying disciplines and ideologies. The time has arrived to examine the likelihood that the common language is found in the ecosphere itself.

Statesmen, stateswomen, and those who wage war use maps, or other attempts to express the physical contours of the Earth, as they begin to consider their options. They most often do so in an anthropocentric light. The aim of this writing is not only to question the logic of anthropocentrism, but to explore the implications of considering the ecosphere itself as an actor on the international stage. This chapter will argue that the ecosphere itself should not be viewed as a neutral actor; instead it should

be seen as an active source of common language, a focal point in the sharing of stories of faith, and the ground for learning about a new way for humans to live sustainably together with nonhuman creation. It has been said that the biosphere itself holds the key to lasting human cooperation. Humans, who are embedded within its confines, are ultimately obliged to confront the limitations of their current practices of consumption and pollution, or risk their own demise.

Clearly, there is a need for a new and fresh approach to the conduct of diplomacy, not simply as an academic exercise but as a necessity. The time has arrived to move beyond the old worldviews that have guided our definitions of power and the singular nation-state. Now we are called to ask ourselves an entirely new set of questions, ones that include the concerns of consumption, language, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, and bioregions. We must ask ourselves what will be required to foment cooperation, not only between leaders of nation-states, but also between entire transnational populations, across the contentious boundaries of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, class, and gender.

The models of diplomacy that have focused solely on singular state-to-state relations must now give way to a more organic model, which is influenced not by artificially designed borders, but by the dictates of the biosphere. At the same time the human propensity to separate the human population from the biosphere or to hierarchically stratify nonhuman creation must be rejected in favor of an understanding that humanity is deeply and inextricably embedded in the entire ecosphere. Such a human relationship with the biosphere is dialectical, with each side influencing the other. Further, such a relationship overrides any human claims of ownership or control over human or nonhuman creation. Finally, an understanding of the ecosphere as ultimately the central player in human relations turns on its head our previously understood definitions of power, including its origin, form, focus, and future.

This chapter begins by considering one of the classic approaches of international relations analysis, the Realist school, followed by the introduction of three newer methodologies. One approach focuses on the role of religion in conflict resolution, as a corrective to traditional ways of understanding relations among nation-states. The second methodology centers on the Ecological Locations of the nation-states in dispute, as potential sources of identity, understanding sustainability, and cooperation. The third approach seeks to determine the Ecological Footprint a nation-state makes upon the Earth in its consumption, destruction, and preservation of natural resources.

“There is a mountain between us,” sings the author of the song. What role can this mountain play? Where do the people understand the mountain to have come from? Who owns the mountain and what distinguishes the people living on one side of the mountain from the other? What are the understandings of the role of the Divine in this relationship? The following pages are an effort to approach old dilemmas with new questions, in the hope of gaining a new perspective.

## Political Realism

While the Realist school is hardly the only school seeking to analyze relations between nation-states, it can in many ways be viewed as a “classic approach.”<sup>3</sup> By examining Realism, we are given a window into diplomacy’s formative past and sometime present. Thus, in order to appreciate how far we still have to move, an analysis of Realism is one way of understanding many of the long-ingrained habits in the current practice of foreign policy.

In the Realist view, diplomacy is governed by a broad set of secular and material assumptions regarding human exchanges, and understands nation-state conduct as guided by the desire to acquire, retain, and project power. Scholars of foreign affairs trace the roots of the Realist school to the Enlightenment, and they attribute its understanding of human conduct to a lineage of influences that include Machiavelli, Auguste Comte, and Max Weber.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, Realism is a synthesis of the work of many thinkers. Hence, the Realist school’s materialist approach to international affairs is an attempt to anchor the discipline in readily identifiable and previously acknowledged forms of analysis.

One of the more prominent twentieth-century proponents of the Realist school was Hans J. Morgenthau. While Morgenthau was only one of Realism’s many proponents and definers, he offers a familiar and useful approach to defining Realism. Much of Morgenthau’s work was an attempt to distill what we can call “classic Realism.” In his book, *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau outlines what he describes as the six principles of political Realism:<sup>5</sup>

1. Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. In order to improve society it is first necessary to understand the laws by which society lives. The operation of these laws being impervious to our preferences, men will challenge them only at the risk of failure.<sup>6</sup>

For Realism, the objective laws that govern society were long established in antiquity. One law, according to Morgenthau, is that individuals and nation-states are predisposed to act in their own self-interest. The task of Realism is thus to “distinguish in politics between truth and opinion.”<sup>7</sup> In Realism, the political objectives of a nation-state are therefore best ascertained by observing its actions, not through listening to the rhetoric of its leaders. Such has been the case throughout history. Drawing conclusions regarding observable nation-state conduct is therefore, in the eyes of the classic Realist, a practice that is rational and objective. For Morgenthau, a theory’s veracity is enhanced rather than diminished by its longevity.<sup>8</sup>

Morgenthau’s second principle goes to the heart of his definition of Realism:

2. The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power.<sup>9</sup>



For the classic Realist, heads of state are guided by the desire to and necessity of acquiring, retaining, and projecting power. In Realism, interest defined as power is the most apt means of imposing intellectual discipline and rational order on the field of international relations.<sup>10</sup> This is because by viewing relations among nation-states through the lens of interest defined as power, one can see more clearly the consistency in the actions of seemingly disparate countries. According to Morgenthau, this consistency remains “regardless of the different motives, preferences and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen.”<sup>11</sup> For this reason, classic Realism holds that it is not important to understand the motives of a statesman or stateswoman but rather his or her “intellectual ability to comprehend the essentials of foreign policy.”<sup>12</sup> Classic Realism, does not disregard the impact of political ideals or moral principles, it requires “a sharp distinction” between what Morgenthau calls “the desirable and the possible.”<sup>13</sup>

Morgenthau’s third principle of political Realism reads as follows:

3. Realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, power can take on many forms and be “anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man.”<sup>15</sup> According to Morgenthau,

... power covers all social relationships . . . from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another. Power covers the domination of man by man, both when it is disciplined by moral ends and controlled by constitutional safeguards . . . and when it is that untamed and barbaric force which finds its laws in nothing but its own strength and its sole justification in its aggrandizement.<sup>16</sup>

According to Morgenthau, despite its potential for destruction, power can temporarily be brought into a system of checks and balances. Among the most useful of these systems is a balance of power. According to Morgenthau, a balance of power is “a perennial element of all pluralistic societies.”<sup>17</sup> The concept that the potential for striking a balance of power exists across the spectrum of circumstance appeals to the Realist viewpoint, which seeks to draw on what it sees as an extant phenomenon rather than to impose what Morgenthau would call an “abstract ideal.”<sup>18</sup> This is because according to the dictates of classical Realism, transformation only occurs when leaders of nation-states manipulate such “perennial forces” as a balance of power in the search for peace and security.<sup>19</sup>

Morgenthau’s fourth principle of Realism addresses the topic of political ethics:

4. Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. It is also aware of the ineluctable tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action.<sup>20</sup>

Realism does not allow for the application of abstract, universal ethics to the conduct of nation-states. Rather, moral principles must be interpreted “through the concrete circumstances of time and place.”<sup>21</sup> Given this standard, the classic Realist argues that while the nation-state “must judge political action by universal moral principles, . . . the moral principle of national survival” is paramount in the conduct of political action.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, notes Morgenthau,

Ethics in the abstract judges action by its conformity with the moral law; political ethics judges action by its political consequences.<sup>23</sup>

Interest defined as power provides a universal principle for conducting political exchanges and the best means of anticipating future nation-state conduct. At the same time “prudence—the weighing of the consequences of alternative political action,” is considered to be “the supreme virtue in politics.”<sup>24</sup>

Morgenthau’s fifth principle of Realism reads as follows:

5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.<sup>25</sup>

For classic Realists, political Realism dictates that nations must resist the temptation to see themselves as the vanguard of what is good and true. For while it is possible to be familiar with universal moral laws, it is quite another thing to know “what is good and evil in the relations among nations.”<sup>26</sup> For this reason, interest defined in terms of power is once again an essential concept, for interest defined as power allows one to judge the behavior of all nations, including one’s own, by the standards of self-interest. Thus, each nation is able to form policies taking into consideration the interests of other nations “while protecting and promoting those of [their] own.”<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Morgenthau’s sixth principle of political Realism stresses the preeminence of the political standard over other standards of analysis in international relations:

6. The political realist is not unaware of the existence and relevance of standards of thought other than political ones. As [a] political realist [one] cannot but subordinate these other standards to those of politics.<sup>28</sup>

Classic Realism stresses the autonomy of the political over other standards of thought in international relations. For example, according to Morgenthau, a strictly legalistic standard of international relations could undercut a nation-state’s ability to protect its interest defined as power. Thus, an illegal seizing of territories by a hostile nation will not necessarily be reversed by a strictly legalistic response. That is not to say that other standards are of no consequence. The economic, legalistic, and moralistic

standards, to name three, exert critical influence in the realm of international relations. For the classic Realist, however, these other standards are subordinate to the political standard of interest defined as power.<sup>29</sup>

Hans Morgenthau's version of the Realist school defines politics as it is still practiced by many on the international stage. Certainly this can be said of Morgenthau's insistence on defining interest in terms of power. Desiring to place political theory in the realm of the hard sciences, the Realist school emphasizes the universal over the exceptional. Likewise, classic Realism's law of self-interest and rejection of a moralistic–legalistic understanding of international relations underscores a desire to render a uniform portrait of relations among nation-states. At the same time, classic Realism insists that conclusions can only be based on incontrovertible evidence. Thus, a national leader's words are of less consequence than his or her actions.

What is the Realist school's ideal arrangement among countries? In a world where interest is defined in terms of power, classic Realism finds equilibrium in striking balances of power among competing nation-states. Such a balance, however, is temporal and requires constant maintenance on the part of national leaders who must work to distinguish between what is desirable and what is possible. What is impossible, notes Morgenthau, is the capacity to know what is good and evil in the realm of international relations.<sup>30</sup> Knowledge is in the doing. What is good and what will work will not emerge from a universal idea of good but rather through the concrete circumstances of practical experience.

Yet what is missing from classic Realism's portrait of international relations? To begin with, the Realist school is exclusively secularist–materialist in its assumptions regarding human motivations. For this reason, a Realist analysis does not privilege appeals to moral norms beyond the necessity of increasing nation-state prestige and power. According to the political theorist Stanton Burnett, the Realist school's arrival into international affairs theory was a response to a perceived lack of scientific theory in the field.<sup>31</sup>

In its thirst to imitate the physical sciences (and to gain, therefore, the success and prestige the physical sciences have in our society), the Realist school, along with its offspring and principal competitors, was dogmatically, unflinchingly secular. Its denial of human—including religious and spiritual—factors was a mere part of its denial of all cultural factors as significant in the shaping of the behaviors of states (the only actors on display).<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, classical Realism's worldview is strictly anthropocentric. Power is defined in exclusively human terms, while moral principles find their origin in human choice and design. Realism argues that human efficacy lies in the recognition of the ultimacy of human power. Thus, for classic Realism, the amelioration of the problems the human community faces will be brought about by selective human control, governed by the knowledge and actions of nation-state leaders.

Realism's insistence on the primacy of the nation-state sets the stage for a variety of assumptions. In Realism's analysis, "success" is a compartmentalized commodity, relegated to the individual perceptions of each nation-state. When competing perceptions find harmony, conflict is reduced, though this is considered by the classic Realist to be a nonnatural state of being.<sup>33</sup> In addition, by insisting on the nation-state as the ultimate arbiter, classic Realism discounts other sources of influence and power, including NGOs and the greater biotic system itself. Finally, classic Realism rejects the possibility that the spiritual life of a nation-state's inhabitants and their leaders might bring to bear influence on the conduct of relations among nation-states. At the same time, classic Realism ignores the presence and importance of the current state of the biosphere, and the need to change human ecological conduct. As a post-facto form of analysis that focuses on human power, classic Realism is thus unable to provide models of sustainability.

### Religion and International Relations

Classic Realism discounts the possibility that religion is a principal source of conflict and conflict resolution. Yet in the wake of the Cold War, from which the Realists drew much of their direction, different sources of conflict and negotiation have necessarily emerged. Douglas Johnston, in his essay entitled "Introduction: Beyond Power Politics," offers but a few:

With the decline of the East-West confrontation and most of its regional manifestations, few of the conflicts that evolve will be rooted any longer in the old Cold War ideologies. Instead, most will derive from clashes of communal identity, whether on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Such disputes tend to occur at the fault lines between rival nationalities or in situations where societies are suffering from the strains of economic competition and rising expectations. These are the most intractable sources of conflict, and they are the sources with which conventional diplomacy is least suited to deal.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, Johnston reminds his readers that religion can be a binding force rather than a fractious one. Parties in conflict can be appealed to on the basis of faith, often with positive results.

We also inadequately appreciate the transformational possibilities that exist when the parties involved in a conflict can be appealed to on the basis of shared spiritual convictions or values. Implicit in the latter is the prospect that, under the right conditions, the parties can operate at a higher level of trust than would otherwise be possible in the realm of *realpolitik*. This is not to suggest that it is an "either-or" proposition with regard to the spiritual and the secular. More likely, it is a "both-and" phenomenon in which a breakthrough at the spiritual level is made possible once the political, economic, and security "planets" have been brought into some kind of proximate alignment.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the introduction of religion as an element of consideration is not introduced at the expense of traditional secular modes of analysis. Rather, religion illumines what has until now been seen as exclusively secular. Such a phenomenon is seen as a direct contradiction to those who view the secular and the spiritual as mutually exclusive. Edward Luttwak, in his essay "The Missing Dimension," explores the inherent tension in this claim.

Astonishingly persistent, Enlightenment prejudice has remained amply manifest in the contemporary professional analysis of foreign affairs. Policymakers, diplomats, journalists, and scholars who are ready to overinterpret economic causality, who are apt to dissect social differentiations most finely, and who will minutely categorize political affiliations and are still in the habit of disregarding the role of religion, religious institutions, and religious motivations in explaining politics and conflict, and even in reporting their concrete modalities. Equally, the role of religious leaders, religious institutions, and religiously motivated lay figures in conflict resolution has also been disregarded—or treated as a marginal phenomenon and hardly worth noting.

One is therefore confronted with a learned repugnance to contend *intellectually* with all that is religion or belongs to it—a complex inhibition compounded out of the peculiar embarrassment that many feel when faced by explicit manifestations of serious religious sentiment; out of the mistaken Enlightenment prediction that the progress of knowledge and the influence of religion were mutually exclusive, making the latter a waning force; and sometimes out of a willful cynicism that illegitimately claims the virtue of realism.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, the fear of the ostensibly unquantifiable has frightened analysts from the pursuit of religion as an analytical tool. The influence of religious faith and culture cannot be quantified in the same manner as an economic index. Such inadequacies, however, do not by any means limit religion's influence in the realm of the political.

### The Cost of Neglecting the Religious Dimension of Analysis: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and U.S. Foreign Policy

It is interesting to note that three of the greatest blunders in late twentieth-century Western foreign policy have been made by a country (the United States) whose ostensible religio-cultural identification is Christian, and whose errors were made in the course of attempting to engage three Islam-identified nation-states: Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. While retrospective consideration of these three cases clearly illustrates the utility of valuing the role of religion in nation-state identity formation, the original absence of such an approach is particularly ironic when considering the depth of analysis that was lavished on secular factors governing the conduct of these three countries and their respective populations.<sup>37</sup>

The case of U.S. policy formation with regard to *Iran* provides what is possibly the richest example of the consequences of neglecting the

religious dimension of analysis. According to Edward Luttwak, American errors can be attributed to three specific and erroneous assumptions: (1) that opposition to the Shah was not based on a religious rejection of Westernizing modernization and the authoritarian regime that promoted it; (2) that only “modern” Iranians (i.e. secular) were likely to have the means and motivation ultimately to control Iran’s fate; and (3) that a religiously identified movement, such as the one whose leader (Khomeini) was living in exile in Paris, could never command the broad base of support required to govern a nation of the size and diversity of Iran.<sup>38</sup> Barry Rubin, a political analyst of Iranian politics, argues that these three false assumptions prevented the United States from being able to anticipate, or even to understand, many of the choices that the new Iranian leadership ultimately made, because those possibilities did not reside within the boundaries of what was then considered to be “rational” behavior. These choices included Tehran’s seizing of the American Embassy, its choice to continue a war with Iraq “long after the battle was counterproductive,” and Khomeini’s issuing of a fatwa calling for the murder of Salman Rushdie at the very “moment Iran [desperately] needed Western investment for reconstruction.”<sup>39</sup> Clearly, in a secularist context, many of the Iranian leadership’s choices have defied the rules guiding the market economy or a classical Realist analysis of nation-state conduct. Yet as an expression of policy based on the privileging of religiously guided motivations, all three of these events can be understood, and some, perhaps, might even have been possible to anticipate.

As the case of *Iraq* continues to unfold, U.S. policy formation remains consistent in its reluctance to privilege the religious influences that could serve to contextualize much of Iraq’s behavior. Backed by the United States early in his leadership of Iraq, Saddam Hussein and his Ba’ath party were seen as an important Sunni bulwark in the overall U.S. strategy to contain what was viewed as the offensive geographic aspirations of the Shi’i leadership of Iran. Having equated Saddam Hussein’s nominal identification with the Sunni branch of Islam with political moderation, the United States and much of the West was taken by surprise when Iraqi troops seized neighboring Kuwait. The subsequent coalition building and Gulf War that followed marked yet another lost learning opportunity for the West. Having decimated Iraqi forces, the coalition army stopped short of taking Baghdad—at the time, a choice that was the subject of much speculation. To enter Baghdad, however, would have risked bringing about the end of what was still considered to be the preferable leadership of the Sunni Iraqi minority over that of the majority Shi’i population. Eliminating Saddam would have also risked the fracture of Iraq along ethnic as well as religious lines, not only in terms of the Shi’i majority, but also because of the sizable Kurdish population within the boundaries of Iraq who harbor their own aspirations for independence. The ultimate American choice, to maintain the status quo in Iraq by employing a modified policy of containment, was clearly a decision guided by the assumptions

of a classic Realist analysis and a privileging of the will of market forces. An Iraq that is broken into pieces along the lines of Shi'i, Sunni, and Kurdish populations would seriously undermine the U.S. goal of using Iraq as a buffer state in the containment of Iran. From a Western perspective, the breakup of present-day Iraq would also greatly complicate future petroleum extraction and export from the region. Making the religious and ethnic borders within Iraq national borders would require multilateral negotiations, whereas the current configuration requires only bilateral exchanges. Such policy decisions on the part of the United States and its allies, however, have not changed the fact that Iraq remains highly unstable; a situation that brings into question its capacity to be perpetually governed by one central government due to powerful religious, ethnic, and secular schisms within the population. Yet despite these factors, U.S. policy formation remains clearly guided by a belief that privileging a classic Realist analysis is the best means of obtaining future security in the region, an assumption that defies most of the lessons of recent history. Regretfully, this same Realist worldview has been sustained in George W. Bush's most recent military incursion into Iraq.

The American experience in *Afghanistan* is yet another example of a secular Realist analysis diminishing the possibility of successfully anticipating the trajectory of policy choices involving religious actors. In the wake of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, American policy makers explored a number of options, finally concluding under the Reagan administration that the backing of Muslim Afghani insurgents employing guerilla tactics would be the most cost-effective approach with the best chance of expelling the Soviets. In this case, U.S. choices were guided by more than a teleological approach, which saw the guerilla forces as the most effective extant option toward realizing the goals of a purely secular analysis. By diminishing and universalizing the importance and specific nature of the religious ideals guiding the Afghani fighters (who, unlike their American backers, did not see their struggle in the context of the ongoing Cold War), U.S. analysts were unable to anticipate the link of governance and religiously driven Civil War that would emerge from the vacuum created by a Soviet pullout. Unfortunately, this willful blindness to such "facts on the ground" persists throughout the conduct of American foreign policy in Afghanistan in a post-9/11 world.

Ultimately, the secularist assumptions made by the United States and many of its Western allies are among one of the greatest shortcomings of the classic Realist approach: principal among these is the assertion that in the modern era, the influence of religion must be diminished in order for a nation to form a national self-consciousness. At the same time, when some secular analysts do express a willingness to take seriously the power and influence of religious forces, they most often do so by treating each religion as though its followers were an ideological and/or theological monoculture, without nuance, internal debate, or conflict. Thus, Western acknowledgment that there are different types of Islam, let alone different

types of Sunnis and Shi'is, is an admission that is most often only reluctantly made after the failure of a policy.

Approaching every religiously identified political actor/movement as a distinct and unique entity, not only in terms of religious allegiance, but also in ethnicity, race, class, and specific geographic location, should clearly be the foundation of any successful prescriptive approach to forming the foreign policies of the future. As Stanton Burnett has observed:

... the fact that modern sociology (and its offspring, modern political science) lacks tools of analysis for important parts of the life of [people] and nations should not impede sober consideration and serious "use" by diplomats of this whole range of ethical, religious, spiritual, philosophical, and mythical phenomena, which are important to political actors and potentially helpful interveners.<sup>40</sup>

Yet the conduct of foreign policy is hardly limited to the guidance and control of conflict. At its best, diplomacy's business is the art of building peaceful and mutually beneficial alliances. Building any type of lasting and cooperative peace between two or more nations requires the mutual acknowledgment and understanding of each nation's culture and the aspirations harbored by its people. Such goals, it would therefore seem, cannot be attained in the absence of analyzing the impact of religious movements and culture upon the political history and present-day circumstances of nation-states.

### Deepening the Reading of a Nation-State: Ecological Location

Understanding the underpinnings of conflict between nation-states often requires the use of unconventional means. As we have seen, international relations analysis that dismisses a religious analysis risks misunderstanding the conflict at hand. Yet just as religion has often been neglected in the course of analyzing relations among nation-states, so too has the role that nonhuman nature plays in the lives of the nations and the people who live within them. In many respects these two schools of analysis, religious and ecological, are deeply linked. One often serves to instruct us on how to better understand the other.

The Christian Ethicist Daniel Spencer proposed a means of examining the relationship that the biotic and non-biotic portions of creation interact, influence, and inform one another. He calls his approach *Ecological Location*.

By *ecological location*, I mean enlarging the term *social location* to include both where human beings are located within human society and within the broader biotic community, as well as conceiving other members of the biotic community and the biotic community itself as locatable active agents that historically interact and shape the other members of the ecological community, including



human beings. Just as social location is an anthropocentric term that helps us to pay attention to how human identities are multiply formed with respect to various lines of human difference, ecological location is an ecocentric term that recognizes that human epistemologies—how we see and interpret the world—are also shaped by our relationship with the land and other creatures in our broader biotic environment.<sup>41</sup>

Ecological Location represents not only a new way of seeing but a new way of interpreting the human relationship to greater Creation. At the same time, Ecological Location forces us to admit that nonhuman members of the biotic community are themselves active agents that shape the lives of human communities. In one respect this can be seen in terms of power. As Spencer has noted:

In recent years, ethicists have highlighted the importance of paying attention to the social locations of persons and communities as a way to reveal power relations in society. Yet as my own upbringing illustrates, it is not only social patterns, but also biophysical and ecological ones that influence how we act and see in the world. If, as Lewis Mumford suggests “all thinking worthy of the name must now be ecological,” combining liberationist and ecological approaches suggests the need for an expanded concept of ecological location.<sup>42</sup>

Ecological Location stands at the crossroads between our concern for human perception and the nonhuman players that shape it. Ecological Location goes beyond the term “social location” and forces the viewer to concede that the environment itself shapes our worldviews. For too long now we have held the human experience at the center while regarding non-human nature to be inert. Within the context of Ecological Location, social location becomes part of a broader web, where “human and non-human creatures and communities are situated with respect to other members of the biotic community.”<sup>43</sup> In this respect, Ecological Location “is the relevant whole or context that must be taken into consideration in ethical reflection.”<sup>44</sup>

The concept of ecological location is a logical outcome of liberationist efforts to deconstruct the nature/culture dichotomy that renders nature inert and invisible with respect to human affairs. Instead of the human social realm being seen as the only valued context, it must be understood as part of the broader ecological web of relations. Hence one’s social location is a distinctive but interconnected part of a larger ecological location: where human and non-human creatures and communities are situated with respect to other members of the biotic community. How we are shaped to see and act in the world results from a complex interplay of physiological, social, cultural, and *environmental/ecological* factors. For ecological ethics (and, I would argue, the vast majority of social ethics), ecological location is the “relevant whole” or context that must be taken into consideration in ethical reflection.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Ecological Location radically expands the scope of human formation, while at the same time emphasizes the centrality nonhuman nature.

Determining the Ecological Location of individuals or groups requires that we become familiar with their Creation stories, which are an important source of “social and ecological blueprints for how [people] organize social relations and interactions.”<sup>46</sup> Creation stories give voice to what is often otherwise left silent in the human/nonhuman relationship. Creation stories are a source of history. Though they are not always literal, they are nearly always powerful touchstones through which human communities attempt to come to terms with their relationships, good or bad, with greater Creation. For this reason, Ecological Location recognizes “the spiritual dimension of human interactions and histories with particular places, habitats, and geographies.”<sup>47</sup>

. . . ecological location can help us to recover for ethical analysis what many indigenous religions have long recognized: the spiritual dimensions of the humanity/nature relation that develop for many and consciously or unconsciously influence the ways we see and act in the world. At least initially, human beings develop attachments not with nature or the biosphere in the abstract or universalized sense, but rather with particular places, particular communities of animals, plants, bodies of water, weather patterns, rock formations, seasonal rhythms. Many believe there is little chance for ecological ethics to succeed in helping to reverse the ecological crisis without human beings developing a renewed sense of spiritual connection to the land and all its creatures and parts. Ecological location can be one part of building up what Mitchell Thomas has called an “ecological identity”<sup>48</sup> by drawing attention to the particularity of our spiritual and aesthetic relations with nature, and how this affects our way of acting and seeing in the world.<sup>49</sup>

The spiritual relationships that emerge within our respective Ecological Locations affect our relationships with both human and nonhuman nature. Ecological Location’s focus on the human relationship with greater Creation obliges us to take a hard look at the spiritual histories of the people and land we are trying to understand. Ecological locations are particularized along the lines of context, time, and ongoing relationships. At the same time, Ecological Location is an invitation to examine the power relationships that exist among humans, and between humans and nonhuman nature.

Ecological location can help us recognize simultaneously power differences within the human community and in humanity/nature relations. Attention to power in ecological location can show how both the dynamics of intrahuman community and the human/nature biotic community are built on either cooperation or domination—that is, relations that either sustain or deplete us socially and ecologically. Thus it can help to better integrate understandings of ecological and social justice as right relation, a critical component of a liberationist ecological ethics. Keeping the intrahuman dynamic of social location is an integral part of ecological location. It retains the concern of

liberationist thinking about how human social differences are constructed into social relations of domination and exclusion. Expanding this to ecological location shows both how these human social relations affect the wider biotic community as well as how they are affected by the limits and makeup of the biotic community.<sup>50</sup>

The themes of cooperation and domination are critical to a thorough reading of Ecological Location. Until now, the locus of domination or cooperation has been seen as emanating exclusively from the human side of the human/nonhuman relationship. Ecological Location expands this notion to include the power that nonhuman nature has to cooperate with or displace human endeavors. At the same time, Ecological Location calls attention to the fact that particular human groups must attribute their own power to their relationship with nonhuman nature and its limits.

Ecological Location requires that we understand history as ecological. Much of the current status of any group can be explained in terms of its historical propensity to cooperate with or dominate the broader biotic community. For this reason, “good ecohistorical analysis” according to Spencer “can help us to better understand the (often contradictory) mix of attitudes, values and practices that shape our current ecological locations.”<sup>51</sup>

Finally, to even begin to understand a community’s Ecological Location, one is obliged to go beyond simple familiarity with the tastes and preferences of its national leaders. One is instead obliged to attempt to become familiar with the lives of ordinary people, across lines of gender, ethnicity, race, faith, language, and geography. By trying to understand how Ecological Location plays out on the ground, Spencer’s proposal provides a means to move beyond the limitations of assuming that a treaty signed by a handful of people will assure peace among millions.

### Expanding the Scope: Ecological Location and the Ecological Footprint Analysis

Daniel Spencer’s proposal of Ecological Location provides a powerful tool for analyzing the lives and circumstances of human and nonhuman individuals and communities. However, to analyze the Ecological Location of an entire country requires other clarifying tools for describing relationships and conflicts that prevail on the scale of the nation-state. One possible means may be found in Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees’ notion of the *Ecological Footprint*.

Wackernagel and Rees have devised a way to measure the ecological impact an individual country makes upon the Earth. The authors first ask us to imagine that the city or town that we live in is covered by a large glass dome, within which we must meet all our food and energy needs and dispose off all our pollution by-products. Clearly, it would only be a matter of days before many cities’ inhabitants would perish under such circumstances. This is because the majority of villages, cities, and nation-states

rely on land and resources outside their immediate borders in order to survive and, in some cases, flourish. Environmental Footprint analysis thus invites its practitioners to calculate how large such an actual dome would have to be in order to sustain the human and nonhuman habitants of a particular region.

It is quite extraordinary to find how much larger many nations' footprints are than their actual borders. For example, Wackernagel and Rees estimate that if the entire Earth's population were able to adopt the level of consumption and pollution of the average American or Canadian, it would require three planet Earths to support all the inhabitants of our one planet.<sup>52</sup> The Ecological Footprint model provides an account of the flows of resources and pollution across national borders in an effort to educate its users as to their level of resource dependency and the degree to which some nations borrow or steal the sustainability of others. At the same time, the Ecological Footprint analysis is a way for a city or a nation-state to assess in cold hard numbers the challenge of making the regions they inhabit sustainable.

Like Spencer, Wackernagel and Rees subscribe to the view that the environment can no longer be viewed as a backdrop to human lives and action, but rather that humankind is embedded in greater Creation.

The premise that *human society is a subsystem of the ecosphere*, that human beings are embedded in nature, is so simple that it is generally overlooked or dismissed as too obvious to be relevant. However, taking this "obvious" insight seriously leads to some profound conclusions. The policy implications of this ecological reality runs much deeper than pressing for improved pollution control and better environmental protection, both of which maintain the myth of separation. If humans are a part of nature's fabric, the "environment" is no mere scenic backdrop but becomes the play itself. The ecosphere is where we live, humanity is dependent on nature, not the reverse. Sustainability requires that our emphasis shift from "managing resources" to managing *ourselves*, that we learn to live as part of nature. Economics at last becomes human ecology.<sup>53</sup>

What makes part of Wackernagel and Rees' approach so powerful is that Ecological Footprint analysis is dominated by concrete economic analysis. While numbers, like words, can be manipulated, the indisputable facts that emerge from an Ecological Footprint analysis powerfully challenges accepted norms of behavior and consumption.

Ecological Footprint analysis is an accounting tool that enables us to estimate the resource consumption and waste assimilation requirements of a defined human population or economy in terms of a corresponding productive land area. Typical questions we can ask with this tool include: how dependent is our study population on resource imports from "elsewhere" and on the waste assimilation capacity of the global commons?, and will nature's productivity be adequate to satisfy the rising material expectations of a growing human population . . . ?<sup>54</sup>

The Ecological Footprint goes far beyond merely calculating human rates of consumption and pollution outputs. The Ecological Footprint is concerned with all the different ways that land is being or not being used. For example, the Ecological Footprint serves as a means of calculating such critical elements as carbon sinks—that part of the ecosphere able to absorb the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) released by fuel consumption.<sup>55</sup> The Ecological Footprint calculates both their distribution and disappearance.

Wankernagel and Rees remind their readers not only of the Ecological Footprints of our respective regions and nations but also what they refer to as “Fair Earthshares,” those portions of the productive and inhabitable Earth which, if divided evenly among the planet’s entire human population, each inhabitant would receive.

Our ecological footprints keep growing while our per capita “earth shares” continue to shrink. Since the beginning of this century, the available ecologically productive land has decreased from over five hectares to less than 1.5 hectares per person in 1995. At the same time, the average North American’s footprint has grown to over four hectares. These opposing trends are in fundamental conflict: the ecological demands of average citizens in rich countries exceed per capita supply by a factor of three. This means that the earth could not support even today’s population, 5.8 billion, sustainably at North American material standards.<sup>56</sup>

Our own individual “earth shares” vary according to a variety of factors, such as hemisphere, nationality, class, ethnicity, race, faith, and gender. One clear problem among many is the relative “normalization” of these gross inequities.

The earth is one but the earth is not. We all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impacts on others. Some consume the earth’s resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations. Others, many more in number, consume far too little and live with the prospects of hunger, squalor, disease, and early death.<sup>57</sup>

### *Doing Ecological Footprint Analysis*

One key premise of Ecological Footprint analysis is that the terms it utilizes cannot be expressed monetarily. This is because monetary units naturally distort the true value of what Wackernagel and Rees refer to as “natural capital.”<sup>58</sup>

Natural Capital refers to any stock of natural assets that yields a flow of goods and services in the future. For example, a forest, a fish stock or an aquifer can provide a harvest or flow that is potentially sustainable year after year. The forest or fish stock is “natural capital” and the sustainable harvest is “natural income.”<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, the monetary value of an item does “not distinguish between substitutable goods and complementary goods.”<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, on monetary balance sheets, all prices are added or subtracted as if goods that are priced the same are of equal importance to human life—money equivalency equates the essential with the trivial.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, according to Wankernagel and Rees, “prices do not monitor stock size or systems fragility, but only the commodity’s short-term scarcity on the market.”<sup>62</sup> This problem is compounded by the fact that “the potential for growth of money is theoretically unlimited, which obscures the possibility that there may be biophysical limits to economic growth.”<sup>63</sup>

How does the Ecological Footprint analysis work in the absence of monetary measurements? It begins by measuring what Wankernagel and Rees refer to as “productive land,” and compares that to the total number of hectares within the borders of a nation-state. The overall calculation includes both “productive” and “unproductive” land, which is variously assigned to eight categories. First, the Ecological Footprint analysis considers the percentage of the land that is no longer ecologically viable. This category is referred to as “energy land” or land appropriated for fossil energy use. The next category assesses “ecologically productive land,” which includes gardens, cropland, pastureland, and managed forests. Next, Wankernagel and Rees refer to “consumed land” or land that has been built upon, sometimes referred to as “degraded land.” Finally, there is “land of limited availability.” This land includes untouched forests and nonproductive areas such as deserts and ice caps.<sup>64</sup>

In order to calculate the Ecological Footprint of a nation in terms of its land, one must begin by calculating the hectares of energy land (or land emitting CO<sub>2</sub>) relative to the total hectares of carbon sinks and their ability to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> produced within the borders of the nation-state. One must then calculate the hectares of built-up land or “consumed land” relative to the total hectares of the country. These same calculation patterns are in turn applied to the other types of land already identified, in order to determine the percentage each category occupies relative to the total size of the nation-state.

How the land is used, not used, or degraded is only a portion of the picture, however. In order to calculate the Ecological Footprint of a country one must also consider the average consumption patterns of individual members of the population. These consumption patterns are divided into five categories: food, housing, transportation, consumer goods and services.

In terms of calculating the consumption patterns among the national population, one must first estimate the average person’s annual consumption of the five categories (food, housing, transportation, consumer goods and services) and then divide the total consumption by population size. “For many categories, national statistics provide both production and

trade figures from which trade-corrected consumption can be assessed.”<sup>65</sup> The calculation looks like this:<sup>66</sup>

Trade corrected consumption = production + imports – exports

The next task is to estimate the “land area appropriated per capita (aa)” for the production of the five principal consumption categories (*i*).<sup>67</sup> This is done by dividing the “average annual consumption of that item as calculated above (*c*’ in kg/capita) by its average annual productivity or yield (*p*’ in kg/ha).”<sup>68</sup> The resulting calculation goes as follows:

$$aa_i = c_i/p_i$$

The next step is to compute the total Ecological Footprint (“ef”) of the average inhabitant of the nation-state—“i.e. the *per capita* footprint”—by totaling all the “[ecosystems] appropriated (aa<sub>*i*</sub>) by all purchased items (*n*) in his or her annual shopping basket of consumption goods and services.”<sup>69</sup> The calculation appears as follows:

$$ef = \sum_{i=1}^n aa_i$$

Finally, one “obtains the ecological footprint (Efp) of the study population by multiplying the average per capita footprint by population size (*N*).”<sup>70</sup> The equation is expressed in this manner:

$$Efp = N(ef)$$

“In some cases where the total area used is available from national statistics, [one] computes the per capita footprint by dividing the population.”<sup>71</sup>

Clearly, there is ample room to be far more nuanced in calculating the Ecological Footprint of an individual or population. It has been suggested by Wankernagel and Rees that if one was to more accurately calculate one’s own footprint, one would have to begin by weighing one’s own garbage over a year-long period. On a broader scale, one must consider the fact that many consumer products require the use of a multiplicity of materials and energy sources. Thus, there is ample room to become far more nuanced than these initial equations suggest. What Wankernagel and Rees are suggesting is rather a standardized approach that allows “general case” comparisons among regions or countries.<sup>72</sup>

## Realism and Ecological Realism

In light of our consideration of religion and international affairs, Ecological Location, and the Ecological Footprint analysis, classic Realism demands to be seen in a different light. The work of Burnett, Luttwak, Johnston, Spencer, Wackernagel and Rees challenges a variety of Realism’s steadfast assumptions. Together, they define a new Realism, one that is eco-centric rather than anthropocentric and challenges the viability of classic Realism’s understanding of the nature of power. In our new understanding, power

itself has changed in character completely, and is no longer an entity to be projected in a self-serving manner. Rather, power is found in a nation-state's ability to protect, cultivate, and efficiently utilize domestically held natural capital, living out a type of sustainability that does not rely exclusively on trade in order to insure survival. Trade, in turn, becomes a matter of exchanging surplus natural capital with one's neighbors. Thus, while classical Realism's old paradigm of power may well have involved the cultivation of the ability of one or more nation-states to manipulate others, the new paradigm emphasizes the ability to control one's own consumption and pollution patterns and to impart one's knowledge of how to do so to any nation who has yet to reach a point of ecological equilibrium. Likewise, while Realism speaks of nation-states' responsibility to acquire, retain, and project power while acting out of their own specific self-interest, the borrowing or theft of others' sustainability is revealed as a very short-term accomplishment.

Under the construct of what I propose to call *Ecological Realism*, classical Realism's call to distinguish between the desirable and the possible is replaced with the distinction between the sustainable and the unsustainable. For this reason, a new definition of balance of power is in order—one that defines balance as ecological equilibrium, first within the borders of the nation-state, and then moving into ecological balance with one's regional neighbors. Thus while for classical Realism national survival is paramount, the principles of Ecological Realism (or Eco-Realism), claim that in fact it is global survival that is the real goal. For this reason, Eco-Realism holds that true self-interest must always be grounded in mutual interest. In this respect, Eco-Realism suggests a level of mutuality and permanent cooperation among nation-states, the likes of which traditional Realism could not have conceived. We must reject classic Realism's view that the balance of power must be seen as temporary and even unnatural. A new Realism is necessary, because diminishing resources and shrinking earth shares demand that nation-states cooperate on a permanent basis at a level of intimacy not previously conceived, or they will perish.

Classic Realism holds that the capacity to know what is good and evil in the realm of international relations is impossible.<sup>73</sup> Eco-Realism directly counters such a notion by arguing that what is good promotes the sustainability of the human and nonhuman members of the biosphere, and what is evil is whatever undermines the capacity for building, sharing, and maintaining sustainability. In this regard, the moral dimension of international relations can no longer be dictated by interest defined as power. Rather, Eco-Realism invites its practitioners to see that sustainability which is built mutually across nation-state and, ultimately, hemispheric borders is an unmitigated good. Power therefore comes to focus not on high-priced commodities trading but rather on low-priced or even free tech transfer between the North and the South.

While a classic Realist would label the above notions as highly unrealistic proposals that go against nearly every law that governs the conduct of



the nation-state, Eco-Realism argues to the contrary. Twentieth-century forms of classic Realism emerged in an era that was only beginning to consider the phenomenon of resource scarcity and the potential ensuing conflicts it could engender. Unequal distribution of raw materials for survival was seen as a matter to be resolved in the realm of bilateral and multilateral nation-state trade and interstate armed conflict. The thinking of the time was highly regionalized, most often focusing on the East–West conflict. Purely regional thinking, however, is a luxury the modern analyst can no longer afford. Damage to the ozone, a dwindling fresh water supply, or the diminishment of carbon sinks that serve vast transnational areas demand a more explicit type of equitable global thinking. Eco-Realism is one attempt to describe what such global thinking might look like, and to guide a paradigm shift that in our notions is not only of power, but also of accountability, responsibility, sovereignty, solidarity, community, religion, land, commerce, and diplomacy.

### *Power and Accountability*

From the Eco-Realist perspective, a nation-state's ability to strike an equilibrium in its use of natural capital and disposal of waste is the primary means by which a nation's power is measured. Dependency on the sustainability of other nations will be a sign of tacit weakness and vulnerability and the mere capacity to acquire raw materials from far-flung regions will no longer be seen as a right, privilege, or valued ability. Such a transformation requires a new understanding of accountability that has yet to be seen in the international commons. Accountability to one's own national population is in itself a foreign notion to many national leaders, beyond the boundaries of maintaining state power. Meaningful accountability to other national populations is even more rare.

Eco-Realism rejects the anthropocentric thinking of classical Realism that holds that nearly all power worthy of the name has been designed, controlled, and propagated by human beings. Eco-Realism holds that the power of the biosphere is in many ways greater than the power any group of humans can muster. No missile or commodities exchange is capable of replacing the ozone or generating accessible fresh water. Classic Realism is convinced that the human is the pinnacle of the power chain. We now know that this is not so. In the biosphere's own changing patterns, the capacity for human adaptability comprises a critical type of power that cannot be matched or ignored. The biosphere, with its capacity for regeneration and its limited supply of materials for human exploitation, demands a new level of human respect, accountability, and material simplicity. As Spencer, Wackernagel and Rees have noted, the human is embedded *within* the biosphere and, therefore, can never claim outside observer status. Until now, many have seen human dependence upon the nonhuman members of the biosphere as an explicit sign of weakness. The time has now come to view such a relationship both as an advantage and as a

primary source for lessons about future human eco-centric conduct. Human accountability must now embody, as Larry Rasmussen has written, “a turning to Earth.”<sup>74</sup>

### *Sovereignty*

The ecological crisis itself, while not necessarily or at least initially diminishing nation-state sovereignty, will demand a reappraisal of the meaning of sovereignty. Borders could be superceded by the reality of bioregions. Bioregions could act in concert, not toward classic Realism’s goal of containment, but toward the goal of building the sustainability of natural capital and equitably sharing the knowledge gained by those in more marginalized locations.

Individual, communal, or state accountability to an entire bioregion will prove difficult to establish and maintain. Yet while current political borders will no doubt remain long into the future, they could potentially come to be seen more as historical distinctions rather than ecological realities. Already multinational corporations (MNCs) have shown that breaking down national borders is more than a pipe dream. In many cases MNCs have acquired a level of power that has directly challenged the ability of many nation-states to control their own domestic and international affairs. This “breaking down” of national borders could be embraced by proponents of Eco-Realism as an opportunity rather than a disadvantage. Classic Realism did not envision how porous national borders might become. The goals of Eco-Realism require such a porousness of the borders that divide nation-states, at the very least in terms of the perceptions of the national populations.

### *Community*

Building communities across national borders is a priority for proponents of Eco-Realism. At the very least, Eco-Realism invites ethnic, religious, and otherwise culturally tied populations to see once again that they have often been divided by abstract borders for the benefit of others, just as regional ecosystems have been parted out along what are often illogical and destructive lines. In practice, the land itself and the methods by which people make their living from it often differ little on either side of national frontiers. This is because agricultural communities that are separated by national borders often mimic the neighbors they have in the same bioregion in their cultivation methods and products. In this respect, emerging transnational agricultural communities already exist on either side of national borders. Yet how can such often-disparate communities become more closely bound together? Therein lies a central question of Eco-Realism.

Clearly Eco-Realism acknowledges that the inherent power of national populations to shape their own futures is a matter their own national

leaders often discount. If sustainability or equilibrium of natural capital is ever to be realized, then the full participation of people on the ground will have to be secured in order to reach this goal. In the North, this will entail the personal decision of millions to end their dependence upon the sustainability of others. The degree to which Northern leaders can coerce their respective populations to embrace sustainability is somewhat suspect. The current unwillingness of the United States to ratify the Kyoto Protocol is only the most recent example of a Northern nation placing its perceived “right” to pollute over the needs of the global community. Despite these facts, many ordinary citizens still have it within their capacity to alter their own consumption and pollution patterns. At the same time, there are many communities, particularly in the South, which are acting far more sustainably than many of their Northern counterparts have ever conceived. For this reason, it is more often the South rather than the North that should be looked to for lessons in sustainability.

Exchanging information on how to become sustainable will require populations to communicate with each other at a more sophisticated and intimate level than their national governments and circumstances often allow. People must be given opportunities to tell their stories about their ties to the land, both physical and spiritual, as well as their own understandings of responsibility to the Earth based on their cultural teachings and their faith. In many respects, such conversations will have to cross religious and cultural lines that have rarely been breached. Hearing and understanding these stories and experiences will be critical if national and regional populations are to have the chance to promote solidarity across existing borders. This may well be the first time national governments have made an effort to understand the impact of popular religion on their own populations.

### *Religion and Land*

As Burnett, Luttwak, and Johnston have acknowledged, our disregard of religion in the realm of international relations has often blinded us to the facts on the ground. The fear of being somehow “unscientific” has left many analysts unable to understand the national populations about which they claim an expertise. Eco-Realism acknowledges that focusing on the religious beliefs, practices, and histories of the populations it seeks to make more ecologically sustainable is central to any effort at individual, national, and regional transformation. Such an approach embraces Spencer’s placement of great importance on a population’s Creation stories and ecological histories. What do the prevailing religious traditions of a people have to say about their perception of Earth’s origins? Where did humans come from? What is the Divinely acknowledged human responsibility to greater Creation? Who are our neighbors and what are our true responsibilities toward them? What are the ritual practices that regionally bind groups of people together? What are considered by a particular

people to be the most important feasts and festivals? Who are the sages and saints whose stories continue to draw people's attention? The seeds of what binds a community together can often be found within the answers to these questions. Conversely, these same seeds are as often the basis of conflict. For this reason Eco-Realism places a premium on the task of all parties who seek sustainability to familiarize themselves with the lived-out religious practices and beliefs of the people they seek to work with. In turn, fighting for the right of transnational populations to communicate along religious and cultural lines will also be a central task of the proponents of Eco-Realism.

Eco-Realism acknowledges the unlikelihood that such exchanges will take place easily. Too many factors stand against the possibility of such communications. Issues of national control, market forces that favor the continuation of existing paradigms, and perhaps the most important of all, the ingrained perceptions of the national populations themselves serve to prevent such exchanges. Employing creativity in effectively asking members of national populations to try to disregard long-held hatreds, be they religious, racial, gender-based, class-based, or ethnic, will be an extraordinary challenge in and of itself. It has often been to the advantage of national governments to perpetuate such bases of conflict in the name of retaining their own individual interpretations of "national security." The choices of national governments are thus a key factor in the transformation envisioned by Eco-Realism.

How can members of national populations telling their foundational stories (including their Creation stories) across existing borders change long-held human habits of consumption and pollution? On one level, the realization of the commonality of many people's lives across national borders will be a revelation for some. For others, the surprise will come in the form of the often complementary nature of their respective Creation stories, religious practices and beliefs. These phenomena could be the basis for further dialogue across transnational borders. Most importantly, the goals of Eco-Realism will require a spiritual transformation in the lives of a significant portion of national populations and their key leaders. In this case "spiritual transformation" means a turning to the Earth as a whole, not an Earth that is simply a provider of resources, or the host to multiple lines of demarcation. Such a spiritual transformation makes room for the belief that humans can learn to live in something other than an anthropocentric world—a world that is ecologically interdependent and deeply integrated where humans are but one species among many. Regretfully, many members of the human community have yet to realize that they are not always the most powerful members of Creation. The popular religious beliefs (especially the Creation stories) of the world's many religions are often better arbiters of such visions than any human.<sup>75</sup> This places the telling and sharing of such beliefs and practices across multiple borders in a place of great importance.

Religious NGOs also play an important role in helping to foment a higher level of eco-centric education and cooperation among transnational

populations. The Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC) is just one example of an international religious NGO, which is involved in this work. The WCC's efforts surrounding the Kyoto Protocol are one example among many where a religious organization has played an important role in raising transnational awareness while confronting the secular arbiters of power regarding climate change.

Regretfully, many of those who claim to represent religious interests on an international level have proven to be self-serving advocates of positions that are often calculated to divide rather than unite people across divisions of race, geography, class, gender, and ethnicity. The spirit of Eco-Realism calls for the opposite state of affairs. By describing an undividable and deeply interdependent biosphere in which all humans are embedded, Eco-Realism invites religious actors to speak of an interdependent ecosphere as the Divine model for cooperation among human and nonhuman members.

Unfortunately for many of the Earth's human inhabitants, discussions of the GAIA hypothesis will lead to little practical reform. GAIA's suppositions (which are based on the premise that the Earth is one contiguous and interdependent biological unit) are often presented in too abstract a manner to capture the imagination. For this reason, focusing on land itself can be a way to draw a wide cross-section of people into a conversation. Often, the smallest villages in the world have religious festivals that are tied to the local land. In turn, there is often a vocabulary, be it through ritual, song, storytelling, or dance that reflects the ties that individual communities have to the land they inhabit. It is significant that popular religious ritual is more often an outdoor activity than something that takes place within the walls of a synagogue, church, mosque, or temple. In these rituals the Earth is often remembered, honored, celebrated, or understood through the eyes of the local inhabitants.

Eco-Realism acknowledges that the ties which people feel to the land where they live or to the land of their forbearers are often profound. The land is the provider of stories—stories of family, stories of hardship and plenty, myths, and stories of the Divine. While the land certainly is the holder of the ecological history that Spencer speaks of, it is also the gatekeeper he names of the spiritual histories of the people who inhabit it. People use God-language to talk about the land. Many people speak of God's blessings or lack of blessings when describing a harvest. Others speak of a fate that God allotted them that accounts for their easy or difficult experiences in trying to make a living from the land. Most, however, speak of a God who created the land, although many ascribe such notions to stories they were told in school rather than as an actual reflection of reality. Nonetheless, God-language persists in even the most secular environs, and it is often difficult for an outsider to determine to what degree people are being sincere or merely habitual in their use of such words and phrases. Eco-Realism, however, is not in the business of examining the degree of faith an individual or community of people possesses. Rather, Eco-Realism seeks to develop a hermeneutic of land as a means for

discussing the Divine and for hopeful motivation to change consumption and pollution patterns. This is the work of Eco-Realism, which seeks to inspire the human community toward a different way of understanding itself and its relationship to the Earth. Such transformative change is difficult to imagine in the absence of speaking about the land and the different Creation stories that explain its existence and purpose.

### *Commerce*

As it has been observed by Wackernagel and Rees, our current economic practices grossly distort the value of many of the commodities we trade.<sup>76</sup> Money, which is theoretically unlimited in supply, masks the reality of the increasingly limited quantity of natural capital that can be found on our planet. At the same time, the phenomenon of globalization has only increased (particularly the North's) capacity to borrow or steal the sustainability of others. Eco-Realism advocates the notion of subsidiarity, which holds that goods and services should always be drawn first from the most local locations possible for the consumption by the local population, and that goods and services which come from great distances should be sought out only in exceptional cases. Enacting such profound changes will be extraordinarily difficult. Currently, we face an increasingly globalized market economy that often concludes that it is cheaper to transport fruits and vegetables from thousands of miles away rather than grow them locally. So, too, has the disparate cost of human labor drawn businesses to sever ties to local laborers in favor of low-wage, low-rights workers in other countries. While the transportation costs of current trade practices are acceptable to many Northern actors, future levels of petroleum reserves may require at least a partial return to the dictums of subsidiarity and limits on the use of fossil fuels.

While it is easy to critique current practices of international trade, it is much more difficult to persuade the market's dominant forces to radically alter current practices. While the dictates of Eco-Realism call attention to many city's, region's, and nation's true earth shares and the long-term consequences they engender, such admonitions will most often fall on deaf ears. Market actors who once prided themselves for their long-term thinking have given way to a new generation who is often only interested in the latest quarterly earnings report. Long-term thinking is less quickly rewarded, and so it is far less practiced. Eco-Realism demands a long-term view, despite the fact that fewer in the marketplace care to grasp its implications.

Do MNCs have contingency plans in the event that the polar caps melt? Is it true that there are already those who are trading in futures that involve clean air and fresh water? It is a strong possibility that however sobering projections for the future of the ecosystem become, many of the actors who guide the market intend to take everything in stride, while altering little if any of their approach to trade. If this is true, then the

proponents of Eco-Realism must focus their efforts not exclusively on those in positions of national and international power, but on a more local level.

Eco-Realism seeks to support local communities that manufacture local goods with local labor and local materials for local consumption whenever possible. Such sustainable practices are more often found in the South than in the North. This goes beyond the fact that most Southerners simply consume less than their Northern counterparts and move into the realm of those Southerners who actively fight against the globalization of their local communities. For this reason, it is likely that Southerners will teach Northerners how to live within their Fair Earthshares while lessening their own Ecological Footprints as they seek sufficiency.<sup>77</sup> Yet it will be difficult for many Northerners to accept Southern assistance. For many Northerners, former Southern colonies are better suited to act as the point of extraction of key raw materials and a source of cheap labor. To honor the South as a teacher will prove difficult for many. Nonetheless, this is exactly the sort of perceptual shift that will be required in order to realize the goals of Eco-Realism.

### Eco-Realism and Sustainable Diplomacy

How can the goals of Eco-Realism best be realized? To what degree can one expect to work within the existing system? At its base, Eco-Realism requires the creation, promotion, and maintenance of a new set of domestic and international relationships. As Wackernagel and Rees point out, our current perception of the nation-state as one of the primary arbiters of influence must ultimately be rejected in favor of the reality of the bioregion. For this reason, the type of diplomacy required by Eco-Realism will differ from what is currently practiced. The inefficiency of singular state-to-state relations will have to give way to focusing on bioregional ties. This is because while singular state-to-state relations cannot be ignored, they cannot stand as the main bulwark of an eco-centric diplomacy—or what I will call *Sustainable Diplomacy*.

#### *Religion, Land, and Power*

Sustainable Diplomacy must be initially understood as the praxis of Eco-Realism in state-to-state and region-to-region relations. Its goal is to ultimately de-emphasize state-to-state relations in favor of promoting and maintaining relations between bioregions. For this reason, Sustainable Diplomacy is a process of fomenting relations, which go well beyond exclusive contacts between human elites. Sustainable Diplomacy therefore places a high value on understanding the lives of the populations it is affecting. In order to develop such understanding, Sustainable Diplomacy begins by mapping the terrain that links religion, land, and power in both human and nonhuman populations. For this reason, the practice of

Sustainable Diplomacy requires a more profound understanding of the lives of those living “on the ground” than many schools of diplomacy advocate.

The current configurations of diplomacy as they are practiced will not disappear tomorrow. Thus, to understand how Sustainable Diplomacy will work on the ground, it must be placed as a transparency over our current practices. Without engaging in this exercise, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to envision how we can accomplish a transition from the current state of affairs to the practice of Sustainable Diplomacy. We must ask the following questions: (1) what new questions will arise in the course of this transition?; (2) how must our current practices and underlying suppositions change in order to move toward Sustainable Diplomacy?; and (3) under Sustainable Diplomacy, what will remain of our current methods of practicing foreign policy? These are a few of the guiding questions that the practitioners of Sustainable Diplomacy must ask while engaging humans, nonhumans, and bioregions on the ground.

The work of Johnston, Luttwak, Berry, and Burnett guide the practitioners of Sustainable Diplomacy to recognize that religion can often play a central role in the promotion of conflict and conflict resolution. For this reason, diplomats who choose to practice Sustainable Diplomacy will have to be more than passingly familiar with the faith traditions as they are practiced by human populations that inhabit the nation-states and bioregions with which they are interacting. Sustainable Diplomacy requires that one understand how states can use religion to retain domestic and sometimes regional dominance. In turn, the advocates of Sustainable Diplomacy will have to acknowledge how a difference in faith traditions between two countries or bioregions alter their mutual perceptions of one another, and can affect their willingness to work together toward a common goal. This can be true at the elite level, as well as in relations between respective populations. For this reason, Sustainable Diplomacy’s acknowledgment of the importance of religion in international relations not only interprets the present, but can also be predictive of the future.

Just as Spencer’s Ecological Location has advocated, practitioners of Sustainable Diplomacy must seek to understand the links between the religious language and images used by the people of a region to convey place and meaning. For many, ties to the land cannot be described without also describing ties to the Divine. These are often inseparable. At the same time, the beliefs central to a people cannot be completely separated from the elites who emerge from among their population. Knowing this, sending a representative who lacks knowledge of the regional faith traditions must be seen as the equivalent of sending an individual who is unable to speak the language of those with whom he or she hopes to communicate.

The land, as Spencer has noted, shapes the perceptions, languages, and beliefs of those who inhabit it. Therefore, any practitioner of Sustainable Diplomacy must place a great emphasis on learning how the land feeds or does not feed a regional or national population, both literally (in terms of



food) and spiritually. Such a responsibility will require an intimate knowledge of regional farming techniques, waste disposal methods, and national and regional efforts that are working toward the ability to produce and maintain an adequate amount of sustainable natural capital to support the human and nonhuman population. At the same time, the practitioner of Sustainable Diplomacy must strive to learn about the Creation stories and other popular religious beliefs that are taught among the people and drawn from their faith traditions. This is because Sustainable Diplomacy holds that it is within the spiritual richness of these stories and traditions where one can often find the seeds for advocating a new level of sustainability and accountability among people.

As in the case of Eco-Realism, Sustainable Diplomacy recognizes that long-term power rests in the ability of a population to strike an equilibrium between its use of natural capital and its disposal of waste. This is not to say that current methods of projecting power are going to disappear overnight. The use or threat of armed force, monetary pressure, and other strategic uses of intimidation will no doubt remain with us far into the future. The task of Sustainable Diplomacy is thus not to dwell exclusively on these traditional projections of power, but rather to help cultivate alternative extant sources of power and influence in the bioregions that might accompany and eventually overtake existing practices. In order to move toward these goals, the practitioners of Sustainable Diplomacy must become expert networkers, helping to bind formerly opposing populations together under the banner of long-term sustainability and ecological survival. Such aims can only be achieved if more people come to realize the truth of Wackernagel and Rees' conclusions: monetary value does not necessarily equal survival value, and no amount of strategic arms can permanently postpone a sobering reckoning regarding the survivability of the ecosphere. For this reason, those who advocate Sustainable Diplomacy must become a far-reaching conduit for those who tell the Creation stories, for those who celebrate popular feasts and festivals, for those who advocate for the sacredness of Creation, and for those whose faith has compelled them to turn to the Earth.<sup>78</sup> Power, therefore, also comes in the form of sharing popular religious beliefs and practices across existing frontiers, and privileging voices that have until now been marginalized. Of equal importance is that all these tasks must be performed across boundaries that are too infrequently breached. Thus the Muslim and the Christian must share instead of imposing their interpretation of Creation stories on their Jewish neighbors. Northerners must sincerely listen to the wisdom of Southerners. And those who have been divided by race, gender, or ethnicity must be invited to the same table, to share in the same exchanges Sustainable Diplomacy envisions for any other group. While experience would show that such exchanges are less than likely to occur in our current circumstances, it is the work of Sustainable Diplomacy to visualize, persuade, explain, and attempt to enact that which others refuse to give voice to.

### *Building and Maintaining Sustainable Communities*

Building and maintaining transnational sustainable communities is one of the ultimate goals of Sustainable Diplomacy. In order to begin this work, proponents of Sustainable Diplomacy will have to identify the principal existing points of conflict between the nation-states or bioregions they are attempting to bring together. In addition, it will be critical to identify the existing communities that are already sustainable. Finally, those who promote the agenda of Sustainable Diplomacy must ask the following questions: (1) how might new means of building sustainable communities lessen or eliminate existing points of conflict?; (2) what are the existing sustainable practices that are currently being employed by the respective populations?; and (3) who are the individuals or groups best suited to share information across borders regarding these existing sustainable practices?

The task of maintaining existing sustainable communities while building new ones is an ongoing work. The mobility of populations, the lessening of individual earth shares, long-term habits, and the current market forces of globalization all work against the realization of true sustainability. For this reason, Sustainable Diplomacy's advocates (particularly in the North) must be willing to open their eyes and see that there are in fact many communities, most often in the South, who are already living relatively sustainable lives. The model of these communities must be lifted up as realistic examples of sustainable communities for those who lack the ability to see that there is another way of living.

Sustainable communities are built from the ground up, first within individual communities and then between communities.<sup>79</sup> The architects of Sustainable Diplomacy must therefore be willing to engage individuals and small groups on the local level, while maintaining a dialogue with the elites. At the same time, Sustainable Diplomacy's advocates must keep in mind that social and environmental justice are integral to one another.<sup>80</sup> In this case it is critical to remember that "justice" is not a synonym for simple numerical equality; it is a collective *mutuality* in which "we share one another's fate" and "promote one another's well being."<sup>81</sup> The starting point of sustainable community is therefore found in the act of entering into the predicaments of those who suffer, for compassion (suffering with) is the passion of life itself.<sup>82</sup> Justice is served when our communities live out this tangible compassion while they embrace the normative guideposts or markers of Sustainable Diplomacy that have been illustrated in this chapter: *solidarity, participation, sufficiency, equity, accountability, material simplicity, spiritual richness, responsibility, and subsidiarity.*<sup>83</sup> Sustainable Diplomacy is not possible without these elemental foundations.

Larry Rasmussen notes, "sustainability owes as much to its socio-ethical character as it does to its technical prowess and knowledge base."<sup>84</sup> Sustainable communities will therefore not survive through exclusively material means. They will only endure when the "social and cultural health of communities is given the same level of attention now lavished on their

technological and economic development.”<sup>85</sup> This is because “our current lack of sustainability is in many respects a crisis of culture—a culture that is unsustainable, in part due to our collective unwillingness to submit human power to grace and humility.”<sup>86</sup>

Advocates of Sustainable Diplomacy must strive to make clear that the human economy is only a subset of Earth’s economy. This is clearly a paradigm shift of the first order. Yet without this shift, the human community will continue to shrink its earth share, lose sight of those communities who are practicing sustainability, and fail to grasp that the crisis it faces is equally spiritual as it is material. It is for this reason that the practice of Sustainable Diplomacy will involve a different manner of representing one’s own government and bioregion. Practitioners of Sustainable Diplomacy will not only share in the political, economic, and consular duties current diplomats undertake, but they will also be conveyers and receivers of culture—including the stories of marginalized peoples and lands. They will become co-teachers of sustainability. At the same time the Sustainable Diplomat will become a more profound type of listener—seeking connections on the ground and across borders, between peoples, faiths, agricultural practices, and pollution management.