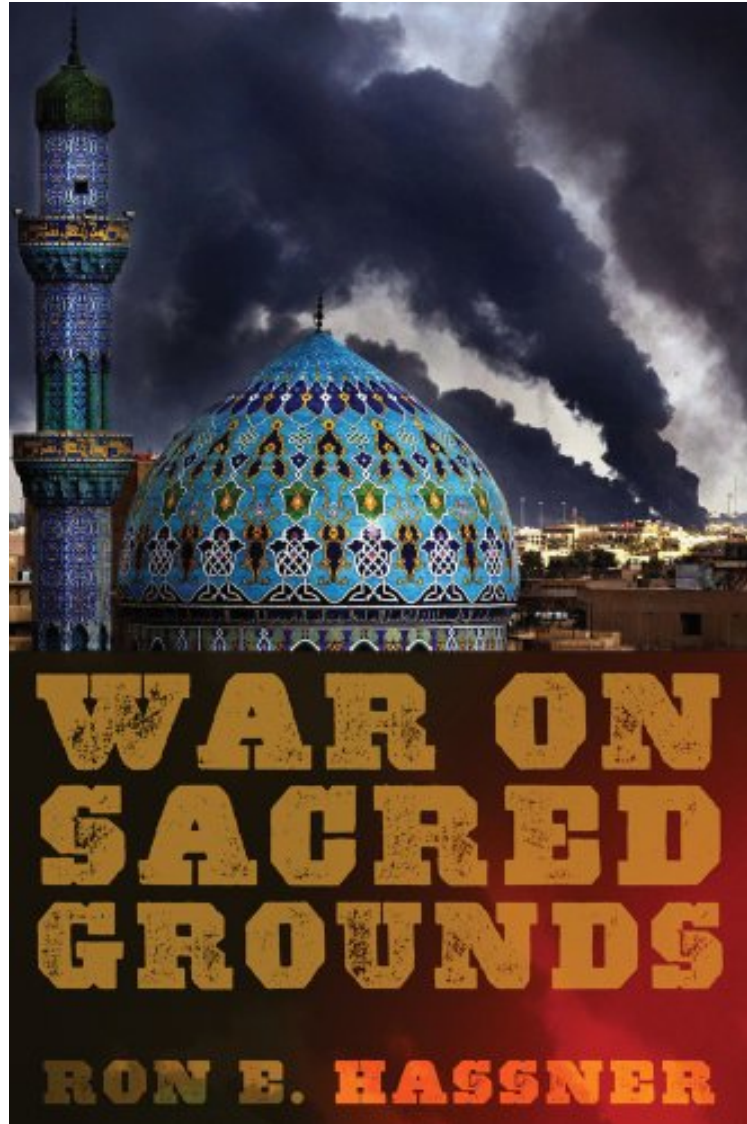


[Download] War on Sacred Grounds

War on Sacred Grounds

Ron E. Hassner

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Ron E. Hassner : War on Sacred Grounds before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised War on Sacred Grounds:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. War on Sacred Grounds By Wee Bey In this excellent study, Ron Hassner analyzes why sacred spaces are so frequently the subject of seemingly intractable conflict and what can be done to manage violence over these sites. Hassner identifies five widespread factors that have historically fueled competition over sacred space among rival religious groups or between religious and secular entities. Once

competition over these sites begins, the indivisibility of sacred space makes conflicts extremely difficult to manage and impossible to resolve. Traditional territorial disputes between nation-states can often be arbitrated through division, compensation, cession or a myriad of other means. However, Hassner argues that sacred sites are monolithic spaces with clearly delineated and inflexible boundaries for which no substitute can be offered. These factors make sacred space indivisible, which in turn precludes the effective use of conflict resolution mechanics to arbitrate disputes. Because these conflicts involve religious ideals and absolute and transcendent values, there is simply no way parties to the dispute can willingly accept compromise or substitution. While the nature of these disputes may preclude their successful resolution, Hassner demonstrates that they can be managed and violence over sacred places mitigated. Doing so, however, requires policymakers take actors within these disputes, along with their claims and concerns, seriously. While seemingly commonsensical, Hassner notes that in practice, this is rarely achieved. A key problem is that policymakers approach disputes over sacred space through either a Huntingtonian lens, which sees religion as a wholly irrational force that is better ignored than engaged; or through a Hobbesian framework, which views religiously motivated actions as a pretext for political concerns, and hence assumes these issues can be arbitrated like any other political dispute. Approaching a dispute over sacred space through either of these conceptual lenses is a recipe for failure. Mitigating these disputes, Hassner argues, requires policymakers to understand the content of religious beliefs, while recognizing that the religious elements of the conflict cannot be delinked from the conflict's political aspects. Whenever possible, policymakers should enlist respected religious leaders in conflict mitigation, as these are the only individuals who can credibly reshape the meaning and value of sacred sites and convey this new meaning to their followers. One of the volume's greatest strengths is the author's ability and willingness to bring a nuanced understanding of the doctrines, rituals and rites that comprise various faiths, and to engage seriously the concerns of actors that lead to conflict over sacred space. Hassner's study is immensely valuable and should be read by social scientists, policymakers and anyone with an interest in conflict over sacred grounds.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. As a political scientist...By ErzeThe attempt and plea for international relations scholars to acknowledge that religion is an indivisible subject was appreciated. The content analyses coupled with knowledge of methodological and epistemological approaches utilized by political scientists made a convincing argument.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Beautifully Written Analysis of a Fascinating SubjectBy Jay P.A ground breaking and thoroughly researched effort to explain the intractability of conflicts over sacred sites, with fascinating examples and analysis. An academic study, carefully documented, but beautifully written and a great read. Every American (and other) policymaker should read this. Hassner has been called "...the leading scholar of religion and violence in the United States today...", and this volume makes it clear why.

Sacred sites offer believers the possibility of communing with the divine and achieving deeper insight into their faith. Yet their spiritual and cultural importance can lead to competition as religious groups seek to exclude rivals from practicing potentially sacrilegious rituals in the hallowed space and wish to assert their own claims. Holy places thus create the potential for military, theological, or political clashes, not only between competing religious groups but also between religious groups and secular actors. In *War on Sacred Grounds*, Ron E. Hassner investigates the causes and properties of conflicts over sites that are both venerated and contested; he also proposes potential means for managing these disputes. Hassner illustrates a complex and poorly understood political dilemma with accounts of the failures to reach settlement at Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif, leading to the clashes of 2000, and the competing claims of Hindus and Muslims at Ayodhya, which resulted in the destruction of the mosque there in 1992. He also addresses more successful compromises in Jerusalem in 1967 and Mecca in 1979. Sacred sites, he contends, are particularly prone to conflict because they provide valuable resources for both religious and political actors yet cannot be divided. The management of conflicts over sacred sites requires cooperation, Hassner suggests, between political leaders interested in promoting conflict resolution and religious leaders who can shape the meaning and value that sacred places hold for believers. Because a reconfiguration of sacred space requires a confluence of political will, religious authority, and a window of opportunity, it is relatively rare. Drawing on the study of religion and the study of politics in equal measure, Hassner's account offers insight into the often-violent dynamics that come into play at the places where religion and politics collide.

"An important and engaging work. Hassner approaches the topic of sacred turf with refreshing new insights and perspectives. . . . He explores from a political science perspective why sacred places are contested and then examines why the 'indivisibility' of sacred sites makes them more problematic to solve than common territorial disputes. . . . The primary focus of the book then turns to the theory and practice of successful sharing of sacred space as a result of direct involvement and input of religious leaders something Hassner sees as missing from most negotiations who in turn must work with their religious constituencies and with the political elite in reconfiguring sacred space. . . . We can only hope that political leaders in control of sacred spaces will read Hassner's book and that more religious leaders will then be included in peace negotiations so that they can creatively shape and reshape 'the meaning, value, and parameters of sacred space.'" Chad F. Emmett, *Middle East Journal*

"Ron Hassner's *War on Sacred Grounds* is a tour de

force. It is, quite simply, the best book on religion and war I have read. It is not merely meticulously researched, theoretically interesting, and methodologically sophisticated, it is also extremely well written. . . . Hassner develops a framework for studying religious sites based on a site's 'vulnerability' and its 'centrality.' This enables him to estimate the importance of sites in the eyes of worshippers and evaluate the likelihood of conflict erupting over it. He draws on insights from both political science and the sociology of religion . . . in a careful and sober manner, and in a way that does neither discipline injustice."Havard Mokleiv Nygard, Journal of Peace Research"Sacred sites, as Hassner shows, have particular characteristics that may differentiate them from other strategic locations in times of conflict. . . . War on Sacred Grounds is an illuminating work that takes religious beliefs seriously while placing them within the context of strategic political action. It provides comparative politics with theoretical insights on a highly salient issue, supported by a rich and nuanced treatment of historical examples."Natan B. Sachs, Comparative Political Studies"Taking religion seriously is a challenge in the field of political science. For instance, how is it that, during the last three decades, holy places around the world, whatever the religions they are associated with, have been the theater of unprecedented and nevertheless unconnected violence? Instead of diluting the religious factor under more familiar paradigms (identity, ideology, ethnicity or struggle for power), Ron E. Hassner, in his highly original book, tackles brilliantly the issue of integrating religion into the field of political science."Olivier Roy, author of The Failure of Political Islam and Holy Ignorance"This is a brilliantly argued book. Ron E. Hassner offers an explanation for why religious sites become contested and why these conflicts are often very difficult to resolve, but he reminds us that in some instances resolution is possible. War on Sacred Grounds is forcefully and vividly written."Daniel Philpott, University of Notre Dame, author of Revolutions in Sovereignty"The play on words in the title of this important book indicates that it is not only about religious reasons for fighting but also about contested space when grounds are regarded as sacred by more than one community. From Ayodhya to Jerusalem, these sites have become flashpoints for political confrontation. Ron E. Hassner proposes that they may also inspire interfaith tolerance, accommodation, and cooperation. War on Sacred Grounds deserves a careful reading by anyone interested in the causes of global religious conflicts and the options that conduce toward peace."Mark Juergensmeyer, author of Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State"Ron E. Hassner's War on Sacred Grounds is among the most important contributions to the study of sacred places and the politics of those spaces in many years. Hassner's perspective is original, daring, bold, and vitally important for scholars who seek to understand the enormous powers held in sacred places and for diplomats who hope to contribute to the resolution of conflicts that are generated by holy grounds."Richard D. Hecht, University of California, Santa Barbara"Ron E. Hassner has drawn on a wide swath of secondary literature on conflicts in sacred spaces; he weaves these insights, along with theoretical insights from religious studies, sociology, and political science, into his discussion of substantive cases. The extremely topical and compelling subject of War on Sacred Grounds will attract the attention of policy analysts and journalists."Sumit Ganguly, Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations, Indiana University, author of Conflict UnendingFrom the Back Cover"Ron E. Hassner has drawn on a wide swath of secondary literature on conflicts in sacred spaces; he weaves these insights, along with theoretical insights from religious studies, sociology, and political science, into his discussion of substantive cases. The extremely topical and compelling subject of War on Sacred Grounds will attract the attention of policy analysts and journalists."-Sumit Ganguly, Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations, Indiana University, author of Conflict Unending "This is a brilliantly argued book. Ron E. Hassner offers an explanation for why religious sites become contested and why these conflicts are often very difficult to resolve, but reminds us that in some instances resolution is possible. War on Sacred Grounds is forcefully and vividly written."- Daniel Philpott, University of Notre Dame, author of Revolutions in SovereigntyAbout the AuthorRon E. Hassner is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of War on Sacred Grounds and Religion on the Battlefield and editor of Religion in the Military.